

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Braeview School R-7**

Conducted in May 2018



## Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Alison Lynch, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Principal.

## School context

Braeview School R-7 caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 22kms south of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the South Valley Precinct Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 467 students, and has increased over the last 5 years. There is a junior primary and primary special class as well. The school is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1021.

The school population includes 3% of Aboriginal students, 16% of students with a verified disability, 19% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 3% of students with English as an additional language or dialect background, and 2 children in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of his tenure at the school, and a 1FTE deputy principal. There are 26 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and 15 Step 9 teachers.

## 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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

**Effective Teaching:** To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

**Improvement Agenda:** How embedded and planned are the systems and practices for self-review?

### To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Students with learning difficulties and behavioural concerns are supported well at Braeview School R-7 through a range of intervention strategies, including:

- Proactive sensory programs
- 'What's the Buzz?' social skills program run by a school services officer in reception classes, and for identified students across the school
- One-to-one learning support for verified students
- MiniLit literacy support for junior primary students, identified by Running Records levels, and
- SSO support in guided reading in all classes.

Detailed negotiated education plans (NEPs) are developed for identified students by the deputy principal in consultation with the class teacher and parent, outlining the focus and strategies for improvement for each student.

The NAPLAN writing results in 2017 showed the school was performing below like schools in each year level. As a result, the 'Seven Steps To Writing' program has been adopted with all primary years teachers being trained. The panel saw examples of differentiation in a maths lesson where students worked in groups to discuss and solve problems at various levels of complexity. Support for staff to work together to

design challenging tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points across all areas of learning will enable students to achieve at a higher level.

Teachers reflected on what they had done well in their planning, teaching and assessing of a recent unit of work and what they would like to have done better. They identified stretch and challenge, providing feedback to students, student goal-setting and improved use of lesson intentions and success criteria as areas for further development.

Staff indicated a need to improve feedback for learning. This was apparent in class walkthroughs, where student workbooks showed little evidence of feedback to indicate next steps, with mainly ticks and comments such as 'good work'. Students should know where they are, where they need to be and how to get there. Feedback that provides clear strategies for improvement allows students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning is most helpful.

Most staff spoke of a range of formative assessments to clarify student knowledge and understandings relating to intended learning. There is evidence of the effective use in several classes of formative assessments such as rubrics, exit cards, pre and post-assessments and reflection time, to inform both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. Leadership are advised to identify, encourage and build on the evident capacity of these teachers by encouraging the sharing of this effective practice with all staff.

Teachers were able to articulate a clear understanding of what intellectual stretch and challenge is and looks like in the classroom. All teachers rated their ability to create opportunities to stretch students to a high or medium extent in a survey conducted during the External School Review (ESR). They were able to explain strategies to improve intellectual stretch and challenge in their classroom, including differentiating the challenges, increasing the focus on growth mindset language and strategies, and providing multiple entry points. However, students interviewed across the school, rated the learning they were exposed to as either 'just right' or 'too easy'. Only 1 child felt that science was sometimes hard. Students reported that they would seek help if unsure in their learning, but they would just do the work and not tell the teacher if the work was too easy.

Opportunities for students to engage in challenging learning relevant to each child's ability was limited due to the prevalence of whole-class activities and worksheets. Leadership acknowledged that student participation and opportunities to influence their learning is limited and an area the school needs to focus on. 'Genius hour' occurs in 2 classes; 1 with all children in the class involved, and another targeting 1 high-performing student. Involving students in problem-solving tasks once a week is a start, but opportunities to engage students in problem-solving and deeper thinking, need to be evident across the school and in all learning areas.

Teachers also recognised students setting their own goals and being involved in co-designing the learning as next steps in providing opportunities to stretch and challenge all students. Goal-setting processes varied throughout the school, with some classes involved in setting individual goals and others setting class goals, either student-identified and developed or teacher-initiated. Many classes showed no evidence of student goal-setting. By involving students in identifying, setting and working towards achieving aspirational goals, they will have shared ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Students will need support to plan, monitor and assess their progress towards their targets. The use of SMARTAR goal-setting practices will support both teachers and students in identifying areas for development and the strategies needed.

Learning intentions describe explicitly what students are expected to learn and success criteria describe what successful achievement looks like. Students have the opportunity to become partners in their own learning by being provided with consistency and clarity in what they are to learn, the purpose of their learning and how they can be successful. When teachers discuss and collaboratively develop the success

criteria with their students, impact on learning is heightened. Several teachers showed a clear understanding and embedded use of learning intentions in their classrooms.

Consideration should be given to building teacher capacity through using the expertise of identified staff to provide professional learning and mentor staff. This will reduce the reliance on the deputy principal for curriculum leadership and provide opportunities for staff to further develop their skills.

#### **Direction 1**

**Achieve a high level of competency, congruence and consistency in teaching practice and programs across the school, to stretch and challenge all students, strengthened by utilising the skills and building the capacity of staff.**

### **To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?**

The school has embraced Robert Marzano's work on High Reliability Schools following leadership's attendance at a two-day workshop. The framework consists of 5 clearly defined stages that provide indicators to measure progress. Leadership provided evidence of the work undertaken through this model to date, including:

- Professional learning communities (PLCs) across the school
- the ongoing development of a 'guaranteed and viable curriculum' for all year levels, and
- staff involvement in designing proficiency scales and pacing guides to align with the Australian Curriculum.

Evidence of this work was seen predominantly in the early years with varying levels of uptake in other areas.

Each of the 5 stages of the framework needs to be mastered before moving to the next level, with the foundation stage being: 'Safe, supportive and collaborative culture'. Presentations, interviews and observations during the review portrayed considerable variation in the depth, congruence and consistency of classroom practices, programs and collaborative planning and teaching. It would be advisable for the school to revisit Stage 1 of this framework.

PLCs are well-established and provide staff with the opportunity to work in small, year level teams. They have the responsibility to initiate and investigate in-depth an area for development, with links to the site improvement plan. The foci of these groups include developing pacing guides in the junior primary, differentiation, reading proficiency scales, bullying and gratitude, and play and oral language. Each PLC is supported with funding and a high level of trust. The majority of staff meetings are dedicated to PLCs, with some whole-school expectations included, such as moderation of student work, using learning design to plan a unit of work, and the sharing of practice. Additional release time is also provided to work on these areas. PLCs present their work at a staff meeting in term 4. Leadership and teachers indicated that success of these teams in achieving positive outcomes for improved teaching practice and student learning, and the impact across the school, varied considerably.

Some learning teams work in open, connected and collaborative ways, while others are operating alone. It is important that curriculum and pedagogical coherence happens not only within learning teams but also across year levels. The panel saw evidence of varying teaching methodologies and pedagogies being implemented in classes. Structured, ongoing PLCs provide opportunities to engage in assess-plan-teach conversations in year level teams. However, opportunities also should be provided for mixed year level teams to collaboratively reflect on and share their practice. This will ensure greater consistency of

pedagogy, language, programs and practice. The opportunity for teachers to observe each other's classes would also support and improve consistency in approaches across the school. When questioned, staff were unable to describe the learning programs and strategies that were in place outside of their own unit or PLC.

Whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements have been developed recently. They broadly outline expectations, content, processes, and targets. A range of programs are included for staff to select from, resulting in classroom practice variation. Governing council members also commented on the inconsistency in teaching practice, programs and communication across the school.

Staff show a commitment to improving their own practice and undertaking new learning, but with support and time to trial, develop and refine their practice. A common message from staff was to 'narrow the focus'. While leadership intends to seek programs and initiatives to improve teaching and learning, staff need to be involved and supported in the decision-making process, through training, time and resources to trial, practice and embed new learning before moving on. This will improve confidence and consistency in all classes and ensure lasting improvement.

All staff with a responsibility for student learning should be involved in the design, development, implementation, and ongoing review of the site improvement plan (SIP). Whole-school initiatives should be linked to the SIP with accountability reinforced through performance management processes and staff meetings.

Targets set within the SIP need to be measurable and aligned to individual student growth. By relating the data to individual students, teachers are able to reflect on how they can adapt their teaching to meet the needs of each student. There was a noticeable difference in teachers' strategic use of data and evidence to identify and plan learning opportunities for individual students. Some staff reported using data to inform their teaching to meet student needs, while for others, data analysis is confined mainly to that undertaken at staff meetings, with limited impact on classroom practice. It is important that data collected has a distinct purpose and is used as a teaching resource, not simply for grouping purposes.

The current assessment schedule and timeline result in testing students late in the year, leaving little opportunity to use the data to inform teaching, with data only passed on to the next teacher. It is important for the school to expand opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in analysing and using relevant data. This will support the planning and implementation of strategies that will lead to raised student achievement across all year levels.

The school has established processes in the collection of multiple datasets, including NAPLAN, PAT and Running Records, collated by the deputy principal. Next steps are to ensure teachers are involved in the collection, collation and analysis of data, with information recorded and following the student throughout their schooling. The school's intended use of a data management system (MARKiT) will support this, with teachers having greater ownership and access to individual student data. It is recommended that clear agreements, expectations and protocols are developed about the collection, analysis and use of data and the sharing of this information.

## **Direction 2**

**Collaboratively develop and refine a whole-school approach to using key, identified practices and programs that link the SIP, PLCs, performance management and intervention, to achieve greater consistency, commitment and cohesion across the school.**

## How embedded and planned are the systems and practices for self-review?

All schools are responsible for the continual self-review of the systems and structures they have in place. These include the SIP, committee structures, intervention and student support, performance management and professional learning. It is important that this is a collective, consultative process that requires data and evidence to monitor progress throughout the year and to inform future directions.

A review of intervention followed disappointing student results from the Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program, resulting in a different approach. MiniLit programs now support year 1 students and guided reading has been introduced recently in classes with SSO support provided.

The school currently has 3 documents that inform its direction: site action plan, a strategic plan and a literacy and numeracy plan, all providing the same information but in different formats. The school would be advised to consolidate their improvement journey into 1 document with clear and concise whole-school expectations and measurable targets. When asked about the impact the SIP has on their teaching, responses included: “less jargon needed”, “don’t know what’s in it” and “don’t understand what’s expected”. Others knew that literacy and numeracy were in the plan but were unable to expand further.

The panel’s analysis of the SIP showed a broad range of strategies and programs but no targets, limiting teachers’ opportunity to measure success and to respond strategically. A focus on student achievement and growth should identify relevant and measurable targets linked to the school’s priorities. Ongoing analysis of multiple datasets by all staff as part of regular self-review processes will strengthen shared understandings and build greater consistency and congruence across the school.

The current review practice involves the collation of key areas of the SIP into a lotus diagram, compiled by leadership and provided to PLCs for discussion and comment during term 4. A new writing program has resulted from feedback received, and performance management processes were identified as an area for improvement. This term 4 review should form part of a rigorous, cyclic review process used to determine priorities, identify strengths and areas for further development, document strategies for improvement and set targets.

Sub-committees in management, literacy and numeracy are in place and could be used to drive the school’s improvement priorities. Each committee is representative of each PLC, ensuring all year levels have a voice. While the management group meets fortnightly, the literacy and numeracy committees have only met once this year. These committees are well-placed to be involved in ongoing self-review of their respective focus areas, ensuring staff input and accountability. Staff should be encouraged to lead these committees to build capacity and share responsibility.

It is important to ensure self-review processes result in clarity of responsibilities and expectations, providing time and support so that new initiatives become embedded into the learning culture. Several staff indicated that they felt overwhelmed by the number of programs provided to staff with limited resourcing and time to consolidate new learning before moving on to the next initiative. Through regular and strategic self-review processes the school will be able to determine and respond to the impact that programs and strategies have on teacher practice and student learning.

### Direction 3

**Collaboratively develop, implement and embed an agreed cycle for rigorous self-review that shapes the ongoing improvement across the school.**

## **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 Braeview School R-7.

There is a strong sense of inclusion of students with special needs, particularly those on the autism spectrum, by students, staff and parents. It is seen as a school of choice by a number of families with a child on the spectrum, living outside the immediate area. A 'crash and bash' room and sensory rooms have been established to provide a safe and welcoming space for children to refocus. SSOs support students in accessing these spaces in scheduled and emergency situations, so they can return to class and engage in the learning programs offered, as well as reduce the disruption to other students' learning.

All teachers have undertaken a range of training to understand and accommodate students on the spectrum within their classes, while ongoing support and training is provided through AutismSA.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Braeview School R-7 provides teachers with structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.

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

1. Achieve a high level of competency, congruence and consistency in teaching practice and programs across the school, to stretch and challenge all students, strengthened by utilising the skills and building the capacity of staff.
2. Collaboratively develop and refine a whole-school approach to using key, identified practices and programs that link the SIP, PLCs, performance management and intervention, to achieve greater consistency, commitment and cohesion across the school.
3. Collaboratively develop, implement and embed an agreed cycle for rigorous self-review that shapes the ongoing improvement across the school.

Based on the school's current performance, Braeview School R-7 will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS

The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.

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David King  
PRINCIPAL  
BRAEVIEW SCHOOL R-7

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Governing Council Chairperson

# Appendix 1

## Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be working towards being compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2017 was 91.5%.

# Appendix 2

## 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 2017, 78% of year 1 and 65% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for year 1 and a decline for year 2.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 75% of year 5 students, and 68% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

This result represents an improvement at year 3 and a decline at years 5 and 7 from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 50% of year 3, 40% of year 5, and 26% 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 76% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 80% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

### Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 72% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, and 82% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline, and for year 7, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 45% in 2015 to 82% in 2017.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 30% of year 3, 17% of year 5, and 21% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 47% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 57% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.