

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Bordertown Primary School

Conducted in July 2020



# Review details

Our education system aspires to become the best in Australia by seeking growth for every student, in every class and in every school.

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

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

This report 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.

We acknowledge the support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Cathy McAuley, Review Principal.

## Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Bordertown Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 271kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 403. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 384. The local partnership is Tatiara.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1000, and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 3% students with disabilities, 11% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 25% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal, deputy and a literacy coordinator, all in one-year positions.

There are 27 teachers (21 FTE) including 10 in the early years of their career and 7 Step 9 teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Move more individuals, specific groups and all student cohorts into higher proficiency categories by reviewing all data collected and determining which reliable tests best support teachers to track progress and make timely judgements that help students be more successful.
- Direction 2** Link professional learning to the school's improvement priorities and, within a set timeframe, systematically evaluate the implementation of agreed teaching approaches with respect to associated growth and gains in student learning.
- Direction 3** Improve the learning outcomes for all students, including students in priority groups and those new to the school, by creating an inclusive school environment in collaboration with staff, students and parents.
- Direction 4** Develop an agreed whole-school pedagogical framework that aligns with and supports the coherent implementation of school-wide teaching and learning agreements.

#### What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

Staff reported that the following strategies were implemented to address the previous directions :

**Direction 1:** 2018 system reviewed to determine goals for 2019 site improvement plan (SIP). Traffic light data was modified from perception data to criterion base, and whole-staff analysis of data with reference to NAPLAN higher band achievement.

**Direction 2:** SIP focus planned for writing and number, focus on developing consistency in running records, year level focus on jolly phonics, bookmaking and CAFÉ with some progress in exploring whole-school programs, ie writer's notebook and Big Write.

**Direction 3:** School services officer (SSO) team time allocation, specific focus on priority groups, EALD/ESL teacher employed to facilitate program for new arrival students, employment of a bilingual SSO to support new arrival students and families. Pastoral care worker links to families, wellbeing teacher supports students and families and a 'nurture nest' introduced to support students emotional needs.

**Direction 4:** SIP includes goals to establish common understandings of best practice and consistency in assessments in literacy and numeracy target areas. Involvement in the STEM 500 by 2 teachers who introduced new pedagogy to students reception to year 7 and the implementation of the Berry Street model.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

All staff are involved and active members of the SIP implementation. The SIP was developed with a focus on 2 goals: numeracy and writing. There has been a heavy focus on writing. The school has worked strategically and collaboratively in supporting staff to implement effective practices and processes in the teaching, reviewing and evaluating of writing.

The panel noted extensive evidence of a whole-school approach to improving pedagogical practices in writing. Professional learning in an evidence-based writing assessment resulted in the implementation and development of a cohesive approach to strengthening and embedding effective writing practices and processes across the site. Staff acknowledged that the opportunity to work in teams and regularly review their progress had been beneficial in ensuring coherence across the site. They also reported high levels of engagement and ownership by students in the improved pedagogical practices and comprehensive assessments in writing.

The school identified numeracy as 1 of the 2 SIP goals for 2020; however, this had not been implemented at the time of the review. The principal reported that this work will now be deferred until 2021. The school has moved from a site-based assessment to standardised summative numeracy assessments with individual targets using the progressive assessment tests in mathematics (PAT-M). Staff noted that next steps in numeracy required defined assessments and comprehensive professional learning to ensure consistency and congruence across the site. Staff reported that a whole-school focus, including shared planning, teaching and moderation across all year levels, would strengthen their collective efficacy in this area.

Staff worked in like year-level teams and provided feedback on steps 4 and 5 of the school improvement plan. Next steps for the school will be to ensure that student participation is an integral component of key actions within the SIP cycle. Work in this area will be a significant factor in strengthening the collective ownership of, and responsibility for, the progress and implementation of the SIP.

**Direction 1**     **Strengthen processes to ensure that students, with staff have planned opportunities to participate in the review and evaluation of improvement planning processes at regular points throughout the year.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

In a survey conducted during the ESR, 94% of responses from staff indicated that opportunities to stretch students to enable them to think deeper about the topic was achieved at a medium to low degree. High levels of engagement were observed in many classrooms, with evidence of open-ended questioning in some classes.

During the ESR, interviews were held with 48 students from years 3 to 7, with 33% reporting maths to be challenging, 25% of students identified that writing was challenging and only 2% of students indicated that reading was challenging.

Teachers recognised the need to accommodate higher-band students across a range of learning areas. The acquisition of a reading assessment tool that expands beyond level 30 will strengthen opportunities for students to be consistently challenged in their reading. Several staff noted that students are well-placed to undertake further responsibility for their own learning, including collaboratively setting goals and targets.

Seventy-five percent of staff indicated that students were engaged in the learning process to a high degree. Eighty-eight percent of staff identified that clarity of the success criteria and students' understanding of the success criteria was achieved at a medium to low degree.

In meetings during the ESR, staff noted that, whilst learning intentions and success criteria were still in the developmental phase, several students were regularly asking what the learning intentions and success criteria were, while other students were involved in the collaborative development of learning intentions and success criteria.

The school is well-positioned to develop and embed consistent understandings and practices in learning intentions and success criteria across the site. Collaboration across classes and year levels in the development and implementation of learning intentions and success criteria will strongly support the collective efficacy of staff and students.

**Direction 2**     **Implement and embed a whole-school approach in the development of effective learning intentions and success criteria that are known, understood and enacted across areas of learning and year levels.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Staff identified a diverse range of assessments used to track and monitor student progress. Formative assessments were used at the beginning of a unit to check for misconceptions and summative assessments at the end. Teachers reflected that formative assessment could be improved through the implementation of regular routines to ensure that this becomes embedded practice across year levels and areas of learning.

The principal reported that investment in professional learning focused on the assessment of writing across the site was pivotal in building the collective efficacy of all staff. Professional learning communities (PLC) have been developed, and each PLC has a curriculum leader who is also a member of the leadership team. Staff have enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to track, monitor and share student data against the writing scale. Work in this area is further strengthened via online PLCs with curriculum officers.

Teachers reported that opportunities for students to undertake self- and peer-assessments and provide feedback to each other was in the early stages of development. Other staff identified being at the beginning stages of developing rubrics with students across a range of learning areas, and noted that work in this area could be further enhanced via planned opportunities for students to design their own rubrics.

Only 22% of students interviewed identified that they were regularly challenged in their learning. Teachers reported variance in effective differentiation for students at/above SEA and acknowledged that work in this area is sporadic across the site.

Other staff reflected that students need to know what an 'A' and a 'B' looks like across a range of learning areas. The school is well-placed to develop and embed a language of learning in relation to stretch and challenge, underpinned by collaboration in designing tasks that acknowledge the diverse needs of learners across all levels of schooling.

**Direction 3     Develop and embed a whole-school approach in effective task design that ensures students are consistently provided with opportunities to display learning at a higher level.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

The school has had 5 different principals over the past 5 years; however, there are high levels of engagement and a strong commitment to the school by proud and supportive staff, students and the community. The establishment of professional learning communities and the current work in writing has been pivotal in strengthening the collective capacity of staff at Bordertown Primary School.

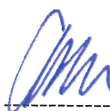
The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1**     **Strengthen processes to ensure that students, with staff have planned opportunities to participate in the review and evaluation of improvement planning processes at regular points throughout the year.**
- Direction 2**     **Implement and embed a whole-school approach in the development of effective learning intentions and success criteria that are known, understood and enacted across areas of learning and year levels.**
- Direction 3**     **Develop and embed a whole-school approach in effective task design that ensures students are consistently provided with opportunities to display learning at a higher level.**

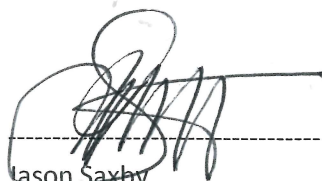
Based on the school's current performance, Bordertown Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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# Appendix 1

## School performance overview

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

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019, 59% of year 1 and 57% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and a decline year 2, from the historic baseline average.

In 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 79% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3, NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than, and for years 5 and 7, within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 33% of year 3, 28% of year 5 and 29% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 59%, or 13 out of 22 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 73%, or 11 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 72% of year 5 students and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents little or no change and for year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving lower than and for years 5 and 7, within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 19% of year 3, 15% of year 5 and 21% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 70%, or 7 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 61%, or 8 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.