EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR HACKHAM WEST R-7 SCHOOL

Conducted in May 2016
**Review details**

A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is to improve the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia’s children and young people.

The purpose of the External School Review is to support schools to raise achievement, sustain high performance and to provide quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in DECD schools.

The framework underpinning the External School Review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.

The overarching review question is “How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?”

This Report of the External School Review outlines aspects of the school’s performance verified through the review process according to the framework. It does not document every aspect of the school’s processes, programs and outcomes.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this Report.

This External School Review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Brett Darcy, Review Principal.
Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.

The Principal of Hackham West R-7 School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

Part 5 Safety: Item 5
Cyber Safety: Policy to be developed during 2016.

Part 6 Site Procedures: Items 1 and 2
• IRMS Reporting: Upskilling new Admin staff to complete within required timeline.
• STAR system online documentation and assurance: Creating a WHS Committee to delegate more tasks through 2016 and beyond.

When the school's actions achieve compliance with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 84.1%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Hackham West R-7 School is a Reception to Year 7 school, located 28kms south of Adelaide. The school has an ICSEA score of 871 and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 16% Aboriginal students, 11% Students with Disabilities, 5% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 4 students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), and 77% of families who access School Card assistance. There is a significantly higher percentage of students deemed vulnerable on the Australian Early Development Census audit than DECD averages.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in a 12-month tenured position with 6 months prior experience in the role, and a 0.6FTE Counsellor with 0.2FTE Aboriginal Education Teacher and 0.2FTE NITT allocations to bring his FTE to 1.0.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 36% of Year 1 and 29% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 2 has been upwards, from 13% to 29%.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 35% of Year 3 students, 52% of Year 5 students and 50% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For
Year 3, this result represents a decline, for Year 5, an improvement, and Year 7, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across DECD schools, and within, for Years 5 and 7.

In 2015, 12% of Year 3, 26% of Year 5 and 0% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 5 of 6 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 0 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

**Numeracy**

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 35% of Year 3 students, 41% of Year 5 students and 36% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average and little or no change for Year 5.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools, just at for Year 5, and below, for Year 7.

In 2015, 6% of Year 3, 4% of Year 5 and 0% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 1 of 4 students from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 1 of 1 student from Year 3, remains in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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**Lines of Inquiry**

During the review process, the panel focused on four key areas from the External School Review Framework:

**Effective Teaching:** To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

**Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

**Improvement Agenda:** How effective are the school’s self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent are the school’s professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

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**To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**

Staff at Hackham West R-7 School bring a wealth of commitment and compassion to support the students and families within the school community. Throughout many processes of the External Review, the panel heard that the social, emotional and, at times, physical needs of students are addressed through support at the school level, as well as through a variety of connections made with external agencies. In their presentation, Leaders at the school made clear that they are steadfast in their aspiration to make a difference for students and families in challenging situations, and the sense of pride they have regarding their community was highly evident. The panel sourced much evidence that confirmed the school’s collective mission to support and progress students’ wellbeing.

Evidence was sourced through both the leaders’ presentation and conversations with Early Years staff that
in 2016, data has been harvested through Partnership service providers to assess the speech and language skills Reception students bring to school. This was generated through the Phonological Assessment Skills Mapping (PASM) screening tool. This data has been used to form groups based on ability and learning needs that operate during mathematics and English. These groups are strongly scaffolded with additional School Services Officer (SSO) allocation and students can move across groups dependent on progress. The panel saw this initiative as responsive and intentional in addressing the varied needs of early learners.

Other action undertaken to identify and respond to each learner’s need was apparent in the whole-school data wall, displayed in the staff room. Each student’s level of ability, as determined by Running Records and EALD scales, was assessed as ‘below’, ‘near’ or ‘above’ standard. Teachers had then recorded dot-pointed plans to support each student to progress. Examples included actions such as designing challenging learning opportunities or providing scaffolded support for students who require consolidation. This process is representative of a high yield strategy and the potential to meet the range of learners’ needs is evident. However, the implementation and, consequently, the impact of these plans was less evident within class at the time of the review. Some organisational plans, such as students moving class for some lessons, had been accomplished, whilst the differentiated learning interventions planned, were not apparent.

Most teachers reported using data to identify students’ ability level or ‘score’ and to then group accordingly. Students discussed the difference between groups as more able students ‘got harder words’ in spelling or ‘more work’ in maths. Leaders reported that diagnostic use of data is the ‘next step’ in the school’s improvement imperative. The panel heard that PAT data has been generated and is yet to be analysed. The panel sees this data as a good starting point to identify the miscues students are experiencing and how this information will then translate into targeted teaching.

**Direction 1**
Design and deliver learning opportunities that connect with the range of learner needs through strategic analysis and triangulation of data that identifies students’ miscues, strengths and learning styles.

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**To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?**

The Review Panel was provided with evidence that staff had worked consistently to set goals with every student in the school. The goals varied in aspect: some were about authentically representing school values, some about working with others and some were about learner achievement. The strategic intent to develop targets with students represents staff members’ understanding that students having ownership of, and engagement with, their learning is key to maximising potential success.

Conversations with students made clear that a few learners know what their goal is and one or two older students discussed how they might meet the goal. Many students with whom the panel spoke were unaware of their learning goal and some were unsure what the term meant. Teaching staff with whom the panel spoke explained that developing and embedding strategies to support students to meet their goals was often compromised by regular, and often challenging, student behaviour. They reported that managing behaviours took priority over other aspects of teaching and that this often thwarted plans or intentions. This was a recurring theme regularly reported throughout the external review process.

Opportunities for some students to access learning that is engaging are evident in some instances. Interestingly, the Review Panel heard that most of these opportunities are afforded to students who experience behavioural issues. Attempts are made to provide these students highly differentiated teaching that connects with their needs. Many staff expressed concern regarding their awareness that students who are ‘near’ or ‘at’ standard miss-out on their attention as they are occupied with inappropriate behaviours. The Review Panel appreciates the significant obstacle that disruptive behaviour can present. The panel is also aware that a way around disenfranchisement that leads to disruption, can be through purposeful and engaging learning opportunities. Students presenting with mid-range behaviours can be inspired and ‘hooked’ into learning that connects with them, and keeps them focused.

At present, these opportunities operate at varying levels across the school and pedagogical implementation is at individual teachers’ discretion. The potential for staff to develop and deliver consistent, engaging pedagogical approaches is evident.
Direction 2
Maximise student engagement and potential achievement through collective inquiry into, and implementation of, teaching strategies that enthuse students and inspire active participation in purposeful learning.

How effective are the school’s self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

The current Principal has initiated a collective approach to the development of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP). Staff have been introduced to the purpose of the document and active in suggesting priorities for school improvement, that have then been included in the plan. To further authenticate this consultative approach, staff have carriage of responsibility to progress the priorities they have proposed. Throughout some of the review conversations, the panel members heard that the collaborative approach to improvement planning was very much valued by staff, who view the process as respectful.

Forums have been established to review and monitor progress to implement the strategies within the SIP. Staff uniformly report that once a term, staff meeting time is dedicated to determining how far each of the agreed strategies has been progressed. Implementations in the ‘Red’ column (needing improvement or development), can move to the ‘Orange’ column (underway), and those in the Orange column can move to ‘Green’ (embedded). The Review Panel acknowledges this developmental approach to the documentation of school plans and, in particular, the intent to use a consultative approach to raise the profile of improvement planning at the school.

Discussion with staff and Principal made evident that initiatives for inclusion in the ‘Red’ column, the school’s priorities, are at this point in time not responsive to, or based upon, diagnostic analysis of data. Most inclusions are ideas proposed by staff and Leaders, that they believe will support students at the school to improve, such as the introduction of a new literacy program.

Targets within the SIP sit under ‘Student Targets’ and ‘School Targets’. Student targets are characterised as a certain percentage of students within cohorts achieving SEA in Running Record assessments. School targets refer to implementations staff will undertake to ensure ‘processes of moderation are underway’ and ‘student engagement and growth is progressed’. Based on data generated in the School Performance Report, it is apparent that limited students meet SEA or achieve in the Higher Bands. Given this, the Review Panel encourage staff and leaders to consider the development of student growth targets that allow staff to set and measure progress for students at varying levels and from existing baselines. The school’s belief that all students can learn would be well-represented by the inclusion of targets that influence and determine growth for each student.

Direction 3
Set aspirational and relevant growth targets for students and determine intentional whole-school priorities through collective analysis of valid data to inform direction.

To what extent are the school’s professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

Opportunities for staff to meet in year-level teams operate fortnightly. The Leadership Team informed the panel that teachers refer to the TFL companion document in guiding their conversations. Documents were provided that represented the conversations teachers had engaged in. One set of notes was characterised as thoughts and reflections brought about by varying TFL statements, and did not include plans, actions or intentions. Another document from February identified a key action as ‘Remember learning is social’ and included questions teachers posed regarding the establishment of a community of learners. Dedicated time to meet and engage in discussion about practice is critical and the panel commends this intent. The opportunity to use this time strategically to enable rigorous self-review and development of effective practice is apparent. Given leaders’ intent to use data more analytically, the Review Panel sees these professional learning times as opportune in deliberately and systematically building teachers’ capacity to
utilise data more intentionally.

Both teaching and administrative staff reported that they are supported to attend external Professional Learning (PL) opportunities and that alignment with school priorities on the SIP, especially the ‘Red’ column, was encouraged. SSO staff reported that opportunities to access PL pertinent to their role or the students they worked with were of value. The panel was informed that, on occasion, plans to attend PL externally had been cancelled due to behavioural incidents that arose at the school.

Staff reported that they had met with their line manager in Term 1 to engage in a Performance and Development (PD) conversation. They described the process as an opportunity to identify two or three goals relevant to their needs. These included promotion of parent engagement, student transition and access to Kids Matter PL. The panel was informed that due to the leaders’ responsibility to respond to behavioural issues, it was not uncommon for PD meetings to be postponed or cancelled. The panel agrees that both PL and PD will be key to ensuring staff at Hackham West R-7 School develop the capacity to use data at a sophisticated, analytical level to meet the diverse needs of the students at the school.

**Direction 4**

*Build teacher capacity to use data diagnostically to inform teaching through the implementation of strategically designed processes of Professional Learning and Performance Development.*
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Hackham West R-7 School staff work actively to support the wellbeing of students at the school. Leaders at the school are aware of the existing opportunities for improvement. At the time of the External Review, the absence of effective use of data-informed decision-making and planning, and inconsistent school-wide pedagogical implementation was evident.

The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Design and deliver learning opportunities that connect with the range of learner needs through strategic analysis and triangulation of data that identifies students' miscues, strengths and learning styles.

2. Maximise student engagement and potential achievement through collective inquiry into, and implementation of, teaching strategies that enthuse students and inspire active participation in purposeful learning.

3. Set aspirational and relevant growth targets for students and determine intentional whole-school priorities through collective analysis of valid data to inform direction.

4. Build teacher capacity to use data diagnostically to inform teaching through the implementation of strategically designed processes of Professional Learning and Performance Development.

Based on the school's current performance, Hackham West R-7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2017.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

Shannon Little
PRINCIPAL
HACKHAM WEST R-7 SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson