

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Renmark North School

Conducted in August 2020



# 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 Simon Harding, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Thomas Harvey, 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
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Renmark North School caters for students from preschool to year 7. It is situated 260kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 122. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 156. The local partnership is Renmark and Loxton.

The school has an ICSEA score of 959, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, 17% students with disabilities, 34% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children in care and 40% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

Students with disabilities increased from 6% in 2017 to 17% currently, with several students waiting for assessment.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of tenure, a B-1 Leader in student wellbeing and the partnership Senior Leader Learning Improvement Primary (Teaching and Learning Impact Coach) is based at the school.

There are 9 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and no Step 9 teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1**    **Prioritise whole-staff professional learning that has a strategic focus on areas that will provide the greatest leverage to embed consistent pedagogy and application across the school.**
- Direction 2**    **Extend the collegial conversations across the site to develop student voice for learning, through involvement in learning intentions, transformational tasks and success criteria that promote higher-order thinking to increase levels of intellectual stretch.**
- Direction 3**    **Engage the governing council and the parent community in refining and improving current communication channels, particularly in regards to student learning outcomes.**

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

Staff and leadership shared a range of strategies the school has implemented and the impact these had on practice in relation to the previous directions. Professional learning is aligned to school priorities and linked to targeted learning across the partnership. This included the Visible Learning focus over 3 years. Expectations were set by leadership. Staff and students often talk about using learning intentions and success criteria and how this assists student learning.

The mini impact cycles where professional learning communities (PLCs) of like year levels meet regularly with the impact coach, focus on achievement data and collaborative planning. These helped teachers develop shared skills and knowledge in these groups. PLCs strengthened conversations between teachers and supported new staff and early career teachers with school expectations.

Focus on learning dispositions is strong, as evident in both teacher and student conversations. These are developed collectively and celebrated through school awards. Opportunities to share progress and school activities through electronic media, student portfolios sent home twice a term, and defining roles within the leadership team with focus on school publicity, were created and strengthened.

## 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?

Site improvement plan (SIP) priorities are based on a range of data. The plan provides clear and narrow direction, and actions aligned to the challenges of practice are evidence-based, with resourcing in place to advance implementation. Primarily, the leadership team was responsible for developing and monitoring plan implementation over time. Teachers fed back evaluations of effectiveness of actions they have taken. Professional meetings are linked to site priorities and teachers are expected to bring evidence of their progress to discuss as part of these meetings. Staff wish to be involved in developing and monitoring of the SIP, as they understand they are ultimately responsible for implementing the planned actions, which are aligned to their challenges of practice. Governing council believe the school is offering information about the SIP through updates at meetings.

PLCs supporting staff with ongoing professional learning, and opportunity (through release time) to collaboratively plan with their team, is powerful and valued by staff. The new model provides increased time, and made a significant difference to the effectiveness of this process. Developing a process to measure the impact of this enhancement is an important next step. Documented whole-school agreements in literacy and numeracy give direction for new and early career staff. Ensuring the work of each PLC is shared with all staff will continue to build common understandings and approaches across the school. Ongoing support by the impact coach to lead regular discussions with PLCs is valuable, and helped staff focus on the needs of students linked to priority areas. Clarity about individual roles and responsibilities, and linking plans of action and challenges of practice, will contribute to effective implementation, review and evaluation at each stage of the process, while building the collective capacity and ownership of the plan by staff.

**Direction 1      Strengthen staff capacity to collectively develop and critically evaluate progress of the challenges of practice through developing effective practices to build common understandings and commitment to change.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

The school has processes in place to track, monitor and analyse student achievement data. Analysis of data is increasingly informing staff discussions and decisions about improvement at a school level.

Leadership provide significant assistance through collated data at the beginning of each year. Staff use this initially then keep their own data collation throughout the year. There is some use of a data wall, which encourages discussion in the mini impact cycles, focusing on the reading priority. Professional meetings with teachers have some focus on student data, for discussions about implications for effective, targeted planning to support learning. Teachers are working with an agreed assessment schedule, and employ a range of strategies for assessment of student learning, including both formative and summative. They shared how data is managed to inform their teaching at a class level, for example, finding collective gaps in learning and making target groups. While good practice is acknowledged, data is not yet handled consistently at an individual level, to effectively inform differentiated planning and instruction across the school.

Students understand that effective feedback helps their learning, and some give feedback to their peers and have scaffolds to support them. Through Visible Learning training, teachers continue to evaluate their practice in providing feedback to students, working towards it being more targeted and regular. They shared that feedback is offered verbally and in writing. Some students were asked to provide feedback for the teacher – to ‘make the learning better’. Student responses varied when asked about strategies they implement to improve; they were not always clear about their next steps in learning. Presenting students with clear feedback about their performance can be powerful to work towards taking more responsibility for constructing goals in conjunction with their teacher.

**Direction 2     Strengthen capacity of staff to provide effective evidence-based feedback for students ensuring they are clear about their current achievement and to inform their next steps in learning.**

## Conditions for effective student learning

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

Staff are genuinely interested in students, are committed to the school and the improvement journey. They work towards making sure students are ready for learning each day, through a commonly agreed approach to 'circle time'. Strategies in place for reflection and evaluation of current practices to effectively meet the needs of students include:

- release time for PLCs and Learning Design Assessment and Moderation work with other partnership schools
- common non-instruction times
- teachers undertaking peer observations, and
- collaborative planning.

Sharing PLC/team work across all staff will increase understanding and adoption of common approaches across the school. Recently, leadership conducted class walkthroughs, talking with students about their learning and providing written feedback to teachers. Staff assistance includes mentoring the early career teachers, and training towards the implementation of expected learning approaches. Milestones and learning achievements are recognised through collectively developed learning dispositions, and students are clearly connected to how these support them in their learning.

Parents are given clear information about their children's progress formally, including learning portfolios, reports and interviews. Using electronic media for information was beneficial, but more consistency in implementation was recommended by parents.

Teachers value regular PLC meetings with colleagues and leadership, which give them clarity about learning needs of the children, encouraging them to use data more effectively for intentional teaching. Established structures to strengthen collaborative practices, common understandings and approaches to differentiate learning, aligned to individual student achievement data, will support each child with appropriate challenge in their learning.

**Direction 3    Strengthen the culture of high expectations through developing and maintaining processes which support the effective implementation of commonly agreed, high-yield differentiated learning practices.**



# Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

There is a commitment to maintaining a community culture across the school. Students value their teachers and are proud of their school. Teachers encourage students to be the best learner they can be. Dispositions to learning are collectively owned by students and staff, and visible in processes used by the school to support learning.

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

- Direction 1**    **Strengthen staff capacity to collectively develop and critically evaluate progress of the challenges of practice through developing effective practices to build common understandings and commitment to change.**
- Direction 2**    **Strengthen capacity of staff to provide effective evidence-based feedback for students ensuring they are clear about their current achievement and to inform their next steps in learning.**
- Direction 3**    **Strengthen the culture of high expectations through developing and maintaining processes which support the effective implementation of commonly agreed, high-yield differentiated learning practices.**

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



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GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON  
EMMA MULLIN



# 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 2019, 56% of year 1 and 59% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and a decline for year 2 from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 2 has been downwards, from 64% to 59%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 81% of year 5 students and 79% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 8% of year 3, 13% of year 5 and 21% 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. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for years 3 and 5 has been downwards from 17% to 8% and from 33% to 13%, respectively. For year 7, the trend has been upwards from 5% to 21%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 25%, or 1 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 67%, or 4 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 63% of year 5 students and 68% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 25% of year 3, no year 5 and 16% 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. Since 2018, the percentage for year 5 has remained at 0%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, none of 2 students from year 3 remained in the upper bands at year 5, and 75%, or 3 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

