

# **Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### **Report for Echunga Primary School**

Conducted in March 2020



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## 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 Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Marie Wright, 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
  - Leader
  - Parent representatives
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Echunga Primary School School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 35kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 86. At the time of the previous review enrolment was 79. The local partnership is Heysen.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1040, and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 10% students with disabilities, 2% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no young people in care and 25% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of tenure. There are no other senior leaders.

There are 5 teachers with none in the early years of their career and 1 AST2 teacher.

## The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

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|--------------------|---|
| <b>Direction 1</b> | Improve student learning outcomes by implementing documented whole-school approaches that embed effective pedagogical approaches and improvement reforms within a context of collective action, responsibility and accountability.  |
| <b>Direction 2</b> | Develop a positive culture of improvement by implementing a coherent school-wide approach to professional learning, professional development planning, and evaluation that aligns with the SIP.   |
| <b>Direction 3</b> | Implement structures and processes to engage student voice authentically in school decision-making processes, and embed student influence in teaching and learning, and school improvement planning and evaluation processes.   |
| <b>Direction 4</b> | Build the capacity of staff and students to participate in data discussions, the design of assessment, determining the associated benchmark measures, and establishing success criteria in ways that motivate students, personalise learning and develop expert learners. |
| <b>Direction 5</b> | Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.  |

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

The current principal has been in the position for 3 years and it was evident to the panel that there had been intentional actions to address the previous ESR directions. These include:

- Whole-school literacy agreement including reading, writing, oral language, spelling, and using strategies/resources such as Big 6, explicit teaching of Jolly Phonics, Jolly Grammar R-7 and decodable readers.
- Whole-school participation in problem solving maths strategies, including misconceptions tests at the beginning of each strand.
- Whole-school approach and participation in Visible Learning, including a 3 year commitment to the partnership 'Collaborative Impact Program'.

- Explicit teaching, learning intentions, success criteria, formative assessment and feedback, learner dispositions, talk of student ownership of their own learning and dialogic classrooms.
- Whole-school use of Brightpath program as a tracking tool and indicator for future teaching points.
- Implementation of a whole-school social skills program.
- Aligning professional learning to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities.
- Whole-school commitment to reflective practice by video teaching and analysis with other staff.
- Explicitly teaching and use of the learner dispositions for students to understand and become more responsible for their learning.
- Shared staff meetings with local schools and student free days regarding moderation and task design.
- All staff use learning intentions and success criteria to enable students to understand what they need to do to be successful.

The review panel recognised that some elements of the previous directions are still to be addressed and are to be actioned in conjunction with the strategies identified in the SIP.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

*How well does the school critically evaluate current curricular, pedagogical and assessment practice to determine challenges of practice?*

The review panel recognised that the principal provides high levels of support and guidance for all staff through the SIP. The challenge of practice has a strong connection with research-based information on best practice. Teachers indicated that reference documents on powerful learners, mathematical proficiencies and learning design are regularly provided to use as a guide for all planning. It was evident that curriculum planning is linked to SIP actions and the accountability of curriculum delivery. The teachers recognise that the SIP 'keeps us on track'.

The use of peer observations of teaching practice conducted either by the principal or self-directed by teachers using video was spoken of highly by all staff. The practice of sharing and critiquing their practice by staff is commended. Teachers recognise and understand the impact of quality planning to improve their practice. The next steps are to continue to build teacher capacity through staff meetings and networking with similar schools in considering how to use the expertise of each other to showcase particular strengths.

The school recognises the need to update their current curriculum agreements to address the changing focus for learning with the continuance of the literacy and numeracy approaches and the introduction of the Brightpath writing program. The next steps for the school to undertake are to ensure that curriculum agreements are completed and a commitment to action is undertaken. In this process, it is important to consider what are the most valuable and evidenced-based elements of literacy pedagogy that identifies achievement but also future direction.

The school uses a variety of assessments to monitor student achievement. Data is documented electronically and is used to identify students for intervention. Staff engage in regular formal and informal discussions regarding student achievement and growth. Future considerations include how teachers can further develop their understanding of the achievement data and how it will change their planning. They reflect on how data is used to modify the lessons for students to enhance the 'stretch' in the lesson design.

**Direction 1      Strengthen the focus on improved student learning through furthering the efficacy of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment with the expectation that the SIP challenges of practice and success criteria are sustainable and achieved.**

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The review panel recognised that the collective efficacy of staff through professional conversations and trust was very evident. Staff were able to identify specific learning programs used and the connection they had with the learning progressions across the school. Enthusiasm from the staff in undertaking the Brightpath and the new writing approach that enables children to internalise the language structures needed to write was evident.

Staff recognised the diversity of learners within their class and across the school. This understanding was best summarised by the parents indicating that 'the interconnection between children from preschool to year 7 was strongly evident'. The collective support offered to all students via teacher or SSO staff was acknowledged by the students and parents.

Differentiated teaching processes varied amongst the teachers who use a range of strategies appropriate to the year levels and abilities and include some inquiry-based approaches. Teachers talked about involving students in shared learning, catering to student interests and planning independent work-tasks to cater for specific year level groups. The composite classes offer extension work which was generally in the form of the next year level task.

Formative assessment practices varied amongst teachers with the vast majority using formative tasks to ascertain student knowledge and form ability groups. Learning intentions are often used as part of the introduction to individual lessons with the success criteria complementing the intention. The students interviewed saw the purpose of learning intentions and success criteria as a measurement of what they needed to learn. Staff need to consider how they can build on the work done on learning intentions and success criteria, moving the focus to how the intentionality of learning is reflected in what students can do, say, make or write. They also need to consider how the learning intention and success criteria can be linked to the use of learning goals and goal setting as a form of consolidation of learning for each student.

Feedback strategies varied amongst the teachers with the vast majority providing instant oral feedback or conferencing with students. Some classes involved students in peer feedback assessments. The students would like to see more immediate feedback.

**Direction 2      To meet the learning needs of all students to ensure that teachers consistently plan differentiated teaching opportunities that include the formative assessment processes, with a particular focus on the learning intentions and success criteria that enables students a stronger connection with their learning.**

## CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

### *To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?*

The key strength of the school as described to the review panel can be categorised as a 'connected community that has a focus on the wellbeing and support of the students'. This shared focus is at the forefront of the thinking of all those involved in the school.

As cited by the parent body, the teachers, SSOs and principal are seen as approachable, with an understanding of all students. The understanding and honesty of leadership and staff in what they can provide to support the expectation of learning for individual children is valued by parents, in particular those who have transferred from other schools.

All students interviewed were able to clearly articulate their understanding of the 'learning pit' model and growth-mindset theory. The students understand the connection between the school values and learning dispositions taught and the panel gained the sense that the students know themselves as learners.

The Making a Difference (MaD) student forum is a new initiative that promotes student voice and the students are able to articulate the function of the group. This is seen as a practical strategy to introduce student agency in the learning with future plans to expand this into broader school decision making matters.

The students interviewed acknowledged that the teachers promoted the notion of high expectations in both work and behaviour. When asked about their own personal expectation the vast majority of responses were 'to do your best'. Future steps to consider include building on existing growth mindset and learning pit theory practices to specifically teach the students about stretching themselves and being persistent/resilient at a deeper level.

Students were familiar with the learning intention/criteria process but saw them as a checklist of what needs to be done. The majority of students indicated that the challenge level of the work offered was rated at an average level and most wanted more challenging work. The next steps include strengthening teacher understanding of student agency within the planning process and developing opportunities for students to contribute in the co-design process.

**Direction 3**    **To ensure authentic student influence within their learning and embed teaching practices that involve co-design strategies, learning intentions, goal setting and student feedback as part of regular reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.**

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

At Echunga Primary School the influence of previous ESR directions is evident in the school's improvement. The school is effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement. Teaching practices are positively impacted by effective systems that build capacity. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.

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

- Direction 1**     Strengthen the focus on improved student learning through furthering the efficacy of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment with the expectation that the SIP challenges of practice and success criteria are sustainable and achieved.
- Direction 2**     To meet the learning needs of all students to ensure that teachers consistently plan differentiated teaching opportunities that include the formative assessment processes, with a particular focus on the learning intentions and success criteria that enables students a stronger connection with their learning.
- Direction 3**     To ensure authentic student influence within their learning and embed teaching practices that involve co-design strategies, learning intentions, goal setting and student feedback as part of regular reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.

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



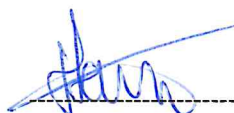
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ECHUNGA PRIMARY SCHOOL



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GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON



# 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).

*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. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Echunga Primary School from 2015- 2019.*

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2015 and 2019, 81% of year 1 and 77% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of year 3 students, 80% of year 5 students and 80% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against SEA.

35% of year 3 students, 30% of year 5 students and 29% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN bands.

### Numeracy

Between 2015 and 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 70% of year 5 students and 80% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

26% of year 3 students, 9% of year 5 students and 20% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN bands.

