

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR MORGAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education
and Child Development

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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Julie Taylor, 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 Morgan Primary 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 2: Learning Improvement Item 2.7 Individual Learning Plans for Aboriginal students
One new student currently coming from exclusion yet to be completed.

Part 3: School Organisation Item 3.5 Camps and Excursions Policy
To be ratified at the next Governing Council meeting.

Part 4: People and Culture Item 4.4 Site induction Policy
Procedures in place but no policy as yet.

Part 5: Safety Item 5.4 Volunteer Policy
Draft Policy under review.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy 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 93.8%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Morgan Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 159 kilometres north-east of Adelaide in the Riverland town of Morgan. The school works with the adjacent Morgan Kindergarten in the Morgan Education Community. The current enrolment is 35 students organised into 3 classes. There has been a slight decline over time from 43 students in 2010. The school has an ICSEA score of 986, and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

Currently, the school population includes 2 Aboriginal students and 1 student with a disability according to the DECD criteria. Approximately 75% of families are eligible for School Card.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her second tenure.

School Performance Overview

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

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

Reading

The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Morgan Primary School over the years 2011 to 2015.

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. From 2011 to 2015, 9 of 21 (43%) Year 1 students, and 8 of 25 (32%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

From 2011 to 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 22 of 26 (85%) Year 3, 24 of 28 (86%) Year 5, and 26 of 32 (81%) Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement of the DECD SEA.

From 2011 to 2015, in Years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is consistently achieving within or above the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In NAPLAN Reading, from 2011 to 2015, 13 of 26 (50%) Year 3, 9 of 28 (32%) Year 5, and 8 of 32 (25%) Year 7 students achieved in the top two bands.

Of the total 7 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in Year 3 over 2011-2013, 4 students remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2013-2015 (57%). No students in Year 3 in 2011 NAPLAN Reading were in the upper bands.

Numeracy

From 2011 to 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 24 of 26 (92%) Year 3, 18 of 28 (64%) Year 5, and 24 of 32 (75%) Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

From 2011 to 2015, in Years 3 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is consistently achieving within or above the average results of similar students across the DECD system, and the results for Year 5 students, when compared to similar students across the system, are inconsistent.

In NAPLAN Numeracy, from 2011 to 2015, 6 of 26 (23%) Year 3, 1 of 28 (4%) Year 5, and 4 of 32 (13%) Year 7 students were in the top two bands.

Of the total 3 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in Year 3 over 2011-2013, none remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2013-2015. Of the 2 students who tested in the higher bands at Year 3 in 2011 NAPLAN Numeracy, 1 remains in the higher bands at Year 7.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: How well are students achieving over time?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

School Community Partnerships: To what extent does parent engagement with the school impact on learning?

How well are students achieving over time?

Morgan Primary School is well-resourced, well-kept, safe and welcoming. There is a strong focus on attendance, and the school actively works with families to ensure that students are at school to access their learning entitlement. Staff reported that, recently, the use of data with students extended to sharing an analysis of individual attendance patterns using a 'traffic light approach'.

The Review Panel interviewed all students at the school in small groups in their own classrooms, as well as conducting a number of classroom walkthroughs, during teaching and learning time. High levels of student interest and motivation were evident across all groups, with students keen to be challenged. Students are excited about learning and the school has a range of ways for students to build skills in line with the

curriculum. The Review Panel saw and heard evidence that in each class expectations about what is taught across year levels is visible and clearly understood. This is particularly important in a school where all students learn in multi-year level classes.

The school timetable structure supports a whole-school approach to literacy and numeracy learning based on using data to inform explicit teaching. Students work across the school in groups based on need. In maths, information about the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards is shared with students to support class goal-setting. Expectations are shared with students in the form of child friendly *I can* statements. Students use these descriptions of expected learning as motivation to higher levels of achievement. Some students reported that when they were in the highest year level of their class, they did not feel that they were always being intellectually stretched. Students at the school are consistently supported to meet standards over time in literacy and numeracy, as evidenced by the high proportion of students achieving the SEA over 2011-25 in NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy.

Teachers were asked by the Review Panel to nominate key improvement initiatives that had a positive impact on student achievement. The consensus was that the top three were the whole-school strategy of using the *Doorways to Literacy* program, whole-school wellbeing strategies, such as Play is the Way, use of Kimochis and the emerging outdoor classroom, and the whole-school approach to Guided Reading. The latter has resulted from analysis of a range of data in literacy, including PAT-R results that had teachers deliberately engaging with students more frequently in “structured reading opportunities” rather than “leaving them up to their own devices”. Around half of Year 3 students are demonstrating high levels of performance in reading, as evidenced by achievement in the higher two bands in NAPLAN reading over time. There is a pattern of relatively few students demonstrating higher band achievement in numeracy over time.

As part of the staff meeting process, teachers expressed that translating successful approaches in literacy to the implementation of the mathematics curriculum is a possible next step in raising student achievement. Students interviewed shared with the Review Panel an example of a homework matrix using Bloom’s Taxonomy and Gardiner’s Multiple Intelligences to focus students on higher-order thinking and creativity. The Review Panel also heard of how learning through the emerging outdoor classroom program was provoking student thinking and giving explicit teaching relevance and meaning. There is opportunity to build the school-wide pedagogy to stretch the learning for all students.

Direction 1

Improve intellectual challenge for all students by building on the design of learning so that students are engaged in critical and creative thinking to develop their general capabilities.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Teachers work actively to create and maintain positive learning environments and engage collaboratively with colleagues to reflect on and improve their practice. Consistent classroom management effectively enables learners to engage in the learning process. During classroom walkthroughs, the Review Panel observed students using a range of resources such as anchor charts, individual cards or placemats, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as enabling and engaging resources to support learning. Teachers provide effective feedback to students, and students reflect on their learning to review their progress and achievement. Student reflection is part of the formal ‘reporting to parents’ process. The Review Panel saw evidence of support for students in peer feedback, and transparent success criteria that are used in writing tasks. Reciprocal feedback will enhance the effectiveness of the feedback cycle, and teacher-to-teacher feedback, through observation and performance and development processes, is an area for exploration.

The whole-school focus on writing is improving students’ writing proficiency through a genre approach to teaching writing skills. The use of the English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) and literacy levels to appraise students’ writing, and identify teaching points for individual students, was spoken about positively by both students and teachers. The school collected data in Term 2 this year, and regular levelling of writing samples will both inform teaching and quantitatively measure the success of strategies implemented.

There are Individual Learning Plans for most students. Plans are monitored and updated regularly with teachers, support staff and families contributing. The current feedback practices support students in knowing what they need to do to improve. There is opportunity to build on these processes and move from a doing things *for* students to a doing things *with* them approach. Involving students in goal-setting in Individual Learning Plans is a first step.

Both students and parents interviewed by the Review Panel were positive about the range of opportunities that the school provides for learning that was beyond “sitting doing paperwork” (student comment). Parents reported that students are given many opportunities to take learning beyond the classroom, for example, through the Annual Camp, Outdoor Classroom, and Carnivals. The Review Panel heard about how an upcoming exhibition at the local museum was involving students in negotiating learning that met particular parameters and, in that way, both engaged them and stretched their thinking. Authentic learning opportunities such as these provide fertile ground for personalising learning and lifting performance. Amplifying the role of students in the learning process will move the school ever closer to its vision of ‘... learners (who) will be confident, capable, adaptable and prepared members of our local and global community’.

Direction 2

Continue to build a positive and challenging class and school learning culture by using assessment for learning strategies, including feedback from students to teachers about pedagogy.

Direction 3

Strengthen student influence and decision-making in authentic learning to further personalise student engagement and raise performance.

To what extent does parent engagement with the school impact on learning?

Effective schools value two-way communication, ensure all have a voice and sense of identity, and make use of resources in the wider community to enhance students’ educational outcomes and school experiences. The Review Panel met with all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and concluded that there is a range of adults at the school who provide support for students in an environment characterised by a high degree of trust. Teachers’ work is enhanced by involvement in partnerships with local schools in professional learning communities, and in joint initiatives and programs, such as Young Environment Leaders. Additionally, teachers reported collaborating with colleagues in other schools informally, through email and phone calls, and referred to observation of practice at other sites. The school fosters community partnerships through involvement with the Returned Serviceman’s League, the Lions Club and the local Museum.

The school reviews processes over time as part of a continuous improvement ethos. One example is where the connections with families about learning, previously termed interviews, have been re-envisioned as Engagement meetings. Proformas that support the preparation of teachers, students and parents for these meetings, reinforce the value of each participant as a partner in the educative process. The Shared Learning Session, also a revised version, encourages family involvement in the learning process by focusing on students as the key agents in sharing their own learning and achievements. Both teachers and parents commented on the success of this initiative.

Students were asked to talk with the Review Panel about how their families support them in their learning. A broad range of examples was shared, including: support with daily reading, encouragement to take risks, applying school-based learning to real-life situations (for example, talk of fractions when cutting-up fruit), providing assistance and ensuring homework is completed, and discussions at home that both reinforce learning that has happened at school and, sometimes, provide a different lens. The Review Panel heard examples of students working with family members on learning experiences where there was an emphasis on sharing the learning as a process, and not just an end product, and developing the language of learning. The Review Panel confirmed that students are hearing common messages from home and school about the importance of schooling and working hard as a student.

Parents reported that communication was received from the school via smartphones, regarding attendance, homework, school values, behaviour and home reading. Parents expressed that they valued the messages they received about their child's learning in this way, as well as through photos and stories from teachers, and teachers confirmed the effectiveness of this method of communication. Parents also indicated that teacher availability before school was helpful in maintaining their connection to learning at school.

Weekly written, paper-based and electronic communication from the school to parents is valued. Parents made clear the usefulness of the Term Planner. Information-sharing through the school newsletter is comprehensive. There was a view that, at times, the essential messages are clouded by the use of jargon and the sheer density of the information. This was expressed as: "People turn off when there's too much information". The School Improvement Plan (SIP) communicates learning direction to the community, and there is an opportunity to simplify the key messages for the community without compromising the intent. The Review Panel discussed, with both parents and the Principal, maintaining the integrity of transparent communication, as a principle, by refining the main ideas and providing further detail for those who wanted it through additional access and links.

The next step for the school is to explore ways to build communication with families, using tools and strategies that enhance the focus on learning.

Direction 4

Improve the school partnership with families by collaboratively designing a strategic approach to communication to support productive relationships and understanding about learning.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Morgan Primary School is a school where effective teaching actively engages learners, and there is a coherent curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum. Demonstrated student achievement is at or above what would reasonably be expected of a school in a similar context.

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

1. Improve intellectual challenge for all students by building on the design of learning so that students are engaged in critical and creative thinking to develop their general capabilities.
2. Continue to build a positive and challenging class and school learning culture by using assessment for learning strategies, including feedback from students to teachers about pedagogy.
3. Strengthen student influence and decision-making in authentic learning to further personalise student engagement and raise performance.
4. Improve the school partnership with families by collaboratively designing a strategic approach to communication to support productive relationships and understanding about learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Morgan Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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.

Kellie Zadow
PRINCIPAL
MORGAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson