Department for Education
External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Flaxmill School P-7

Conducted in May 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 Maxine McSherry , Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Brenton Robins, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal and Leaders.
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - ACEO (Aboriginal Community Education Officer) and AET (Aboriginal Education Teacher)
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers.

School context

Flaxmill School P-7 caters for children from pre-school to year 7. It is situated 23kms from the Adelaide CBD. The school enrolment in 2021 is 401, enrolment at the time of the previous review was 366. The local partnership is Beach Road.

The school has an ICSEA score of 958 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. Flaxmill School P-7 was reclassified in 2020, previously being Category 2. The preschool is Category 1.

The school population includes 10% Aboriginal students, 30% students with disabilities, 7% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% children/young people in care and 53% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 1st year of his second tenure. There are 2 Assistant Principals in their 4th year of their tenures with responsibility for student services, wellbeing, literacy, intervention, and Aboriginal education. In addition to this, the school has a preschool coordinator and a STEM coordinator.

There are 30 teachers, including 4 in the early years of their career and 8 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **Provide support and opportunities for staff to plan together to design tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points through the use of formative and summative assessments that will extend all students' learning opportunities and enable them to achieve at a higher level.**

Direction 2   **Develop and embed authentic student influence for learning through communicating clear learning intentions, developing success criteria with students and providing quality feedback to students that identifies what the student is doing well and strategies to further improve.**

Direction 3   **Develop consistent understandings and practices in moderation, and subsequent A-E grade allocation across year levels, through collaborative planning, teaching, assessing and analysing of student work and discussion of teaching pedagogy.**

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
Professional Learning communities (PLCs) are driving change in pedagogy at Flaxmill School P-7. All staff undertook staff training and development in leaning intentions, success criteria, learning design and moderation. The Flaxmill team created whole-school agreements in literacy and numeracy. A planning tool was implemented to monitor learning intentions, success criteria and student feedback. Staff use individual student literacy and numeracy data to map student achievement. Consistency is being developed through robust conversations on student achievement data against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and Literacy and Numeracy progressions. Professional Learning Communities indicated that further training and development in quality feedback and formative assessment is

necessary to embed these aspects into their everyday pedagogical practice. Moderation was also identified by staff as an area for further development. An upward trajectory of data in Running Records, Phonics screening and NAPLAN Reading indicate that implementation of the previous directions had a positive impact on the school improvement.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school use evidence from student achievement and growth data to inform relevant and high impact goals and targets for improvement?

School improvement planning is an area of strength for Flaxmill School P-7 with strong foundations in goal-setting. Teachers and leaders contribute to school improvement planning through targeted meetings at the start of the year and through professional learning communities (PLCs) throughout the year. The school employs a traffic light system to determine the goals which were met and those that require further attention or adjustment.

Multiple datasets are analysed to identify the needs of individual students and student cohorts. The data identifies strength, weaknesses, gaps and trends with responsive intervention, whole-class and small group programs put in place. Effectiveness of this approach is evident in the notable increases and improvements in NAPLAN Reading, Running Records and phonics data.

A whole-school assessment schedule was developed and used consistently by all teachers, with Score link valued by teachers as a resource for data storage. The school is well-positioned to review the assessment schedule and consider the volume of data being gathered and determine what is of most value.

Parents articulated the school's improvement plan key focus areas and valued time provided at Governing Council to share the year level group data.

The achievement growth of Aboriginal students is regularly tracked and monitored by staff and targeted responsive programs put in place. An additional level of support was allocated to Aboriginal students in the higher bands of learning to further ensure their continued growth.

The coordinated approach to school improvement planning assists the school in meeting their vision of helping all students become resilient and powerful learners achieving their personal best. The cycle could be further strengthened through engagement of School Services Officers (SSOs).

Learning growth and milestones are recognised in assemblies, newsletters and notes home. Staff and students reported this was an area that could be further reinforced as there is much to be celebrated.

Direction 1   **Continue to build collective responsibility in school improvement planning and celebrate achievements with staff, students, parents and the wider community.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Staff had training and development in learning design, formative assessment, summative assessment and quality feedback. Internal and external expertise is used to support professional development with whole school improvement planning and whole-school professional development reflected in individual performance plans of teachers.

Assessment data is consistently analysed using robust conversations in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) about what leaders and teachers want students to learn and what quality learning will look like in the classroom.

Integration of 'Back to Front Maths' across the school enabled teachers to better understand the misconceptions students may have and adjust their teaching program accordingly. Professional development around learning design and assessment, blended with collaborative planning across the learning band teams, strengthened the level of differentiation provided in individual classrooms.

Preschool to school transition is carefully monitored, with student achievement growth points mapped. This data is used to determine intervention and inter-agency support required for the youngest children, ensuring a strong start to schooling.

There is a range of strategies being put in place to help students understand the intended learning outcomes for lessons or units of work. Learning intentions for units of work or individual lessons were evident in classrooms. Some teachers use formative assessment, incorporating student feedback, to ensure student learning continues to move forward. The school is now well-placed to embed this consistently across the whole school.

Teachers use a variation of approaches, including traffic light systems, flip books, 'What Went Well?' question time, exit cards and working walls to enable students to show their level of understanding. Professional Learning Communities provide the ideal forum for this data to be discussed and analysed to improve achievement and growth.

Parents articulated a range of ways in which their child's learning needs were being met and appreciate the responsive programs and the high level of commitment from staff.

Direction 2   **Further develop whole-school understandings of formative assessment and implement consistently to effectively interpret student achievement and move learning forward.**

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

Staff provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students and families with a strong commitment to continually improve teaching and learning to support all learners. Attendance data is the strongest in the Partnership and reinforces the culture of learning which exists.

The leadership team clearly articulated their vision on improving student achievement, and were committed to the principle that all children can and deserve to learn.

Innovation through STEM and links with the Adelaide University and CSIRO support staff in building student capacity. Programs, including structured Nature Play, Robotics and Robo Gals, are valued by students and parents.

School services officers add value to the complex classrooms by providing structured support for individual and small groups of students. Identified programs were established to address disadvantage and ensure that students who are yet to reach a standard of educational achievement, and those excelling, are provided with targeted support to continue their growth.

Moderation is being used by PLCs to build consistency in expectations, task design and assessment. The school is well-positioned to extend this across all PLCs on-site and beyond the school community for specialist teachers.

Students described a range of strategies encouraged by their teachers to help them when they were stuck with their learning, including staying calm, trying a different approach, seeking help form a friend, persisting or asking an adult. This supports students with becoming independent learners.

There was a diverse range of approaches to student goal-setting, including students who set their own goals to students who, in consultation with their teacher, considered their data to collaboratively determine their goal. Building consistency in goal-setting will further support student achievement.

There was a range of responses from students when asked about their performance in assessments and grades, and in relation to what they would need to do to achieve a higher grade. Some children were well-informed and articulate about their progress, other students were unaware of their progress or achievement.

Direction 3   **Collaboratively develop assessment tasks and frameworks that enable students to monitor and assess their learning and understand what is required to achieve a higher grade.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Flaxmill School P-7 is an inclusive, caring, and responsive environment supporting a complex community. Leadership is committed to optimising the conditions for learning and blends high expectations with ongoing support. It is a strong learning community with contributions from staff, students and parents valued. The school is well-placed to continue to build on a solid foundation of student achievement to ensure that every child and young person continues to experience academic and social growth.

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

Direction 1   Continue to build collective responsibility in school improvement planning and celebrate achievements with staff, students, parents and the wider community.

Direction 2   Further develop whole-school understandings of formative assessment and implement consistently to effectively interpret student achievement and move learning forward.

Direction 3   Collaboratively develop assessment tasks and frameworks that enable students to monitor and assess their learning and understand what is required to achieve a higher grade.
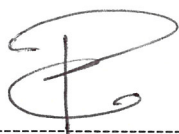
Based on the school's current performance, Flaxmill School P-7 will be externally reviewed again 2024.

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Peter Cobb
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Flaxmill School P-7

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 2019, 66% of year 1 and 74% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2018 and 2020 there is an upwards trend for year 1 students.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 80% of year 3 students, 77% of year 5 students and 76% 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 2019 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 40% of year 3, 26% of year 5 and 16% 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 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 11 out of 43 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 6 out of 37 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of year 3 students, 77% of year 5 students and 62% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

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

In 2019, 10% of year 3, 12% of year 5 and 11% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 5 out of 43 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 4 out of 37 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.