

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Robertstown Primary School

Conducted in February 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 Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Maxine McSherry, 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
  - Leader
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers.

## School context

Robertstown Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 130kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 11. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 18. The local partnership is Goyder and Light.

The school has an ICSEA score of 984 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 35% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 80% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 2nd year of tenure.

There is 1 Teacher, 3 Part-time SSOs, PCW and Grounds Person. Staffing has remained stable over the last 5 years.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1 Collaboratively develop and embed a whole-site approach to intellectual stretch and challenge through the development of transforming tasks and strengthened by students setting their own learning goals.**
- Direction 2 Design, implement, review and embed effective and consistent pedagogical practices within and across all learning areas.**
- Direction 3 Provide planned and regular opportunities for staff and students to engage in self-review processes that will inform and strengthen the analysis of data to improve learning outcomes for all students.**

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

It was evident there had been actions taken to address the previous ESR directions. These included task designs catering for a range of students across multiple year levels, teachers responding to the students and adapting or changing their lessons. Data is analysed and discussed with the focus on learner impact and 'where to next' for the students. The School improvement Plan (SIP) is monitored and the challenge of practice reviewed to identify 'where to next'.

Elements of the previous directions are still to be addressed and are to be actioned in conjunction with the strategies identified in the SIP.

## 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?

It was evident to the panel the staff have a very strong understanding of the connection between curriculum, teaching and assessment to ensure quality teaching for all learners. Curriculum planning is linked to SIP actions and teachers plan to ensure students receive their year level curriculum entitlements.

The teachers recognise the SIP goals and targets keep them on track and achievement growth is monitored regularly and cross-checked at staff meetings. Previous directions and the SIP have changed the teaching approaches moving from formal teaching to a more open and differentiated approach.

Given the size of the student population, all achievement data is focused on individual growth. Teachers and SSOs regularly exchange the achievement progress of students who are supported through intervention strategies. Students were able to reference the regular testing conducted weekly.

The staff have a strong understanding of the impact that planning contributes to their practice. Shared reflection on the data results and analysis of errors or misunderstandings are re-addressed in teaching actions to rectify concepts which have been misunderstood.

Teachers indicated programs such as 7 Steps in Writing and Jolly Phonics have made a significant impact on literacy. The Big Ideas in Number (BliN) mathematics numeracy focus uses an investigative maths approach which is explicitly taught. The introduction of literacy and numeracy blocks with daily routines such as 'warm-up' maths activities, Jolly Phonics and grammar has enabled targeted teaching and follow-up with individual students. Students were able to clearly articulate their learning strategies from the BliN and '7 Steps in Writing' programs. Staff have recognised the students are more engaged with their learning and parents acknowledged the learning programs offered have made an impact on their children's learning.

Due to the small number of staff, they continue to build teacher capacity through personal learning, staff meetings and network learning teams. Staff use each other's expertise and expand on the opportunity to work with like schools to broaden and improve teaching practices in planning, implementing and monitoring student growth.

**Direction 1      Embed the focus on individual student achievement through the continuous development of shared teaching and learning strategies aligned to the school's improvement priorities.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

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

The Principal reported that all the work conducted is strongly focused on the literacy and mathematical approaches adopted which has enabled teachers to sharpen their focus on intentional teaching. The staff refer to student achievement as growth data. The SSOs are familiar with the summative assessments used, eg spelling and dictation which is shared and discussed to determine the next steps to support individual students. Staff know their students' data and the intervention strategies employed are demonstrating growth. The parents reported that the staff were able to identify 'where my child is at' and act upon this to address their learning needs.

Differentiation is apparent with teachers applying a variety of strategies ranging from scaffolding to open-ended problem approaches. The students indicated there is a mixture of lesson styles through explicit teaching, worksheets and games. They also know there are differences between the year levels. The students know what is expected of them and all were engaged in the tasks. SSOs provide intervention support with students working from the OnePlan strategy. They provide updates of children's progress which is recorded in their plan.

Teachers were regularly checking on work, providing feedback and walking around the class during lessons. Learning intentions acronyms such as WALT and WILF are used to explain the purpose of the learning. Teachers explain the work and use entry and exit questions to check on the students' understanding. Due to the size of classes, feedback practices are generally oral conversations and are used to consolidate concepts taught. Written tick sheet feedback approaches focus on organisational and compliance matters. Regular circle time sessions enable students to be heard but they indicated they would like more challenging work.

The staff have shown a collective commitment to having high expectations of students and developing quality teaching practices. They indicated more work is needed with the higher band students especially with extension work. Next steps to consider include strengthening teacher understanding of student involvement within the planning process, building student understanding and capacity in learner voice and decision-making about student learning potential.

**Direction 2**     **To meet the learning needs of all students, ensure that teachers strengthen the differentiated teaching opportunities to enable students to succeed in engaging and meaningful learning.**

## Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school engage with parents, the community and local partnership to support involvement and improvement in student learning?

The community context identifies that the population trend and growth is generally made up of retirees and mobile workers. The employment opportunities are also very limiting. The school participates in several community events such as ANZAC, Remembrance Day and are the facilitators of the community lunches. Staff acknowledged and valued the community connections and the shared celebrations such as the End of Year Concert.

The Governing Council and Parent Club are well-informed and proactive about all school matters. Communication strategies to advertise the learning across the school include telephone apps, weekly curriculum overviews, newsletters and articles in the local newspaper. Parents reported the communication of their children's progress is immediate and concerns are responded to quickly. The Principal indicated that further work is needed in building more of 'how your child is going' communication between the school and home. New parents transferring from other schools indicated the transition and follow-up on their children has been very good and they can see the improvement in their learning.

The school needs to build on the existing culture of learning and high expectation within the classroom and the broader community. The next steps include promoting the learning achievements of the whole school and individual students and celebrating these with families and the wider community. There is a need to build on a variety of existing and new strategies to enable families and other community members to be involved in the children's learning. Other considerations include investigating the use of specialist curriculum offerings as well as using outside personnel through hourly paid instructors, electronic formats or sharing services across neighbouring schools.

**Direction 3**    **To enrich student learning, strengthen the school community engagement through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships between the school and the broader community.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Robertstown Primary School is progressing and improving performance and growth in students' achievements and provides effective conditions for student learning. The school is using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement. Effective leadership provides strategic direction in learning and targeted interventions. Self-review processes are regularly and strategically used to determine the impact on student achievement.

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

- Direction 1**      **Embed the focus on individual student achievement through the continuous development of shared teaching and learning strategies aligned to the school's improvement priorities.**
- Direction 2**      **To meet the learning needs of all students, ensure that teachers strengthen the differentiated teaching opportunities to enable students to succeed in engaging and meaningful learning.**
- Direction 3**      **To enrich student learning, strengthen the school community engagement through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships between the school and the broader community.**

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



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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).

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. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies which may occur in any one year and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Robertstown Primary School from 2015-2019.

### **Reading**

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2016 and 2019, 75% or 6 of 8 of year 1 and 69% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2016 and 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2016 and 2019 33% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

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

### **Numeracy**

Between 2016 and 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 92% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 87% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2016 and 2019 no year 3 students, 40% of year 5 students and 37% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

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