

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Moorak Primary School

Conducted in November 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 Debbie Grzeczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Joy Keddie, 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

Moorak Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 449kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 107. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 105. The local partnership is Blue Lake.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 996 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, less than 5% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 25% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 7th year of tenure.

There are 6 Teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 Teacher.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Implement a collaboratively developed, whole-school pedagogical agreement that supports student involvement in co-design, setting and reviewing goals, and ensures quality learning experiences that are responsive, engaging and challenging.
- Direction 2** Implement effective pedagogical practices and explicit learning programs that are planned, structured and sequenced, and reflect the diagnostic use of student data with high expectations for all students.
- Direction 3** Develop and implement whole-school teaching and learning agreements, in particular, literacy and numeracy, in a collegiate and collaborative way.
- Direction 4** Collaboratively develop a whole-school self-review process and site improvement plan that reflects a cyclic nature, is rigorous, systematic, transparent and inclusive, and guides the school on a continuous improvement journey.

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

The previous External School Review directions and the strategic creation of a school improvement team has guided the improvement journey and resulted in a significant shift in teacher pedagogy. Professional learning has influenced teacher practice and learning intentions and success criteria are visible across all classes. Staff collaborated with Department for Education personnel and created comprehensive whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements.

Engagement in the partnership focus on agile leadership has resulted in learning sprints occurring in all classes. Clear expectations and a published schedule maintain a high focus on sprints. Teachers value the process as it directly relates to and impacts on their teaching.

Teachers are increasingly using data to measure student growth and identify areas for improvement. The school improvement plan (SIP) has been refined to reflect data analysis, and evidence-based programs have been introduced to support student learning and have a positive impact on student achievement data.

The school now has the opportunity to refine and embed effective pedagogy and focus on providing stretch for every student.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The school improvement plan has a narrow focus which is evidence-based and data driven. The Principal has strategically developed a school improvement team (SIT) that supports and drives teacher practice to deliver on the plan's success criteria. Professional development plans (PDPs) and professional learning are aligned to the focus areas, which are known by all staff. Utilising partnership and Department for Education support, and providing clear structures and processes drive the plan and enable regular check-ins to monitor progress.

SIP priorities are supported through the partnership focus on agile leadership which results in teachers conducting a series of learning sprints. The sprints are informed by data and directly related to refining and improving teacher practice in the focus areas. Teachers are keen to improve their practice and a published sprint schedule ensures teachers have regular opportunity to reflect and discuss their practice collectively to adjust their practice accordingly.

Whilst teachers know the focus of the SIP, they were less confident articulating the impact of their actions. Supporting teachers to go deeper into the data will assist them to evaluate the impact of their strategies and actions on student achievement. The Principal believed that a more collaborative approach to developing priorities would occur in the next improvement cycle to achieve greater ownership and clarity of the improvement work.

Whilst learning sprints have been a successful vehicle to drive the improvement agenda it is essential that all staff have a clear understanding of the 5-step improvement cycle. Having explicit understanding of each step will optimise each element so their site improvement plan; challenge of practice, targets, goals, actions, and success criteria, which will further drive improvement. The Department for Education's improvement planning handbook will be a valuable resource in progressing this work.

Direction 1 Strengthen structures and processes that further develop whole school understanding and ownership of the 5-step improvement cycle.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Students are exposed to a variety of individual, paired and group work with most talking of on 'hands-on' and inquiry-based learning. All teachers use aspects of evidence-based pedagogy to support student learning and all students have individual learning goals. All classes display learning intentions which are used by students to support their learning. Some classes were effectively using peers to read, support and edit work which enables students to receive timely feedback to further improve. A common language enables students to articulate their learning with the majority of students reporting engagement and enjoyment of lessons.

Teachers use pre and post-testing to group students to track and monitor growth. They described tasks with multiple entry and exit points, scaffolded questions, open-ended inquiry questions and choices in how students work, and the mode of presentation to give all students easy access and opportunity for success. Regular teacher questioning as a check in to ensure student understanding was a common feature in all classes. Whilst there is an obvious intent to differentiate tasks some students report they are not challenged in some aspects of their learning. Teachers' highlighted intellectual stretch as an area for further support.

Teachers find creative ways to hook students into learning which is appreciated by students and connects them to the task. Strong teacher and student relationships further support engagement in the strong focus on learning. Students were highly complementary of their teachers but reflected that they would like more ownership of their learning. Students felt knowing their grades and owning their data would increase their effort to push for a higher grade. Providing students with tangible and aspirational examples of how to improve their work would further strengthen student agency in learning, increasing student interaction and allow them to track, improve and stretch their learning.

Whilst all teachers use elements of high impact teaching strategies there is variance across classes. Identifying elements of effective teacher practice and its impact on student learning and providing opportunities to share this practice will further strengthen a consistent whole-school approach.

Direction 2 **Embed a consistent application of high impact teaching strategies across all classes.**

Effective leadership

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

The Principal has strategically and deliberately created the SIT ensuring representation of all sections of the school. A cohesive and collective culture of responsibility encourages staff to take on leadership roles and attention has been paid to build the capacity of SIT leaders through mentoring. Teachers feel valued and access professional learning to further develop their skills. The high level transparency and collegiate nature of leadership has crafted a culture of learning which flows through the school. The Principal is to be commended for his work in strategically aligning staff to drive a clear focus on pedagogy.

The Principal has a clear vision which has been communicated to staff. Leaders are supportive of staff and constantly moving their practice forward and a culture of continuous improvement is evident. A transparent sharing of non-negotiables streamlines teacher practice.

Parents, teachers and students interviewed were highly complementary of the Principal in developing a positive, supportive culture that focuses on teaching and learning. Many staff identified the strategic implementation of the SIT and learning sprints as a strength in transforming the school's culture. Many believed that the key to the success was leaders having clarity of what needs to be developed, the roles of all stakeholders involved, and guaranteeing accountability processes were in place.

Leader roles and responsibilities have been strategically developed to support the SIP and maintain a clear focus on improved teaching and learning. Professional development plans are aligned to the school improvement plan and regular opportunities for feedback assist teachers to refine their practice. A series of formal and informal conversations assist new leaders to hone and adapt their leadership. As the school looks to embed high impact teaching strategies across the school, a renewed focus on explicit feedback to teachers will emerge. Providing leaders with the tools and skills to provide explicit and constructive feedback will amplify the process.

Direction 3 Build capacity of all leaders to provide explicit feedback to further improve teacher practice.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Moorak Primary School has a strong positive culture, deep sense of community and welcoming atmosphere. Students are confident and articulate about their learning which results in a tangible sense of pride in the school. Staff model lifelong learning and seek ways to further improve and refine their practice, creating positive learning environments to support student learning. Parents find staff approachable and express high satisfaction with the school. Governing council expressed a high level of trust and support for the Principal who has aligned staffing and resources to support the school's improvement agenda. The peer reading system is inclusive of the kindergarten and contributes to successful transition processes.

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

- Direction 1** **Strengthen structures and processes that further develop whole school understanding and ownership of the 5-step improvement cycle.**
- Direction 2** **Embed a consistent application of high impact teaching strategies across all classes.**
- Direction 3** **Build capacity of all leaders to provide explicit feedback to further improve teacher practice.**

Based on the school's current performance, Moorak Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Peter Mitchinson
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Moorak Primary School



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 50% of year 1 and 86% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 1 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For year 2 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2021 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 92% of year 3 students, 88% of year 5 students and 82% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2021 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2021 42% of year 3, 25% of year 5 and 18% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 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 40% or 2 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2021 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 75% of year 5 students and 91% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2021 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2021 33% of year 3, 13% of year 5 and 18% 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 those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 33% or 1 out of 3 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.