

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### **Report for Wasleys Primary School**

Conducted in June 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 Susan Copeland, Review Principal.

## School context

Wasleys Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 64kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Goyder and Light Partnership. The current enrolment is 42 students, having decreased from 45 students in 2012 to 17 students in 2016. The school is classified as Category 3 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 969.

The school population includes 1 Aboriginal student, 1 student with a verified disability, 21% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 8% (3) of students of EALD background, and 1 child in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of her tenure at the school. The school has no senior leaders. There are 2.8FTE teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 teacher.

There are 2 composite classes: reception to year 3 and years 4 to 7. The students are divided into 3 groups (reception to year 2; years 3 to 5; and years 6 to 7) for literacy and numeracy daily to reduce the number of year levels and students in each group.

## 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:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Improvement Agenda:</b>            | <b>How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?</b>  |
| <b>School Community Partnerships:</b> | <b>How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?</b>   |
| <b>Effective Leadership:</b>          | <b>To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?</b> |

### **How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?**

Student achievement in NAPLAN reading and numeracy data at Wasleys Primary School is mostly within the range of students with similar characteristics. However, achievement in the higher bands has been minimal over recent years at all year levels. The number of students achieving the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) shows little improvement, with the exception of year 7 numeracy. Staff are confident in identifying the students who are capable of achieving in the higher bands in NAPLAN testing and those requiring additional support to achieve the SEA. Ongoing work for the school will be to provide opportunities for staff to discuss, track and monitor students who are currently achieving just below the higher bands. The collaborative development of processes to create a pedagogical shift from

achieving SEA to higher band achievement and retention will be important in supporting all students to sustain continual improvement.

Whole-school processes, whereby teachers systematically analyse and interrogate data to identify trends and actions, are in place to support individual, cohort and whole-school learning improvement. The school collects multiple learner achievement datasets according to an assessment schedule with a five-level colour-coding system, used to identify those students above, at and below SEA, including:

- Running Records
- SA Spelling
- PAT Reading and Maths
- 1 minute maths
- Big Ideas in Number, and
- A-E grade progress.

Engagement, wellbeing, and perception data is also collected from students, staff and parents through surveys, which are analysed with areas for improvement identified and acted upon.

Teachers spoke of using data that identified misconceptions in maths to identify next steps for teaching and grouping of students. While PAT and NAPLAN data is collected and collated, it has not been used to inform learning needs of individual students in any depth. The school can ensure this data, together with associated online resources, is utilised to intentionally design learning programs and interventions within the classroom.

An opportunity exists to review and refine the assessment schedule within the development of a literacy agreement. This will ensure all data is collected for a distinct purpose, and is utilised as a resource not only to track progress and achievement, but also to inform teaching practice and programs. By relating the data to individual students, teachers are able to reflect on how they can adapt their teaching approaches to make a difference for each student. The ongoing analysis of datasets, as part of a regular self-review process, will further strengthen shared understandings and build greater consistency and congruence across the school, as well as allow teachers to evaluate the impact of their practices and strategies on student learning.

The inclusion of an additional class for literacy and numeracy lessons each day provides the opportunity to reduce class numbers, the range of year levels and corresponding curriculum to be addressed.

The panel saw limited examples of differentiation in classrooms, with the exception of grouping students based on numeracy misconceptions and spelling levels. Staff engaged in the early stages of professional learning on task design and moderation through the department's Learning Design and Moderation (LDAM) initiative and support from the Senior Leader Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP). Further work on task design and opportunities to work with staff from nearby schools will enable teachers to design challenging tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points across all areas of learning. This will support and accommodate the diverse learning needs within each class, and provide opportunities for students to engage in learning at a higher level.

Each student has an individual learning plan (ILP) with long and short-term goals identified within the areas of English, maths and Social/Emotional. These ILPs are shared with parents and students who have the opportunity to influence the plan's directions. They are discussed as part of three-way interviews where students are able to share their learning. Further refinement of these plans should include using SMARTAR goal-setting with clear, measurable targets and explicit strategies to be incorporated, with adjustments made throughout the year.

Individual student folders, containing some diagnostic tests and work samples with a literacy and numeracy focus, have been implemented in 2018 for year 3 to 7 students. While in the early stages, staff did not comment on the impact this initiative is having on teaching. It is suggested that staff develop clear protocols and processes for the use of these folders to ensure relevance, consistency of practice across the school and valued learning. Student goal-setting and evidence towards achieving these goals could be documented in these folders as a record of student involvement in their learning. By engaging the students in sharing and understanding their own data, monitoring their progress and identifying areas for improvement, students will have greater ownership and responsibility for their learning.

#### **Direction 1**

**Build teacher capacity to design learning experiences with multiple entry and exit points to stretch and challenge all students, as identified through individual student achievement and growth data, supported through further professional learning in and the implementation of the Learning Design and Moderation strategy.**

### **How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

In response to questions from the panel, students shared their views about teaching and learning, confidently and openly.

The school is developing opportunities for students to contribute to school initiatives and develop leadership skills, supported through the establishment of a student representative council this year and students' involvement in environmental initiatives. Written applications were required for those applying for leadership roles with feedback provided by the principal. Student voice, however, needs to include influence over their own learning. Students at all year levels benefit from opportunities to be active participants in their own learning, sharing data, setting learning goals and using and providing feedback, in order to take responsibility for furthering their own learning.

When students were asked if they had a say in what and how they learn in class, their responses indicated only surface levels of involvement, including where to sit, choosing after-school clubs, and some selection of topics within the learning. It is important that students are able to have some choice in the direction of the curriculum, and teachers design tasks to engage students and build on their interests, prior knowledge and skills. Developing and embedding authentic student influence for learning across all learning areas and year levels will enable students to become more independent and powerful learners. The opportunity to have some influence in the learning process is linked to increases in student effort, performance and learning, and could include choice of tasks, reporting formats, learning goals, and behaviours and responsibilities. It is recommended the school investigates the use of Student Voice Audit Action Tiles by the student representative council, to identify strengths and areas for development in school, to increase engagement and involvement of students.

Students did not see the setting of learning goals as an integral part of their learning, nor were these evident in classrooms. One group of students shared that they had set goals early in term 1, but had not referred to them since, while other students reported that no goals had been set this year. 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 and in determining the strategies needed. Students have the capabilities to set their own learning goals, provide and receive feedback that will inform future learning, and be better able to accept responsibility for themselves as learners.

Teachers responded in a survey that their learning intentions and success criteria ranged in clarity and effectiveness from a low to high level. When asked, students were unclear about the what, why and how of their learning. The panel did not see evidence of the use of learning intentions or success criteria in classrooms. Students need to be provided with clarity in what they are to learn, the purpose of that learning and how they can be successful. When teachers discuss and collaboratively develop success criteria with their students, the impact on the learning is heightened. While the learning intention may be clear to the teacher, it is vital that this is communicated both verbally and in writing with students and referenced throughout the lesson. Further work in this area will support both teachers and students to improve learning outcomes and student engagement.

Students rated the learning they were exposed to as either 'just right' or 'too easy', with only 2 students indicating that English was sometimes hard. Using formative assessments during the lesson provides timely information to teachers on adjusting the teaching and learning, thus challenging and supporting all students. One teacher uses formative assessments effectively within the classroom to clarify student knowledge and understanding related to the intended learning. It is important that the expertise of this teacher is shared with other staff to build capacity and consistency of practice.

Students showed a heavy reliance on seeking help from their teacher when faced with difficulties in learning. Several students said they would keep going and try to work it out themselves before going to the teacher, but most would immediately ask the teacher. Only 1 child spoke of having a growth mindset. While the panel acknowledges work undertaken in developing powerful learner/growth mindset language and strategies, this is a 'work-in-progress' and needs to be continued.

Embedding feedback for learning should be a two-way process. This occurs when the teacher provides feedback to students to help them improve, and the student has the opportunity to provide feedback to the teacher about how best they learn. The school's intended use of the Pivot survey tool will provide the school with feedback on students' perceptions of their learning, but opportunities for students to provide feedback to teachers need to be ongoing.

Students benefit from access to feedback that acknowledges growth and makes clear the next steps for improvement. This is heightened through the sharing of data and evidence with students. All 3 teachers indicated, via a survey conducted during the review, that feedback to students was achieved to a medium or high level. Survey responses also indicated that feedback from students was used by teachers to adapt their planning to a similar level. However, teachers specified that they received limited feedback from students about their learning, with examples reflecting enjoyment of the lesson and discussions about what was hard or easy. Most students indicated that feedback was mainly focused on what they were doing well (verified through examination of student workbooks). It is important that teachers provide strategic feedback to challenge and stretch all students in their learning and to inform next steps. The development of a whole-school approach to student feedback for learning will strengthen the valuable work already begun.

## **Direction 2**

**Increase authentic student influence in their learning through individual learner goal-setting, effective two-way feedback, and collaborative development and sharing of lesson intentions and success criteria, as evidenced through the TfEL framework.**

## **To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?**

The school leadership is recognised for the work undertaken in 18 months in embedding a positive, improvement-focused culture across the school. The panel verified a positive intent by staff to apply their professional learning towards improving their own teaching practice. They are to be commended on the open, trusting and respectful relationships established within a short timeframe. The principal was new last year, and 2 of the 3 teachers are new to the school this year.

Relationships between all staff are supportive and focused on continual improvement. Quality professional development is occurring on a daily basis with teachers and the principal engaging in both formal and informal analysis, and reflection on their teaching, with the focus being on improving student learning outcomes. Staff are willing to share practice and resources, exchange feedback and learn from each other. They openly share what is happening in the classroom and discuss what can be done to further improve. The opportunity to observe each other's practice, 'watching others work' (WOW) is in the beginning stages, with teachers identifying a focus for the observation and receiving feedback from their peers. This is particularly valuable for the teachers in the early stages of their careers. The opportunity to observe in each other's class will further de-privatise practice and improve consistency in approaches. It will support students in transitioning into classes in coming years, after potentially being with the same teacher for several years.

Staff are supported and personally committed to developing their expertise through professional learning and the sharing of practice, strategies and pedagogy. There is a high level of integrity, commitment and energy to trial and implement change, aligned to the SIP and identified improvement strategies.

Staff identified that they would like to improve in their use of formative assessments, providing effective feedback to students, increasing student influence, stretching the more capable learners and improving their knowledge and understanding of maths content and pedagogy.

The school is building teacher capacity through the expertise of identified staff (teacher and principal) to provide professional learning and support in mentoring early career teachers. Involvement in partnership PD and accessing the expertise of the SLLIP and principal consultant (PC) will supplement the capacity of experienced staff to lead further improvements of practice within the school.

Leadership identified the need to review and refine the whole-school literacy agreement. Big 6 reading podcasts are being used to familiarise new staff with the components necessary for a quality reading program. The collaborative development of a whole-school literacy agreement is key to ensuring consistency of practice with content, processes, teaching strategies, programs, assessment and interventions, expectations, timeframes and targets to be included. It should also provide clear standards against which to measure student achievement in literacy.

Performance and development processes and professional learning undertaken focus on improving classroom practice and is aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The panel was able to verify the use of the department's performance plan template, performance conversations with leadership and written feedback to teachers. Personal performance plans are developed by all teachers with clear goals for further improvement identified. Staff professionalism in defining their work priorities, key strategies and support required is acknowledged by the panel. Personal written feedback by the principal following meetings to discuss these plans was verified through documentation. Professional development meetings with leadership should continue to build professional capacity, provide a time to share student data, and discuss what is working well.

Staff meetings have a strong focus on professional learning with a clear, documented agenda for the year based around the school priorities of literacy, numeracy and student engagement. The review panel attended a staff meeting where professional discussions between staff centred on new learning provided at a recent partnership pupil free day. Teachers and leadership shared their learning, and each identified a commitment for action to follow-up and report back.

With only 1 non-instruction time provider, the opportunity to release teachers to plan and work collaboratively is limited. However, the dedication and commitment of staff to undertake this shared planning outside of the teaching day is acknowledged. This also extends to the willingness of staff to run after-school clubs 4 days a week, with the majority of students involved. This is greatly appreciated by parents and contributes strongly to the growing confidence and engagement of the community with the school, resulting in steadily increasing enrolments.

The panel acknowledges the professional learning and improvements staff have already undertaken towards achieving the school and partnership directions. Staff are committed to continuously strengthening their pedagogy and curriculum knowledge, particularly in the school's focus on maths. Support and time for teachers to trial, develop and refine their practice needs to be provided through a coordinated approach to performance and development, and professional learning that is narrow and deep. By refining the approach to focus on a few key practices, greater consistency and cohesion of practice and pedagogy will be achieved and the improvements embedded into practice.

### **Direction 3**

**Refine the professional learning and improvement agenda to ensure it is carefully paced, linked to the SIP, reviewed and further developed with support for staff, so that new initiatives become fully embedded into the learning culture.**

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

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

Leadership is responsive to concerns, open and transparent, with strong parent support, appreciation and respect. Efforts to engage with families include after-school clubs operating 4 days each week, with staff willingly involved and providing a breakfast club daily. The implementation of SeeSaw as a means of sharing learning and communicating with families has been well-received. The school established a playgroup that operates weekly, providing a valuable and powerful connection with the community.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Wasleys Primary School has effective leadership that provides strategic direction and planning. Teachers are provided with ongoing collaborative professional learning.

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

1. Build teacher capacity to design learning experiences with multiple entry and exit points to stretch and challenge all students, as identified through individual student achievement and growth data, supported through further professional learning in and the implementation of the Learning Design and Moderation strategy.
2. Increase authentic student influence in their learning through individual learner goal-setting, effective two-way feedback, and collaborative development and sharing of lesson intentions and success criteria, as evidenced through the TfEL framework.
3. Refine the professional learning and improvement agenda to ensure it is carefully paced, linked to the SIP, reviewed and further developed with support for staff, so that new initiatives become embedded into the learning culture.

Based on the school's current performance, Wasleys Primary School 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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Patricia Joseph  
PRINCIPAL  
WASLEYS PRIMARY SCHOOL

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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 compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 92.5%.

## Appendix 2

### School performance overview

The external school review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the department Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Wasleys Primary School over the years 2014 to 2017. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

#### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2014 and 2017, 75% of year 1 and 56% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students, and 67% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 39% of year 3, 25% of year 5, and 8% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading.

Between 2014 and 2017, 50% (1 of 2) of students were retained in the higher bands in NAPLAN reading from year 3 to 5, and 25% (1 of 4) of students were retained in the higher bands from year 3 to 7.

#### Numeracy

Between 2014 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of year 3 students, 61% of year 5 students, and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 8% of year 3, 5% of year 5 and 0% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy.

Between 2014 and 2017, no students were retained in the higher bands in NAPLAN numeracy from year 3 to 5 or from year 3 to 7.