

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Woodside Primary School

Conducted in March 2019



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 Phil Garner Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Marie-Louise Adams Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Woodside Primary School, Woodside has an enrolment of 283 students and has been increasing steadily. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 242.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1051 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 7% students with disabilities, 1% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) and 9% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in his 3rd year of his tenure and a deputy principal.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Direction 5** Strategically connect the analysis of the learning data, strategies identified in the site improvement plan (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.
- Direction 6** Monitor and review the implementation of the improvement agenda as described in the SIP 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.

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

The appointment of a new principal in 2017 has led to increased engagement with the previous ESR directions. These continue to be a focus for the school with high yield evidence-based strategies included in the SIP. The analysis of student data has become more sophisticated over time with teachers indicating increased understanding of the importance of using student data to inform the teaching and learning process. As a result of a strategic focus on problem solving and fluency in mathematics, improvement in both SEA and the higher bands in NAPLAN has been achieved by years 5 and 7 students, however continues to remain a focus for years two and three.

Effective pedagogical practices that improve student learning continue to be developed and enhanced across the school. While there was evidence of some teachers using high impact strategies that engage and challenge students effectively, they are not widely implemented across the school at this stage. This will need to be a continued focus for the school during the next review cycle.

The development of professional learning communities and a collaborative team approach to planning is leading to greater deprivatisation of teaching and learning.

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 school has developed a collaborative consultation process to deeply analyse student assessment data and evaluate current practices across the school with staff and the governing council being active participants in the process. Staff commented on the positive way in which the school has worked together to analyse and identify the areas for improvement, an example being the evaluation and review of writing across the school. The teacher self-reflection process and blind moderation of writing samples allowed the school to identify specific areas of focus and strategically design the actions for improvement and the setting of realistic achievement targets.

With the identified goals focused on reading, writing and numeracy, specialist teachers have indicated their need to focus on making relevant learning connections to the challenges of practice to ensure a whole-school focus on continuous student improvement.

Staff indicated that high levels of consultation have enabled them to have greater ownership of the school's self-review cycle and the future direction of the school. Professional learning communities have been enhanced with the focus on the challenges of practice and the continued analysis of curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices. Due to the time constraints in developing the SIP, student involvement was not possible, however as the self-review cycle evolves, opportunities for student consultation will need to be considered.

The key actions identified by the school to achieve the challenges of practice will require a collective consistency of approach, continued professional collaboration and collective ownership and accountability. The school is now in a position to drive the improvement agenda forward and improve achievement and equity for all students.

Direction 1 Collaboratively develop and implement whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements that reflect current research-based curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices and the school's identified challenges of practice.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The school has collaboratively developed a whole-school approach to teaching fluency and problem solving in numeracy with students in the upper primary reporting the learning tasks in maths to be engaging and challenging. With these classes adopting a flexible learning approach to the teaching and learning, students have greater opportunity to collaborate together, taking greater ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Evidenced in class visits and in discussions with teachers, the challenge and engagement provided

in other curriculum areas is not as evident as in maths, particularly for high achieving students where they reported too much repetition of work from the previous year and not enough new learning.

There is evidence from classroom visits of an over-reliance on commercial worksheets across the school, with students the review team spoke with indicating this to be less than challenging. Students indicated that they would like more agency in their learning, less worksheets and more hands-on learning.

Providing students with the learning intentions and success criteria is not common practice across the school. Those teachers who do use them, do so subtly, verbally and inconsistently. Students believe that effective learning is all about being on task, finishing the work, behaving in class and working hard. Students added that they would welcome an understanding of their next steps in learning so they could focus their efforts on improving their achievement.

The evidence gathered indicates the need for teachers to have a greater understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning. There are too many missed opportunities to engage and challenge students. The deep analysis of student data used by the school to identify the challenges of practice now need to be replicated in the deep analysis of curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices to ensure effective learning design, differentiation of the learning, challenge and engagement.

Direction 2 Collaboratively develop and implement a consistent whole-school approach to effective learning design, with a focus on learning intentions, developing success criteria and identifying the next steps in learning.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP – STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

How well does the school's strategic leadership support and sustain a culture of learning and improvement?

The new SIP has galvanised the community on the journey of improvement bringing relevancy and transparency to the process of school improvement. The professional learning and performance development plans are now closely linked to the SIP and enable staff to focus clearly and strategically on the challenges of practice, the actions and the improvement cycle of the school. It is important that the focus goals are specific, achievable and in line with the actions and strategies that have been identified through the SIP process, and are reviewed regularly.

The review team evidenced the need for the school to review and develop critical policies, procedures and agreements, to ensure consistency of practice, equity for all staff and students and to maintain the strategic focus on student achievement. These documents include literacy and numeracy whole-school agreements, behaviour management procedures and decision making policies.

The leadership team are very experienced and diverse leaders who have cultured a significant amount of positive change in the school over a short period of time. Teachers and the community are supportive of these initiatives that are clearly enhancing the professional learning opportunities for staff, developing consistency across the school and promoting a focus on improving student achievement. The leadership team is now in a prime position to work collaboratively in leading and supporting the school community through the development of a collective vision and strategic consolidation of these initiatives. This will ensure clarity and commitment by everyone to the school's improvement journey.

Direction 3 Develop a shared vision for the school's improvement journey and consolidate and embed recently introduced educational initiatives to ensure complete ownership and commitment from the school community.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Woodside Primary School is seen by the community as a welcoming and supportive school that provides a wide range of learning opportunities for students in its care. The school has recently invested in a range of engaging learning environments such as the nature trail and kitchen garden and the flexible teaching and learning focus in years 6 and 7 that have captured the imagination of the school community.

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

- Direction 1** Collaboratively develop and implement whole school literacy and numeracy agreements that reflect current research-based curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices and the school's identified challenges of practice.
- Direction 2** Collaboratively develop and implement a consistent whole school approach to effective learning design with a focus on learning intentions, developing success criteria and identifying the next steps in learning.
- Direction 3** Develop a shared vision for the school's improvement journey and consolidate and embed recently introduced educational initiatives to ensure complete ownership and commitment from the school community.

Based on the school's current performance, Woodside Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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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 2018, 86% of year 1 and 81% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018 the trend for year 2 has been downwards, from 96% to 81% respectively.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 91% of year 5 students and 88% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline and for years 5 and 7, little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within and for year 5 students, higher than, the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 51% of year 3, 39% of year 5 and 31% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 58% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and 53% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 94% of year 5 students and 92% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline and for year 5 and 7, an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within and for year 5 above, the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 28% of year 3, 30% of year 5 and 23% 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.

Between 2016 and 2018 the trend for year 3 has been downwards from 47% to 28% respectively and for year 5, upwards, from 15% to 30% respectively.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 53% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 46% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.