Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Pennington School R-7

Conducted in June 2021

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 Sue Mittiga, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Ken Randall, 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
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers.

School context

Pennington School R-7 caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 13kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 277. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 355. The local partnership is Inner West.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 955 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 15% Aboriginal students, 7% students with disabilities, 61% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% children/young people in care and 69% of students eligible for School Card assistance. The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 2nd year of their second tenure, a Deputy Principal, a student wellbeing leader and an IELC (Intensive English Language Class) leader.

There are 19 teachers, including 4 in the early years of their career and 6 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **Deepen the intellectual stretch and quality of all learning through the application of a range of pedagogies that enable all students continual access to a challenging and engaging curriculum that is sustained over time.**

Direction 2   **Extend learning design for explicit teaching across the curriculum to increase the percentage of students achieving the SEA and in the higher proficiency bands, as measured by NAPLAN.**

Direction 3   **Extend, at the classroom level, the use of an evidence-base to inform structures and processes for the management of student behaviour to increase and sustain high academic expectations and a culture of improvement.**

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

Direction 1: Staff engaged in extensive professional development to deepen their conceptual understanding in numeracy and literacy. A scope and sequence in mathematics, with an explicit yearly overview, was developed. This ensured coherent practice is implemented across all classrooms. There is whole school consistency in the teaching of writing and reading with an evidence-based writing program being delivered reception to year two, and all teachers implementing cyclic learning sprint processes that are transferring new learning into classroom practice.

Direction 2: Deep analysis of school reading data challenged the teaching practices that existed at the school. Leadership and staff engaged in current research and professional development, resulting in changes to the teaching of reading. Language comprehension, vocabulary development and word knowledge are explicitly taught.

Teachers are implementing a sequenced approach to learning guided by the principles of explicit teaching. Differentiated tasks with multiple entry and exit points are designed to ensure all students are accessing the curriculum.

Direction 3: The 'OFF to a Great Start Program' developed by staff outlines the framework to provide safe, supportive classroom environments that improve learner achievement and support student emotional

regulation. Staff have positive behaviour support guidelines that are consistently implemented to ensure learning opportunities are maximised.

The school has comprehensive attendance tracking and support procedures in place and works in collaboration with external service providers to support students and families in need.

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?

Self-review and evaluation focusses on what the school has learnt and how, over time, improvement actions and strategies have influenced sustained change in teaching practice. Pennington School R-7 has effective cyclic review and evaluation processes that have resulted in changes to teaching practice, with positive impact on student learning outcomes. The deep analysis of student achievement data challenged staff to review their practice, engage with current research and professional development, and trial new models of teaching reading.

An ongoing cycle of learning sprints, with a clear line of sight to the school improvement plan's (SIP's) challenge of practice, is driving change to classroom practice. The direction of learning sprints is informed by current research and evidenced-based texts. Professional learning teams led by peer teachers, meet weekly to critically analyse an evidence-based reading comprehension text and evaluate the effectiveness of classroom pedagogical changes. Pre and post test data is collected and analysed to determine the impact on student learning and inform the next steps in teaching and learning. The outcomes of the sprint processes are reflected on, shared with all staff and, if successful, adopted. This is resulting in the consistent teaching of explicit reading strategies that are improving Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) results. The school is well-positioned to further embed and consolidate current review and evaluation processes to ensure ongoing consistency of practice.

An integral step in the school's improvement planning cycle is the review and reset day. Multiple measures of data, including whole-school data and individual student achievement data, are analysed by staff and the effectiveness of SIP actions and success criteria are reviewed. School improvement plan actions have embedded practices that influence student achievement in reading and writing across SEA and lower bands. There is an opportunity to further reflect on student achievement data to determine the actions that will stretch students into higher-band achievement.

Direction 1 **To further refine data analysis and improvement strategies to maximise the impact on student learning through a focus on high-band students.**

Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

Authentic student voice involves students collaboratively planning and making decisions about their learning. Becoming partners in their own learning can strengthen students' meta-cognitive skills helping them assess, monitor and regulate their learning.

Students understand and can confidently describe, using technical language, what they are learning and the strategies they are implementing. This is particularly evident in literacy and numeracy. With intentionality, teachers explicitly teach the use of meta-language reception to year seven, building on the technical language components of curriculum each year.

The use of learning intentions and success criteria, WALT and WILT (We Are Learning To, What I'm Looking For) is an embedded practice across the school. They are displayed in every classroom to describe the intent and outcomes of the learning. Learning Intentions and success criteria are discussed and referred to during the lesson and in reflection time at the conclusion of the lesson. A group of year 4/5 students described how success criteria were used as a reflective tool to provide feedback on their learning. They rated how well they met the success criteria using a scale, including novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert.

Students have limited opportunities to make decisions about their learning and to provide staff with feedback. Teachers recognise that this is an area for further development. Some primary students participated in a Partnership program, analysing the school PAT (question analysis) data. Students shared deep insights with staff about year level cohort learning achievement, identifying questions that were performed well and areas that teachers will need to teach, and students will need to learn.

The school is well-positioned to further embed a common language for learning to assist students with analysing their learning data, monitoring, and assessing their own learning and giving staff feedback about their learning. Planned opportunities for students to become authentic partners in learning, will further strengthen their metacognitive strategies and build their motivation to learn.

Direction 2   **To engage students to become powerful partners in their own learning through involving them in collaborative planning and decision-making about their learning.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Pedagogy is the science and craft of teaching. How teachers teach is critical to student engagement in learning and their achievement. Pennington School R-7 has a strong culture of improvement and learning. Staff are committed to improving their practice through engaging with research and professional development and are coherently implementing evidence-based pedagogical practices across all classrooms. One example is Read, Write Inc, a reading and phonics program that is positively impacting on student language acquisition and achievement. This program is rigorously implemented daily across the junior primary.

Staff have consistent pedagogical practices based on the model of explicit teaching. Implementation of the gradual release of responsibility (we do, you do, I do) model that sequences lesson instruction is observable in all classrooms. Differentiation is evident with student tasks incorporating multiple entry and exit points. The explicit teaching of vocabulary is a consistent practice. Student writing shows evidence of tier 1-3 vocabulary in a range of genres. 'Word walls' and 'anchor' charts are evident in classrooms and are referred to and used by both staff and students.

Individual student learning goal use is limited. There is an opportunity to develop goals and targets with students where their progress is reviewed as a continual process, and where they are supported to develop the steps they will need to take to accomplish their goals. The year 6/7 students reported that they set some learning goals from pre-tests and checked their progress against the post-test. There is an opportunity to build on this process and extend it across the school. Staff are well-positioned to develop processes with students to take ownership of their own learning data and use it to determine individual learning goals.

Pedagogical practices modelled by staff have a high impact on learning, including setting clear learning intentions and success criteria and modelling explicit learning strategies. There is opportunity to further evolve effective pedagogical practices by giving students opportunities to apply their learning in authentic contexts that will challenge all students for continuous improvement including high-band students.

Direction 3   **To embed strategies that will enable all students to develop learning goals and targets that are reviewed and monitored as a continual process.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Pennington School R-7 is a diverse school community where the culture is underpinned by student wellbeing for learning. The school is held in high regard by parents, students and staff for its strong educational programs and the caring and support it provides to students and their families. The school has a strong culture of improvement. Leadership and staff are committed to improving their practice, engaging in professional development and implementing evidenced-based practices coherently across the school to enhance student learning outcomes.

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

Direction 1   **To further refine data analysis and improvement strategies to maximise the impact on student learning through a focus on high-band students.**

Direction 2   **To engage students to become powerful partners in their own learning through involving them in collaborative planning and decision-making about their learning.**

Direction 3   **To embed strategies that will enable all students to develop learning goals and targets that are reviewed and monitored as a continual process.**

Based on the school's current performance, Pennington School R-7 will be externally reviewed again in 2024.

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Georgina Grinsted
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Pennington School R-7

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).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2020, 44% of year 1 and 33% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 58% of year 3 students, 47% of year 5 students and 67% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement for year 5, little or no change, and for year 7, an improvement from historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 49% to 67%.

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

In 2019, 19% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 19% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 17% to 19%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 67%, or 4 out of 6 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 50%, or 2 out of 4 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 61% of year 3 students, 38% of year 5 students and 56% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, for year 5 a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 40% to 61%.

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

In 2019, 27% of year 3, 6% of year 5 and 4% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 5 this result represents little or no change, and for year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 3% to 27%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 1 out of 1 student from year 3, remains in the upper bands at year 5, and 50%, or 1 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.