EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Ungarra Primary School

Conducted in July 2017

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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Cam Wright, Review Principal.

School context

Ungarra Primary School is located 570kms north-west of Adelaide CBD on the Eyre Peninsula. The school was established in 1914 and has an enrolment of 36 students; numbers having increased from 28 in 2015. The school's Index of Educational Disadvantage is 6 and it has an ICSEA value of 999.

The school population has no students who identify as Aboriginal, no students with a Non-English Speaking Background, and one student with disabilities.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of her tenure. There are three teaching staff members and four School Services Officers (SSOs) employed at the school.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on four key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: **How well are students achieving over time?**

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

School Community Partnerships: **How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

Improvement Agenda: **How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?**

How well are students achieving over time?

The External School Review (ESR) conducted at Ungarra Primary School made evident the number of high-yield and contemporary initiatives introduced over the past two years. Whilst the Principal and the Review Panel agree the school is continuing to embed and further strengthen this work, it is highly apparent that the direction is clear to all and designed to maximise student learning outcomes.

Data provided prior to and during the ESR allowed the Review Panel to see the growth and improvement that has been achieved over the two-year period. Whilst cohort data is not the most useful evidence in a small school, it is clear that when compared to previous collations, NAPLAN results are higher than in previous years. PAT data also exemplifies improvement in achievement at a whole-school level. Importantly, the school is cognisant of the validity of cohort data in small schools and, as such, chooses to collate and triangulate achievement data for each student. Every learner has a data profile developed that includes a range of assessment results including Running Records, NAPLAN, PAT Reading and Maths, Lexiles, Sight Words, and phonological awareness data. Regular and scheduled assessments ensure each student's growth is identified. Parents with whom the panel spoke expressed their appreciation that this comprehensive and individualised information guides family interviews, allowing them a very accurate and detailed understanding of their child's progress. The ESR panel noted that the school has set stanine five as the standard for PAT achievement, representing the high expectations they hold for their students.

During the leader's presentation, the panel heard of the school's deliberate and strategic response to data that showed student behaviour had previously been of concern. Perception and EDSAS data showed that a disproportionate number of students were experiencing behavioural challenges, and that concerns regarding inconsistent approaches to behaviour management were apparent. Over a twelve-month period, the Principal led staff, students and parents through processes to collectively develop an agreed behaviour education policy, implement consistent responses, improve restorative practice and build a culture of high expectations. Outcomes of this process saw students who were initially identified as at risk, significantly reduce behavioural issues, and the 2016 staff opinion survey documented that 100% of staff strongly agree

that behaviour is well-managed at the site. Most importantly, the panel heard throughout the ESR process that, as a result of improved student behaviour, the focus at the school is now firmly placed on the learning agenda.

After discussion with teachers, students aim to improve their positive approach to behaviour, and are awarded points accordingly. Students with whom the panel spoke discussed this initiative at length, reporting that the accumulation of a certain number of points results in a reward. When discussing the concept with the ESR panel, students' emphasis was clearly more focused on the outcome they receive than on the importance of persevering in learning. Staff perceptions grade students' 'Effort' as A, B or C and, during the ESR, staff celebrated a school-wide improvement from 2016 results. The ESR panel encourages staff to consider how this concept might now be extended to represent the renewed focus on learning; how students at the school might set goals about their learning and potential achievement. The raft of valid data collated at the school could provide students an insight into their progress and allow them to identify where their next learning goal is, and how to achieve it.

Conversations with students and access to their exercise books showed that, at the time of the ESR, students at the school have limited opportunity for teacher feedback that informs them of their progress and where and how they can build on their achievements. Students reported that they know how they are going when they see their report and the grades allocated. Other students said that they really didn't know how they were going with their learning, and when asked how they could find out, suggested they could ask the teacher or wait for their report. The ESR panel noted that written feedback to students, in the main, comprised ticks or affirmations. The work of Hattie makes clear the significance of valid and formative feedback in improving student learning outcomes, and encourages us to engage students in dialogue that allows them to determine *How am I going?*, *Where am I going?* and *How do I get there?*. The opportunity to provide the eager learners at Ungarra Primary School with these scaffolds to learning is an exciting next step in the improvement journey.

Direction 1
Allow students to track and understand their growth through the identification of personal learning goals and the provision of formative feedback regarding their progress.

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

As referred to above, the profile of data and its place in informing practice has been introduced to the school over the last two years. The range of data sourced has been used by staff to identify students' existing understanding and the next developmental stage of their learning. In addition, the staff have responded to miscues or strengths that the data has made evident by forming groups within the classes. Through these, students requiring consolidation or extension access learning that is designed to address their individual progress. PAT-R and diagnostic data has been analysed to identify the comprehension strategies students can further develop and, again, groups formed accordingly. Students experiencing difficulty when attempting to solve mathematical problems, whose ability to calculate quickly and accurately is compromised, have accessed the QuickSmart program designed to increase their automaticity. Parents with whom the ESR panel spoke expressed their belief that students requiring support, as well as those ready for extension, are provided appropriate interventions.

The leaders' presentation made clear to the ESR panel members that an intent to introduce approaches that deepen student cognition and challenge thinking is apparent at the school. The panel heard of the school's work in developing learning design and 'transforming tasks', and saw documents that represented teachers' planning in this area. Identification of the intent of the learning, questions of inquiry and the criteria students work towards were included in planning documents. The plans were aligned with the Australian Curriculum Standards and informed by content descriptors. During classroom visits the panel sourced evidence that the impact this contemporary approach to planning is having on practice is in its early stages. Some evidence of students participating in problem-solving and encouraged to make comments about their learning was apparent. The panel also sourced evidence of students participating in a task delivered to the whole class, where each student was required to produce the same product with limited cognitive stimulation. The panel acknowledges that groups are formed to meet students' needs and that this goes some way to delivering personalised learning. However, given the diverse age range and

consequent abilities within each of the classes at the school, the ESR panel agrees that continuing to work on cross-curricula task design that allows multiple entry points, promotes student inquiry and is, therefore, highly differentiated, will further ensure the school caters to the needs of all learners.

Document analysis allowed the ESR panel to see that Performance and Development systems have enabled each teacher to identify an aspect of their practice that they will develop further, and that these are aligned with the school's priorities. Assessment design featured in these plans, and the panel concurs that this is a timely and important improvement imperative at the school. Planning documents accessed by the panel indicated assessment was simply identifying how grades would be allocated against criteria. Evidence sourced during the ESR showed that opportunities students have to demonstrate their learning include re-telling, explaining or testing. Little evidence of opportunities for the diverse cohorts of students to demonstrate their learning through rich assessments tasks, that provide varied scaffolds for students to exemplify their understanding, was apparent.

Direction 2
Deliver learning opportunities that meet the diverse range of students' needs through contemporary planning that ensures multiple points of access and promotes inquiry, and assessment that allows each student to fully demonstrate their understanding.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Throughout the ESR process, the panel was made aware of the interested, enthusiastic and willing nature that students bring to the classroom. All students with whom the panel spoke were happy to talk about their school and understood the importance of learning. Some aspects of the ESR allowed the panel to see that the school is working towards designing authentic opportunities for students to have influence over their learning and school direction. A document that recorded students' opinions regarding the priorities within the Site Improvement Plan was provided, and the panel agrees the students' perceptions were insightful and well-considered. The kitchen garden program also allows students to work together and make decisions about processes and products, and provides a model from which similar opportunities in the classroom may be developed.

The school has introduced the teaching strategy of 'Tell to Ask', a concept designed to elicit student thinking, and staff discussed the development of Socratic questioning techniques that promote this approach. The ESR panel agrees that this concept is also representative of the potential that exists to build student agency within the learning agenda, to move from 'telling' students about learning, to 'asking' them to make decisions about and better understand their learning.

When asked what good learning looks like, students at the school quickly described being good, finishing work, not talking and following instructions. One student explained that good learning was "When you get prizes and then you get better and get another prize". This perception that learning was about compliance and reward and that teacher approval was central to learning, was further implied through teachers' comments to students. The ESR panel heard statements that informed students that they had impressed the teacher, that the teacher liked their work, or were asked to undertake a task 'for me'. In the culture that now exists at the school, the opportunity to bring students to the centre of the learning agenda is apparent.

Staff planning documents made clear that teachers have considered and documented the criteria students are working towards. This has been identified at each year level and aligned with the outcomes of the Australian Curriculum (AC). The document also includes reference to the standards that will gauge which grade a student will be allocated. The ESR panel acknowledges this intentional approach to planning and asks staff to now consider how student agency might be progressed using the concepts of criteria and standards. Students with whom the panel spoke had very limited understanding with regards to their progress, the intended learning outcome or allocation of grades. An opportunity to bring the criteria of the learning to the students and to engage in rich dialogue that allows them to understand the indicators of success will allow them to monitor their progress and appreciate its purpose more fully. The use of exemplars and rubrics may further strengthen this concept. Collective examination of standards within the AC will also contribute to students understanding which grade they are working towards and what they need to do to improve further. The opportunity to capitalise on the students' potential and to "let them in

on the secret" is an exciting next step at Ungarra Primary School and one that fits seamlessly with existing priorities.

Direction 3
Develop student agency within the learning agenda through collective inquiry into criteria that make clear the intent of the learning and the provision of scaffolds that allow students to monitor and measure their improvement.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

As aforementioned, the profile of data at the school has been raised over the last two years. Staff and parents understand the importance data has in informing planning at the student and whole-school level. The school's Site Improvement Plan is clearly responsive to data analysis and student needs are identified through a diagnostic use of achievement data. The ESR panel heard from staff that ongoing processes of self-review are regular, in fact 'constant', and data-responsive. The panel formed an understanding of an emergent and strategic approach to self-review, based on an evidentiary approach to evaluation operating at the school.

When discussing the use of data at the class or student level, teachers referred to the formulation of groups based on ability, miscues or strengths. It was reported that the Principal supports the shared analysis of data to determine the grouping. PAT data is used as a reference point for planning the teaching of reading, and teachers have been working together to unpack the teaching of comprehension strategies. Students who are exceeding standards have individual plans documented that identify targets for further growth and strategies to achieve these. The plans are aligned with both NAPLAN and PAT standards. Some reference to the use of a test of Phonological Awareness and how this is applied in identifying which aspects of literacy learning are to be taught was sourced during teacher conversations. One staff member referred to data as highly important and discussed conducting pre-tests to determine 'where students are at' prior to a unit of learning. Observations and discussions with students were also referred to as a source of data regarding learners' progress.

The ESR panel was left with a clear understanding of the staff members' appreciation of data in 2017. However, conversations during the process and observation of staff meeting did make apparent that, at this point in time, teachers are in the early stages of data management. The panel heard that analysis of individual student data is led by the Principal and decisions regarding conclusions arising from the analysis, whilst made during joint conversations, are influenced by the leader. The panel attended a staff meeting and observed the review of the PAT Reading data generated from a recent assessment. This data had been collated and analysed by the Principal and a recommendation pre-determined. A table was displayed for staff to view, and the Principal led a discussion that synthesized the results and then proposed a subsequent direction for the coming term, to which all staff agreed.

When considering further direction for Ungarra Primary School, the concept of staff transience and itinerant leadership was a constant focus for both parents and staff. The importance of embedding clear, consistent and agreed practices and processes to ensure continued coherence at the school is fully appreciated by the Principal, who is clearly working to do just that. The notion of staff capacity to access, collate and analyse data independently to inform whole-school planning and classroom practice is significant in this intent. Research informs us that when teachers access and diagnose student achievement data actively, it provides a greater understanding of the evidence and, therefore, strengthens alignment with planning. The school is well-placed to develop teachers' data literacy and to build practice in this area.

Direction 4
Ensure planning at the student and whole school levels is strategic and well-informed by building each teacher's capacity to access, collate, analyse and respond to varying data and to plan accordingly.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Ungarra Primary School.

Effective practice in the Effective Leadership aspect of the ESR Framework was evident at the school. The initial pre-review meeting determined *How effectively does the school foster a culture of learning?* as a potential Line of Inquiry. The ESR panel sourced much strong evidence that this aspect of improvement was operating at a high level. A positive and focused approach to change was evident, and the introduction of high-quality curriculum planning and effective teaching clearly understood across the staff and parent community. Systems of Performance and Development and Professional Learning have been strategically designed to build teacher capacity to meet expectations and agreements, and a strong culture of collective action and responsibility was evident. Examples of the leader's educational approach were evident, as she models good practice and teaches alongside colleagues. Achievement, perception and behaviour data all attest to improvement at the school. Governing Council representatives explained that they are less concerned regarding potential changes to staffing as they now have a clear understanding of the direction of the school, and see this as being an agreed and embedded approach. Given the evidence sourced, the ESR panel agreed that continued inquiry into this aspect of the framework would not add further value to the existing practices at the school, and decommissioned the Line of Inquiry. The panel commends and celebrates the work of the leader to bring about this improvement at the school. This evidence was sourced through every aspect of the ESR process.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

At Ungarra Primary School, effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted intervention, and self-review processes are regularly and strategically used to determine the impact school strategies and practices are having on student achievement.

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

1. Allow students to track and understand their growth through the identification of personal learning goals and the provision of formative feedback regarding their progress.

2. Deliver learning opportunities that meet the diverse range of students' needs through contemporary planning that ensures multiple points of access and promotes inquiry, and assessment that allows each student to fully demonstrate their understanding.

3. Develop student agency within the learning agenda through collective inquiry into criteria that make clear the intent of the learning and the provision of scaffolds that allow students to monitor and measure their improvement.

4. Ensure planning at the student and whole-school levels is strategic and well-informed by building each teacher's capacity to access, collate, analyse and respond to varying data and to plan accordingly.

Based on the school's current performance, Ungarra Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Ashleigh Ferguson
PRINCIPAL
UNGARRA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

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

The Principal of Ungarra Primary School has verified that the school compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 2016 was 94.1%.

Appendix Two

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 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 any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Ungarra Primary School from 2012 to 2016 to overcome any anomalies.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2012 and 2016, 41% (11 of 27) of Year 1, and 52% (13 of 25) of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

From 2012 to 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicated that 77% (17 of 22) of Year 3 students and 77% (17 of 22) of Year 5 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. The school has had no Year 7 students enrolled since 2014. However, between 2012 and 2014, 85% (6 of 7) of Year 7 students met SEA in NAPLAN Reading.

Between 2012 and 2016, 41% (9 of 22) Year 3, and 32% (7 of 22) of Year 5 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. Between 2012 and 2014, 29% (2 of 7) of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading Bands.

Between 2012 and 2016, 3 of 4 students remained in the upper tow bands from Year 3 to Year 5 in reading. The 1 student did not remain in the upper two bands from Year 3 to 7 from 2009 to 2016.

Numeracy

From 2012 until 2016 inclusive, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicated that 73% (16 of 22) of Year 3 students and 77% (17 of 22) of Year 5 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. Between 2012 and 2014, 71% (5 of 7) of Year 7 students met SEA in NAPLAN Numeracy.

From 2012 to 2016, 36% (8 of 22) of Year 3, and 18% (4 of 22) of Year 5 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. Between 2012 and 2014, no students achieved in the two higher proficiency bands in numeracy.

Between 2012 and 2016, 2 of 3 students remained in the upper two bands from Year 3 to Year 5 in numeracy.