

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

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Report for Bridgewater Primary School

Conducted in September 2017



**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 framework underpinning the External School Review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.*

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

*This Report of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. While, not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this Report.*

*The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.*

*This External School Review was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Paul Harmer, Review Principal.*

## School context

Bridgewater Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 21kms south-east of Adelaide in the suburb of Bridgewater. The school has a current enrolment of 202 students showing a steady decline. The school has an ICSEA score of 1113, and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5 (2%) Aboriginal students, 8 (3%) students with disabilities, 245 (33%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1 child in care, and 12% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her fifth year of tenure and 2 Senior Leaders. There are 11.2FTE teachers (16 people), and 6 School Services Officers (SSO) personnel working in Administration, classroom support and as specialist areas (Artist in Residence, Literacy and Mathematics support).

## Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

**Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent has a coherent approach to curriculum been developed?

**Improvement Agenda:** To what extent do teachers use data and information to inform their planning and instruction?

## To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Bridgewater Primary School has a strong sense of community. In conversation with both parents and staff, the Review Panel heard about the collaboration and mutual respect between the school and families. The Review Panel met with 3 parents who represented the Governing Council and general parent body. The parents commented on the strong sense of belonging in the school, and see the school as a focal point for the community; it is considered as inclusive and positive for all families. The learning philosophy and culture of the school is clearly articulated by the Principal, and the parent community recognise it as a point of difference or 'signature' of the school. All were supportive, and reported that the school is communicative, and works with them to support the social, emotional and learning needs of all children. Parents shared a number of examples of ways that they work in partnership with the school staff to support their child. Governing Council members reported that they feel included in all matters related to the school.

The students valued and respected all of the staff; students are happy to be at school and see it as a place for learning 'new stuff'. They see the school as interesting, with opportunities to do different things through a 'hands-on' approach, such as the Kitchen Garden, the nature play area, and the natural terrain of the school. The students were unanimous in agreeing that the combination of inside and outside classroom activities and lessons made their learning interesting and fun.

The use of Learning Goals is common practice from Reception to Year 7, and generally discussed with parents in Term 3. The students were able to talk about their specific learning goals and how they meet their goals with support from the teachers.

The students were able to provide strategies that they use to help themselves when the work is 'hard' and understood the term 'persistence'. These strategies include re-reading the question, leaving it and then going back later, asking a friend or asking the teacher. In most cases where a child asked a teacher for help, the teacher did not give a direct answer but posed further clarifying questions. There were mixed responses from

the students when talking about the 'challenge' of the work provided in class. From the students' responses the work is seen as challenging but not too hard, with most students rating the level of challenge as 'middle range'. The primary students indicated that their maths lessons were delivered in a number of different ways, including worksheets, group work, mini-whiteboards and hands-on projects (for example, Putt-Putt golf). The Early Years classes generally worked through a themed focus to engage the students through an integrated approach to learning. The senior students recognised Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) as part of the learning at school, but tended to see it as an area of Science only. They were unable to make clear links with the STEM processes in other subjects.

The parents recognised that the engagement of students with their work and what was taught is dependent on the individual teacher. Several parents commented on how their children talked about their learning activities with enthusiasm and interest. The parents believed that the children were challenged or extended, especially in the area of STEM, where they cited how their children were able to describe the process and stages of their learning. The parents recognised that the outdoor environment and access to the natural play elements was a strong factor in the engagement of the children of the school. The parents valued the 'Three-Way' interview showcase held in Term 3, as it gave them an understanding of their child's learning and their achievement in meeting their learning goals.

The staff spoke of a culture of high expectation across the school and within the classes. The staff are able to articulate their own personal understanding of what stretch and engagement means, with mixed responses as to what it looks like in the classroom. There was a general agreement that the teachers were moving from giving their students 'extra work' to extend them, to making the children think more deeply about their learning. This notion has been supported by the work that the school has started through the Visible Learning Project, and is building on some previous work with growth mindsets.

There is a strong understanding by the staff that the child is the focus of learning. All of the staff were able to talk about how differentiation in their planning and teaching enhances the engagement of students. The new teachers spoke of how their mentor teachers were able to support them in catering for individual student needs and by demonstrating how to scaffold their lessons to stretch the students appropriately.

Next steps include developing common understandings for all students that intellectual stretch does not equate to just the provision of work at a higher year level, and that intellectual stretch is applicable to all students and across all areas of learning.

Teacher professional learning around a deeper understanding of involving student voice in the planning of curriculum and lessons would be a key factor in addressing learning design, assessment and moderation processes within the school. It has the potential to raise the intellectual challenge of students and stretch teaching for student learning across the curriculum. Planned work within year levels and learning areas in the development of transforming tasks would complement this, and is seen as important work for the school to undertake.

#### **Direction 1**

**Build the capacity of students to think critically and creatively by strengthening and embedding the emerging work on pedagogical practices to co-design their learning and tasks.**

#### **To what extent has a coherent approach to curriculum been developed?**

The Bridgewater Primary School Site Improvement Plan (SIP) identifies Literacy and Numeracy as two key priorities with a strong focus on whole-school practices and scaffolded pedagogy. The implementation of a school Literacy Agreement has steered the school into working from a collective platform and consistent approach in the delivery of literacy across the school. This has been complemented with resources such as Words Their Way (WTW) spelling, and Fountas and Pinnel reading, plus intervention support for targeted students. Both the teachers and students identified that these programs were used regularly across the school, and that the students "really enjoyed the spelling program as they are getting to understand how spelling works". The staff recognised that WTW was in its first full year across the whole school, and that further work from staff in using the program needs to be developed.

Staff have been exposed to professional learning in numeracy through *Back to Front Maths* and *Natural Maths* workshops, and use elements of these programs in class practices. Work has been done in numeracy

with mental routines, problematizing, reflection and intervention support using Quicksmart as one tool.

The combination of explicit and open teaching is evident across Reception to Year 7 classes. The students identified consistencies of practice in several classes, with class routines such as activity worksheets and weekly tests. Several senior students acknowledged that quiet classrooms and working by themselves helps them with their learning. Recently enrolled students recognised that the teaching in the school was different to their previous experiences, and that the teachers were more encouraging.

From the classroom observations it was evident that the use of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria processes are displayed. The depth of this form of shared learning varied, and some of the students were unable to explain what it means to them.

The teachers acknowledged the professional learning opportunities provided for individuals and learning teams were seen to be of great benefit. Professional Development (PD) processes are comprehensive and are tailored for individual growth. Staff recognised the link between the professional learning options undertaken and the directions of the Site Improvement Plan, the Partnership Plan and DECD professional learning initiatives. Combined training sessions at the Partnership level enabled staff to further develop their understandings of task design by drawing on the experiences of colleagues from neighbouring schools. The Visible Learning program is accepted by all staff and they see it as a major focus for collective PD across the school.

The mentoring of graduate and early career teachers has been well-received and beneficial in developing their teaching practice. The use of a maths coach to support teachers with their practice is acknowledged and making a difference. The use of observation models (peer and leaders) to support teacher practice is greatly appreciated and has helped in the confidence of the new teachers in refining their knowledge and teaching craft. The release time and timetabling structure within the school, which has enabled year-level teams to share and reflect on their work, has been successful. The strategic use of Senior Leaders in year-level cohorts has provided guidance and support for the teachers in addressing both class matters and SIP objectives.

The Leadership Team has recognised the positive work that has been achieved with year level teams. They see this process as the start of strengthening the teams to promote the de-privatisation of practice, and increase the congruence and connectedness of learning across the Reception to Year 7 range.

Taking into account the various levels of teaching experience within the staff cohort, it would be beneficial in identifying and developing effective and consistent pedagogical practices across the school.

By strengthening teacher knowledge in task design that involves students through learner voice and co-design, it will further develop and embed effective and consistent pedagogical practice in curriculum planning.

## **Direction 2**

**Build on the capacity of staff in the design of consistent teaching practices that link student learning from Reception to Year 7, and include student influence, evidence-based data and learning intentions.**

### **To what extent do teachers use data and information to inform their planning and instruction?**

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) specifies that teachers will develop a consistent plan to share data of individual students and whole-school approaches in literacy and numeracy. The SIP identifies a number of assessment tools to be used and the desired achievement targets (SMARTA Targets). Student achievement data is comprehensively collected and used at three levels across the school: whole-school, year-level and individual student. All of the staff are familiar with, and use, standard assessment tools such as Running Records, PAT tests and NAPLAN. The Leadership Team supports staff in analysing the test results from these assessment tools so that they can identify specific patterns and trends with individual students or class cohorts.

All student achievement data was recorded on the electronic Scorelink program, and staff have been trained in how to access and interpret the information. There is a strong emphasis on analysing the effect size or growth patterns of individual students rather than focus on raw scores of groups of students. Whole-school achievement data is tracked to ascertain student achievement growth. This information is managed by the

Leadership Team and is shared through staff meetings and year level teams.

The school uses a variety of diagnostic tests programs, such as *Quicksmart*, to support students with learning difficulties. These programs are implemented and managed by the Principal in consultation with teachers and SSO personnel.

Students are assessed regularly by teachers through formal weekly tests. These can take the form of WTW spelling tests, WTW Dictation, Running Records (R-7) and Quickthink Maths. A variety of student self-assessment tools are used across the school as exemplified with the '1-4 Learning Scale'. Pre- and post-test processes are used in the primary years level of schooling. An example of this is the Middle Years Mental Computation assessment tool. This is used by senior classes and shared with the students. This test model enables the students to identify their strengths and growth areas in numeracy. In discussion with their teachers, the students can target specific growth areas as part of their learning goals.

Student achievement is compared from year-to-year to identify trends and monitor growth. Formal assessments, such as PAT-M and PAT-R, are analysed to look for gaps in the students' knowledge and skills. This information is used to plan intervention support for targeted students.

Feedback from students varies from teacher to teacher. Examples include individual conversations, anecdotal observations and ballot boxes, to formal responses. Some staff members are using student peer feedback processes with some lessons, however, recognise that this is new to many students, and some formal teaching of what authentic feedback is and how students can use it to help themselves and others, is provided.

As a result of a Ministerial exemption in 2011, the site uses a modified form of reporting achievement grades against the Standards of Educational Achievement and reporting using a word equivalent for A-E grade scores. As a consequence, the teachers use a system that can be paralleled with the DECD A-E grading process. For example, the term 'Learner' is equivalent to a C, Learner Plus = B; Advanced Learner = A; Beginner Learner = D, and Novice Learner = E. Teachers focus their assessments on evidence based on the general capabilities and content knowledge alongside standardised testing. The parent community are accepting of this assessment and reporting format.

It has been recognised that the school does use information from a variety of datasets to support and plan for student learning. The next phase of the school's future planning would be to continue to work on explicit assessment criteria, task design and moderation that incorporates feedback processes to and from students.

### **Direction 3**

**Strengthen the whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback processes.**

### **What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?**

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Bridgewater Primary School.

[Bridgewater Primary School values environmental education and active natural play gardens as an integral part of educating children attending the school.](#) The *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden* Program has been successfully implemented in the school. The school has a specialist staff member and volunteers committed to the program to ensure its longevity. The school recognises the value of this asset and its potential connection with the curriculum and STEM methodologies. The school has also recognised that the garden has had an impact on the social and emotional dispositions of students, including cooperation, sharing, respect, and responsibility for the environment. The *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden* is available to all facets of the school campus where students have access to the facility.

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Bridgewater Primary School provides effective leadership in strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions for a diverse and complex student population. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative planning.

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

1. Build the capacity of students to think critically and creatively by strengthening and embedding the emerging work on pedagogical practices to co-design their learning and tasks.
2. Build on the capacity of staff in the design of consistent teaching practices that link student learning from Reception to Year 7, and include student influence, evidence-based data and learning intentions.
3. Strengthen the whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback processes.

Based on the school's current performance, Bridgewater Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Barb Jenkins  
PRINCIPAL  
BRIDGEWATER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

## Appendix One

### Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Bridgewater 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:

Part 1: Governance:

Item 2 – The collaborative development of the Site Improvement Plan.

Item 5 – Working collaboratively with the Principal on an update of the school's Strategic Directions and the Site Improvement Plan priorities through the Annual School Report.

Part 4: People and Culture:

Item 3 – Implementing the DECD Performance and Development Policy.

Part 5: Safety:

Item 4 – The school to implement a Volunteer Policy that accords with DECD guidelines.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 92.1%.

## Appendix Two

### School Performance Overview

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).*

#### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 23% of Year 1, and 76% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

This result represents a decline for Year 1 students from the historic baseline average. The results for Year 2 students represent little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading progress, as measured by NAPLAN, indicates that 77% of Year 3 students, 76% of Year 5 students, and 68% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For Year 3, this result represents an improvement. For Year 5, this result represents little or no improvement, and in Year 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools. For 2016 Year 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is lower than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 42% of Year 3 students, 48% of Year 5 students, and 48% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 73%, or 8 of 11 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016 and 82%, or 9 of 11 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2016.

#### Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 73% of Year 3 students, 80% of Year 5 students, and 72% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA.

For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no improvement, and the Year 7 results represent a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 12% of Year 3, 28% of Year 5, and 48% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 40% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100% of Year 3 students remain in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2016.