

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR WOODSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Conducted in July 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"*

*This External School Review has evaluated:*

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

*The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.*

*This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Katherine Holman, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of Woodside 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:

- Governance Item 4: working with the Governing Council to report, on a regular basis, on the achievement of the student group as a whole. The Principal will investigate the most efficient and effective way to do this and implement this by the end of 2015.
- Governance Item 7: the Principal will develop a Parents Complaints Policy based on the DECD model and endorse it through Governing Council by the end of 2015.
- School Organisation Item 4: the Principal will develop a Bullying and Harassment Policy implementation checklist in order to comply with the Cossey Review. This is to be completed by the end of 2015.
- HR Management Item 3: The Principal will implement the DECD Performance and Development Policy immediately. All staff are to develop performance plans as an integral aspect of this policy.
- HR Management Item 6: the Principal will make staff aware of the latest release of the DECD Code of Ethics by the end of 2015.
- Safety Item 4: The Principal will implement a Volunteer Policy that accords with DECD Guidelines and endorse it through the Governing Council by the end of 2015.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 94.2%, which exceeds the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Woodside Primary School is a metropolitan school with an enrolment of approximately 242 students, catering for students from Reception to Year 7. The enrolment has been relatively stable over the 2010 to 2014 period. The school has an ICSEA score of 1051, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school enjoys a positive reputation within the local community.

The school population includes 3% (6) Students with a Disability, 0.5% (1) Aboriginal student, and approximately 7% (17) of students are eligible for School Card assistance.

The leadership consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal and a Reading Support Teacher. The leadership team have been working together for many years at the school.

### Lines of inquiry

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

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?</b>
<b>Effective Leadership:</b>	<b>How effectively does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?</b>

### How well are students achieving over time?

Analysis of reading achievement (based on Running Records) through Years 1 and 2, from 2011 to 2014, indicates that an average of 85% of Year 1 students achieved the expected DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA), and at Year 2, 94% achieved the SEA. Assuming that a high proportion of students move from Year 1 to 2 at the school, the data indicates an increase of 13% achieving the SEA from 2011 to 2012 (from 81% to 93%), an 8% increase from 2012 to 2013 (from 86% to 94%) and an 11% increase from 2013 to 2014 (from 86% to 97%).

The reading achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), shows an average of 86% of Year 3, 85% of Year 5 and 88% of Year 7 students at the SEA. The Year 3 achievement at SEA shows an improvement trend over the past three years from 78% (2012) to 97% (2014). The Year 5 data shows an increase in achievement from 75% (2011) to 96% (2013) and then a slight drop to 86% in 2014. The Year 7 cohort shows some slight decline in achievement from 96% (2011) to 82% (2013) and then a rise back to 93% at SEA.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher reading bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last 7 years, there was, on average, 47% at Year 3, 28% at Year 5 and 30% at Year 7 in the top two bands. It is important to note that 70% of the Year 3 students achieved in the top two bands in reading in 2014. For those students who achieve in the top two bands in reading at Year 3, an average of 58% of the tracked students remain in the upper two bands through to Year 7.

The school should be commended for the proportion of students who achieved at the SEA in reading over time and for the 2014 Year 3 result in the upper two bands (as measured by NAPLAN) as evidenced above.

The numeracy achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), shows an average of 85% of Year 3, 78% of Year 5 and 82% of Year 7 students at the SEA. The following two observations were made from the data and confirmed with the Principal and in school documentation. Firstly, there is a small but noticeable improvement trend in Year 3 students achieving the standard from 2010 to 2014. Secondly, the Year 5 numeracy results show decline in percentages at SEA over the same period of time. Year 7 percentages in numeracy achievement remain relatively constant over time.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher numeracy bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last seven years, there was, on average, 37% at Year 3, 18% at Year 5 and 21% at Year 7. For those tracked students who achieved in the top two bands in numeracy at Year 3, approximately half of them were retained in these bands through to Year 7.

The challenge for the school is to raise the achievement rates in numeracy, particularly through to Year 5, and retain students in the upper two bands for reading and numeracy as they progress through school.

### Direction 1

**Improve numeracy achievement and retention in upper bands across the school through the consistent implementation of agreed evidence-based pedagogical approaches in numeracy teaching.**

The Principal's presentation to the Review Panel cited a number of aspects that the panel considered important to the scope of the external review. These include: data analysis is undertaken by the leadership team and the synthesis is presented to staff with identified aspects for improvement. For example, the focus on 'sophistication' in writing and the need for a mathematical focus emerged from the Principal's analysis of student difficulty with 'fluency plus' style questions. He also noted students' difficulty in responding to worded problems and questions that require problem-solving in the NAPLAN data, and confirmed this through the professional judgement of staff.

The Principal also spoke about initiatives that had been introduced inclusive of numeracy, explicit teaching through the use of success criteria, formative assessment, teacher observations and student-led interviews in the Upper Primary years. The strategic decision about why specific teaching strategies are implemented was encapsulated in this statement from the Principal: "I am keen to focus on those who don't appear particularly engaged or challenged with their learning. In this group are those who are very capable, mostly are well-behaved, but 'coast' and need to be 'stretched'."

As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel pursued the following lines of inquiry.

### **How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

The teachers have engaged with a number of consultants to explore evidence-based teaching strategies to raise student engagement and outcomes in both literacy and numeracy learning, as described in the Australian Curriculum (AC). The Principal has provided the data analysis for staff and has identified aspects of writing, vocabulary development, fractions and problem-solving in Maths as key areas for improvement. As a result of professional learning, teachers are beginning to implement classroom practices such as '7 Steps to Writing', the first step being a 'sizzling start', formative assessment with students, and making the learning intentions clear for students. Many of these strategies are in the early phases of development. Students verified their understanding of the 'sizzling start' and formative assessment approaches used in writing.

Teaching staff discuss strategies, develop a common understanding of what aspects to trial in classrooms and then share their implementation within the staff Teacher Learning Communities (TLC) to further refine their practices. Some staff recently began to observe each other in the implementation phase of these teaching practices. The Principal described a level of nervousness by staff in having others observe them in their work. He described this as 'small steps' towards more open and deprivatised classrooms. It would be beneficial to expand the opportunities for staff to watch each other work for the purpose of giving and receiving feedback about the effectiveness of the agreed strategies being trialled, and to achieve consistency in pedagogical approaches used across the school.

### **Direction 2**

**Develop a whole-school approach to having teachers observe colleagues in implementing and sharing the agreed evidence-based pedagogical practices to student achievement and growth in learning from Reception to Year 7.**

Members of the leadership team spoke of building the resilience of learners by teachers asking deeper questions of them. An example of the type of questions mentioned by one of the leaders as being used in classrooms included: "Show me your thinking in working through this problem." This was evidenced during a classroom observation when a teacher asked a student to present the answer using a 'mathematical term'. In another classroom observation a teacher asked a student to: "Show me another way of doing that mathematically." The leadership team did confirm that they were "noticing more children sharing their thinking."

When asked about how they are challenged in their learning, the students replied that they get harder things to do, particularly in maths and spelling. Others replied that they get 'more sheets' to complete. Other sophisticated answers from the students included: "We work with other people who help you generate ideas"; "My teacher says 'I'll give you a challenge'." In one classroom, the Review Panel noted an

extension activity called the 'Sting in the Tail' which provided extra challenge to a maths concept being taught. Parents presented an understanding and acceptance that students were not rushed through reading levels but, rather, given broader reading experiences to expand their interest and skill. Upper Primary teachers commented about setting more open-ended tasks and offering more choice in integrated studies to extend students in the higher learning bands. Students confirmed a need for more negotiated choice to engage them further with this work.

One of the strategies the Principal had indicated the Review Panel would observe in classes was making learning intentions and success criteria clear for all students. Interestingly, the strategic intent to impact this change across the school was not documented in either the 2014 or 2015 Site Improvement Plan (SIP). The Review Panel did not see consistent evidence of this approach as a strategy used across the classes visited. However, the students did confirm that "the teachers seem to explain it better to you." Students also confirmed success criteria was provided to them and that they were encouraged to ask questions and explain tasks to peers. Student comment and some classroom observations verified these approaches being used successfully in classes. Observations and student comment also verified the use of 'wait' time, use of 'coloured cups' and teacher questioning to determine levels of student understanding and readiness to complete the tasks.

Exemplars of learning intentions and success criteria were provided to the Review Panel in later staff discussions. There were many and varied approaches used dependent on year level, type of integrated study unit and assessment strategies used. One assessment rubric presented to the Review Panel provided all students with an opportunity to demonstrate an 'A' in their learning. As one student confirmed: "Rubrics explain what you need to do to get an A or a B." This is an area for further development by the staff to enable students to 'strive' for high expectations with their learning. As stated by the Principal: "We want to let the kids in on the secret." The students, parents and staff verified the use of A-E standards against the Australian Curriculum subjects to report student learning.

Students and parents confirmed that rubrics were used in assessment in some classes. They understood that they provide good detail on how to improve. Students also verified the use of peer assessment, testing and written teacher comments and SSO oral comments in knowing how to improve. Students commented positively about getting more than one opportunity to draft writing and getting feedback on drafts. Others talked about '5 Star' quality work and doing the thinking and preparation for the learning, rather than just 'completing the work first'.

### **Direction 3**

**Improve student achievement and growth by making the learning intentions clear for all students and collaboratively designing the learning tasks and assessment criteria to enable all students to strive for personal best.**

#### **How effectively does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?**

The leadership team and staff identified a number of evidence-based teaching practices to improve literacy and numeracy learning, and other areas of the Australian Curriculum. The current 2015 SIP describes twenty strategies to implement across the school in literacy and numeracy. Staff provided input on the SIP at the start of the year and chose to select, trial, reflect and review a reduced number of effective teaching practices to an agreed embedded stage across the school. As one staff member commented: "We realise we need to go deeper and not skim over the top." Governing Council members verified that they saw and discussed the 2015 SIP at a meeting earlier in the 2015 school year.

Agreements reached about the explicitness of the strategies to be implemented are documented in meeting minutes. Whole-school agreements about the curriculum and pedagogical expectations for the school should be clearly documented to create clarity and consistency about what is 'valued' at Woodside Primary School. These agreements should be used to support the delivery of a connected program and as a reference point for professional accountability across the staff team.

The implementation of agreed approaches is supported by a professional learning program that is planned for staff. Where possible, the leadership team attempts to get all staff together to participate in professional learning. Opportunities are provided for staff to discuss, share, trial and report on progress made with implementation of the agreed strategies through TLC. Performance feedback to staff with respect to their professional capabilities, and progress in implementing agreed improvements to teaching practice, was relatively informal. In supporting whole-school improvement, particularly as it relates to improved pedagogical practices, the leadership team need to provide consistent instructional leadership through a formal performance and development structure, inclusive of classroom observations and written feedback with respect to the agreed practices to be implemented consistently.

#### **Direction 4**

**Provide regular, ongoing and focused performance and development opportunities for staff to support the successful and consistent implementation of agreed, documented teaching practices and curriculum priorities across the school.**

Monitoring and tracking of student progress through Running Records, PROBE, NAPLAN and PAT-R, PAT-M (2015 only) data as well as teacher assessments, is undertaken by both school leaders and the Reading Support Teacher. Teachers undertake Running Record assessments to Year 3 each term to track improvement. Further monitoring occurs beyond Year 3, if required. The Reading Support Teacher and Deputy Principal connect with 'a fantastic group' of SSO staff to provide targeted support for students. Class data sets are provided to teachers at the start of each year on a school-generated spreadsheet, principally to support class programming, planning and grouping.

Negotiated Education Plans (colloquially known as 'OnePlans') are monitored for the 9 students verified with learning needs. Learning intentions are developed by class teachers and broken down for these students and others who present with learning difficulties, as evidenced in documentation provided to the Review Panel. The SSO team implements the support programs under the direction of teachers and Reading Support Teacher. The intervention is provided both inside and outside the classroom.

Parents described differences in approaches to the teaching of reading and 'play-based' learning across the early years of schooling. They have also noticed the different approaches used in maths but have not yet understood the reasoning behind these changes. Parents and Governing Council members did verify that previously they have had information provided about changes to the Australian Curriculum, cyber-bullying and reading through parent workshops, newsletters and term overviews from teachers.

Student-led conferences in Upper Primary classes were introduced to support a culture of high expectation with older students. While parents understood the rationale of developing student responsibility with their learning, it did not meet the parent expectations for reporting about their child's progress. This latter initiative was not on the SIP as a deliberate strategic change to raise responsibility and accountability for learning with older students.

#### **Direction 5**

**Strategically connect the analysis of the learning data, strategies identified in the SIP and the ongoing review and reporting of evidence of improvement. Communicate the approaches and progress made to all stakeholders to foster community understanding and support for the changes being implemented.**

The school is monitoring the learning data well. The use of other data is equally important in determining the effectiveness of changes being implemented to positively impact on student outcomes. For example, staff and student perceptions about 'what is working' and 'what is making a difference' to student engagement and achievement should be harvested in an ongoing manner. The staff use TLC forums to share, examine and discuss their professional work in line with the improvement agenda. This presents an opportunity to reflect, refine and embed approaches, verified through multiple measures, which are raising engagement, growth and achievement. The learning data (school and classroom-based) will serve as confirmation of improvement. It was verified that NAPLAN data is presented and discussed at the

Governing Council. Other data and evidence should also be presented to the Governing Council and community to validate the improvements being made.

**Direction 6**

**Monitor and review the implementation of the improvement agenda as described in the Site Improvement Plan in an ongoing and rigorous manner. Use multiple measures of data to make collaborative decisions and documented agreements about the effective teaching strategies to be implemented across the school and report these to all stakeholders.**

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Woodside Primary School is performing well. It is demonstrating growth in student achievement over time. The school maintains high expectations for its students and articulates this in the school's stated values. Teachers are provided with structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning in relation to curriculum and pedagogical improvement. The pedagogical changes reflect the DECD Teaching for Effective Learning Framework. There is a sound working relationship with the Governing Council of the school.

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

1. Improve numeracy achievement and retention in upper bands across the school through the consistent implementation of agreed evidence-based pedagogical approaches in numeracy teaching.
2. Develop a whole-school approach to having teachers observe colleagues in implementing and sharing the agreed evidence-based pedagogical practices to student achievement and growth in learning from Reception to Year 7.
3. Improve student achievement and growth by making the learning intentions clear for all students and collaboratively designing the learning tasks and assessment criteria to enable all students to strive for personal best.
4. Provide regular, ongoing and focused performance and development opportunities for staff to support the successful and consistent implementation of agreed, documented teaching practices and curriculum priorities across the school.
5. Strategically connect the analysis of the learning data, strategies identified in the SIP and the ongoing review and reporting of evidence of improvement. Communicate the approaches and progress made to all stakeholders to foster community understanding and support for the changes being implemented.
6. Monitor and review the implementation of the improvement agenda as described in the Site Improvement Plan in an ongoing and rigorous manner. Use multiple measures of data to make collaborative decisions and documented agreements about the effective teaching strategies to be implemented across the school and report these to all stakeholders.

Based on the school's current performance, Woodside Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT

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.

John Balnaves  
PRINCIPAL  
WOODSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson