

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Cadell 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 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 Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Steve Freeman, Review Principal.

## School context

Cadell Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 180kms from the Adelaide CBD. Enrolment in 2018 is 9 students, and has been declining in the last 5 years.

The school has an ICSEA score of 903, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 1 child in care, and 45% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the first 6 months of his tenure at the school. There are 2 teachers (including the principal) and 45 hours of school services officers time. There are 2 class groups: reception to year 3 and year 4 to 7 for morning literacy and numeracy, and reception to year 7 in the afternoon for other subjects.

## 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:

**Improvement Agenda:** How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

**School Community Partnerships:** To what extent does parent engagement with the school impact on student learning?

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

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

Cadell Primary School is unique in having an enrolment of 9 students, enabling the learning of each child to be personalised. One of the strengths of the school is the relationships developed between the school staff, students, parents and wider town community. The school is described by parents as a 'family oriented school' where everyone is considered and counts. This has created an environment where everyone is focused on the learning opportunities, achievement and growth of students.

The school uses several datasets to track and monitor students' progress, which includes NAPLAN and PAT, coupled with the site-specific diagnostic assessments such as Westwood Spelling, Brightpath Writing, A-E grading and individual teacher records. The school has a comprehensive approach to intervention using a flowchart to collect data on all students at wave 1, 2 and 3 levels.

Achievement data is collected by all the staff and is managed by the principal, who collates, analyses and presents the information via data walls and school reports. This information is accessible to everyone with an annual data day held in term 4, as part of the school self-review and future planning process.

Staff knowledge and reference to the students' achievement data was evident to the review panel. The recent inclusion of the Brightpath Writing assessment tool has been well-received by staff and students as a means of tracking achievement. Students were able to describe how the writing wall chart helps them and explained what they need to do to improve to the next stage of their writing. The teachers and school services officers also commented on how they use the data to guide the students to the next level of achievement.

Intervention programs are conducted by SSOs, focusing on literacy and numeracy, using assessment tools such as Quicksmart maths and MultiLit. They were very appreciative of the training opportunities provided for them in these tools and showed obvious knowledge of the data and how to make use of it. Sharing and recording of the students' results between the teachers and SSOs is readily done both formally and informally. SSOs were unanimous about the success of these programs, stating that they could see growth in the students' knowledge and consolidation of their maths concepts and reading.

The classroom teachers indicated that the training and development in Brightpath and, more recently, Seven Steps to Writing, has been beneficial. One teacher stated that she had "seen a lot of growth over time by students", and shares the information with her students. Other strategies that have been employed include work done in maths through the Big Ideas in Number (BiN) strategy, where teachers recorded student achievements and modified lessons for the next level of learning for each child.

The panel concluded that evidence-based accountability has been fostered in the school, resulting in growth and improvement of all students. The school can further develop a seamless approach between evidence-based learning design, continuous collection of student growth against continuums of development, and reporting against and review of individualised student learning plans.

#### **Direction 1**

**Streamline learning design, assessment, recording and reporting student learning against individualised student learning plans.**

### **To what extent does parent engagement with the school impact on student learning?**

The Cadell Primary School's motto 'We may be small but we are strong' is clearly understood and supported by all members of the school community, and validated by the evidence in relation to parent engagement with the school. Given the size of the parent community it was very evident to the panel that they are very proactive in supporting the learning opportunities offered, both on and off-campus.

Communication between the school and home is very good and was described by members of the governing council as being of "a high order". The principal and staff are seen as approachable and act upon any concerns or issues that may arise. The principal's consultation processes are broad and inclusive of all sectors of the community in seeking information about all school matters. This is exemplified through newsletter articles detailing events and achievements, formal reports at governing council meetings or any involvement of community volunteers and organisations (for example, Cadell Training Centre and the 'Oscar W' Echuca Run). This community involvement has generated a genuine interest and appreciation within the school.

The school promotes a playgroup network between 3 other local schools with about 15 children attending. Such activities are important and provide the infrastructure and support to ensure its continuity. New families to the school commented on the quality of the transition process conducted by the principal and staff. One parent indicated that her induction into the school was very thorough, with a welcoming approach by staff, a genuine interest in her child's learning, and regular follow-up contact about her child's wellbeing and academic progress. Parents also commented positively on the transition processes between the local kindergartens and secondary school.

Reporting student achievement and progress is solid and comprehensive across the school, with a range of strategies that include three-way interviews, formal reports and the review of individual learning plans (ILPs). Reports are well-understood and any questions raised by the parents have led to interviews with positive outcomes.

Support of children with specific and identified learning needs is strong and parents are readily involved in engaging with their child's progress. They are involved in ILP and negotiated education plan discussions, and the school is transitioning to the One Child One Plan planning tool. Teachers provide parents copies of their child's ILP and conduct regular interviews throughout the year. Communication with parents is through personal contact, email or a communication book. One parent indicated that the communication book provides her with immediate information on her child's learning achievements and behaviours, and that she greatly appreciates this continual flow of information.

Parents were unanimous in their support for the school's commitment to offering extra-curricular opportunities for the students to complement the classroom learning program. Excursions and incursions are rated highly amongst the parents and add value to curriculum provided by teachers. The review panel acknowledged parent and broader community participation in assisting with excursions, special events or as classroom volunteers. A parent said: "Learning does not stop at the school fence".

Partnership between the school, parents and the broader community can deliver positive outcomes in supporting the success of learners. The size of the school and its future is a matter of concern from all stakeholders; however, this has not hindered the learning opportunities available to students. The school is seen as an integral part of the Cadell Township, and the engagement of parents and the wider community in the students' learning is commendable.

## **Direction 2**

**Develop and build the knowledge and understanding of the learning programs offered within the school with the parent community, and how they can work in partnership with the school to engage and stretch the learning of the students.**

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

The site improvement plan (SIP) statement of purpose states that 'the school will provide an educational program that will develop in each student a passion and purpose for learning and a commitment to maximising his/her learning potential'. This is to be achieved through a combination of explicit and inquiry-based teaching methodologies undertaken by the teachers and school support officers.

The school connects with other network schools and the local partnership to share training and development opportunities for all staff to improve their pedagogy. The principal indicated that the professional learning opportunities are important for small schools, and stated 'networking reduces isolation' amongst staff. Professional development undertaken by staff ranged from partnership activities in assessment and moderation, to site-specific initiatives, such as the guided reading program, STEM and

observations at other schools focusing on special education programs. These sessions have not only developed staff teaching skills, but they have also provided a better understanding of the research behind each of the offered learning strategies.

Site performance development planning sessions are held twice a year with the focus on site directions, data use and pedagogical practice. When challenged about their practices staff are in a better position to respond to 'hard questions' and recognise that they are now more accountable to parents in what they teach. Teachers and SSOs have valued the professional development experiences, where an SSO stated that 'they feel that they are considered as an educator, working with teachers for the same outcome'. This was confirmed by a teacher who indicated that sharing work with other schools validated what she was doing in her own practice.

The school uses a thematic approach to deliver an integrated approach to the curriculum based on input from the students and linked to the core subjects from the curriculum. The planning of these topics is cross-referenced with the Australian Curriculum (AC). Through the support of the Senior Leader Learning Improvement Primary, and the exchange between colleagues at the partnership level, staff are developing their knowledge and use of the task design model to blend the curriculum content with the general capabilities.

The review panel observed students' presentations of a recent unit of study (Tom Kruse – Outback Mailman), demonstrating the application of their learning through subjects such as maths, history, geography, technology and English. Students' information recall was high and indicated a connection with their learning. One student said: "the teacher makes the Tom Kruse project interesting". The teacher indicated that the next theme topic (Olden Days' Technology) came from the students' interests as a follow-up from a museum visit related to the Tom Kruse project.

Learning intentions were being used in the classrooms through discussions and displays on the board, although it was observed that the language used was 'teacher-centric' and could be reshaped into 'kids-speak'. Differentiation strategies that supported the learning intentions of lessons varied within the school and were tailored closely to the individual child. They ranged from individual conferencing to the use of specific programs such as the Quickvoice reading app for identified students. Parents acknowledged the differentiated strategies that teachers use to support the diverse range of students and their abilities. Several parents cited how their children have improved in their learning, especially over the last 6 to 12 months.

Assessment strategies used ranged from formal tests, such as Westwood spelling tests, guided reading assessments, Big ideas in Number (BiN) maths, and Brightpath writing to task rubrics and peer assessments. One teacher indicated that BiN maths results enabled her to identify deficits in the students' knowledge and make changes to the teaching focus, resulting in growth in the students' understanding of number facts. Intervention strategies used include Quicksmart maths and Multilit reading, which are managed by the SSO personnel. Information from all tests is recorded and discussed amongst all staff with appropriate modifications to the learning program for each child. The panel observed student participation in a peer assessment with the responses being fair and constructive to the presenters.

Students interviewed indicated that the level of work offered was an even mixture of hard and easy work. Older students recognised that some lessons such as spelling and reading followed routines in which the children progressed through a list of activities. Other lesson tasks like project work, allowed students to select how they were to present their learning. Students agreed that teachers explained the work clearly, and said that their teacher only provided clues or prompts when the work was challenging, which made

them “think harder and work things out ourselves”. Students said teachers make their work interesting by using prompts such as songs, iPads, computers and games.

Teachers indicated that verbal feedback is a big part of the feedback strategy used given the size of the classes, and is based on questioning. The panel observed a number of feedback techniques in students’ exercise books, ranging from ticks and stickers, to more detailed written comments, including provocations to challenge and extend student learning. Students said that teachers gave clear feedback, and recognised that feedback helped them with their learning. When asked how the feedback could be improved, they suggested more detailed feedback, using rubrics to assess against, and more peer feedback during presentations.

The principal indicated that all students have clear individual learning goals in their ILPs. The focus of these goals is generally around English and maths, with one other (for example, personal organisation). These goals are shared and discussed with students using language like ‘What I want to learn...’ and ‘I can...’ Students’ understanding of ILPs is varied, believing that ILPs “show you what you have been doing” and “you can record your own comments along with those of the teachers and parents”.

The school has incorporated Growth Mindsets and the Learning Pit within the learning process to support students in achieving their learning goals. This was verified by comments made by the students who confidently spoke of these concepts and the display of wall charts in the classrooms.

By strengthening teacher knowledge in task design that involves students through learner voice and co-design, teachers will further develop and embed effective and consistent pedagogical practice in curriculum planning. Connectedness of the professional learning and site improvement plan is clear, and provides a united and logical approach to the professional growth of teachers and support staff in order to improve the learning outcomes of all students.

### **Direction 3**

**Build on the capacity to design consistent teaching practices that integrate student influence, evidence-based data and learning intentions in a manner that links student learning from reception to year 7.**

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

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

Given the small enrolment numbers the school enacts its motto of ‘small but strong’ by instilling a sense of positive achievement amongst all of its students from year 4 to 7. The panel noted that all students demonstrate their understanding of the positive approach to their learning and the learning of others. Peer interactions between students, and relationships between staff and students were conducive to a positive learning environment.

Students held deep and meaningful discussions about their learning with a high level of thinking. This was exemplified during the oral presentations of projects completed through to congratulating peers for achieving particular learning goals (for example, acknowledging the achievement of their friends in the Brightpath writing success chart). The panel recognised that a personalised relationship between the staff and students is a strong factor in supporting them with their learning aspirations. Parents wholly supported the teachers and their work in promoting an equitable learning environment for all.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Cadell Primary School is progressing and improving performance and effectiveness. There is evidence indicating that demonstrated growth in students' achievement is at or above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context, and the school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.

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

1. Streamline learning design, assessment, recording and reporting student learning against individualised student learning plans.
2. Develop and build on the knowledge and understanding of the learning programs offered within the school with the parent community, and how they can work in partnership with the school to engage and stretch the learning of the students.
3. Build on the capacity to design consistent teaching practices that integrate student influence, evidence-based data and learning intentions in a manner that links student learning from reception to year 7.

Based on the school's current performance, Cadell 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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John Sutton  
PRINCIPAL  
CADELL 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 86.1%.

## 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).

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 Cadell Primary School over the years 2012 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 2012 and 2017, the trend for years 1 and 2 demonstrated that 53% (9 of 17) of year 1 and 53% (8 of 15) of year 2 students achieved the expected SEA.

Between 2012 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 53% (9 of 17) of year 3 students, 69% (11 of 16) of year 5 students, and 76% (13 of 17) of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2012 and 2017, 24% (4 of 17) of year 3 students, 13% (2 of 16) of year 5 students, and none of the 17 year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Between 2012 and 2017, for those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 50% (1 of 2) of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

#### Numeracy

Between 2012 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 47% (8 of 17) of year 3 students, 63% (10 of 16) of year 5 students, and 59% (10 of 17) of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2012 and 2017, 12% (2 of 17) of year 3 students, 13% (2 of 16) of year 5 students, and 18% (3 of 17) of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

Between 2012 and 2017, for those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100% (1 of 1) of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.