

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

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Report for Nangwarry Primary School

Conducted in April 2017



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and  
Child Development

### **Review details**

*A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) 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 DECD schools.*

*The framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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.*

*The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.*

*This External School Review was conducted by June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sheree Mader, Review Principal.*

## School context

Nangwarry Primary School is located 401kms south of the Adelaide CBD. The school is part of the south-east Coast and Vines Partnership.

Student enrolment has been stable at 51 since 2011. The school is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 10% Aboriginal students, 12% students with disabilities, and 35% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The School Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her 13<sup>th</sup> year. Class configuration involves 3 classes: Reception/Year 1, Years 2/3/4 and Years 5/6/7. Two of the three class teachers are new to the school, with one being a graduate teacher. The school has a preschool on-campus, and collaborative work between the Preschool and Early Years staff is proactive and supports early childhood learning.

## 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 three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

**Student Learning:** To what extent is there a culture of improvement that provides for the varied needs of all learners?

**Improvement Agenda:** How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

**Effective Leadership:** How effectively does the school foster a culture of learning?

## To what extent is there a culture of improvement that provides for the varied needs of all learners?

From the data in the School Performance Report, between 2012 and 2016, 46% of Year 3, 31% Year 5, and 50% of Year 7 students achieved the Standard of Education Achievement (SEA) in NAPLAN Reading. In NAPLAN Numeracy, 32% of Year 3, 28% of Year 5, and 46% of Year 7 students achieved the SEA. With these results the Review Panel was keen to investigate the depth and nature of the culture to improve student learning outcomes for all students.

Varying support programs for students identified as Wave 2 were verified through conversations and documentation throughout the review. However, the efficiency as to whether the skills being taught to identified students were being developed in class-based learning could not be verified through comments from students and, in some cases, parents. It is imperative to address the effectiveness of support programs as part of the self-review process to ensure resources are targeted towards the best support of student requirements.

For students in Wave 1, there were limited verifications, based on observations and comments received, of students being engaged with rigour and higher-order learning opportunities, which challenged them to extend their current level of academic achievement. Student responses regarding how they felt about whether the learning was easy, at the right level or too hard indicated more compliance to learning than genuinely being actively involved and engaged: "the work we do is okay", "sometimes I get bored as we do a lot of worksheets, but they are fairly easy" and "most of us do what the teacher tells us to do". Evidence of year level common tasks was confirmed during walkthroughs and in student workbooks.

Whilst the Review Panel sighted evidence of the collective and proactive initiatives being implemented by the early years and preschool staff, the pedagogies to support and engage students across the site varied greatly. Staff spoke of eliciting prior knowledge and using pre- and post-tests to demonstrate student growth. This was

also verified by students. However, when students were asked what grade they felt they were working at and what they could do to improve, the comments came back to the teacher's responsibility: "listen more", "ask the teacher" and "do what the teacher tells me to do". Whilst collaboration for curriculum delivery between staff was evident, the level of consistency and coherence to a common understanding and approaches to the whole school processes could not be verified.

The Review Panel can verify from conversations that all staff have high expectations for students. With the high turnover of staff, it is essential that a key priority for leadership is to ensure high expectations in relation to whole-school agreements and curriculum delivery across the school. Regular observations and Professional Development meetings that are aligned to student learning, growth and, as required, changes to teachers' pedagogical practice, will ensure ongoing tracking and monitoring of student learning outcomes at the individual, year level and cohort levels.

The Review Panel can verify the collaborative approach and willingness by staff to develop their skills and this indicates they are ready to share their developing understanding in planning, programming and moderating. Providing staff opportunities to both share the creation and implementation of transformational tasks, with follow-up on moderating student work, will assist in developing rigour and higher-order learning opportunities for all students.

#### **Direction 1**

**Increase growth in student achievement by documenting and implementing consistent planning and programming, which is rigorous, evidence-based and provides for differentiation to challenge and stretch learning for all students.**

### **How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?**

Data, over-time, indicates that whole-school improvement at Nangwarry Primary School is not happening. Therefore, the Site Improvement Plan must include a clear vision with a narrow and deep focus on areas that will make a difference to the improvement of student learning outcomes at school, year level and down to individual student levels.

Self-review processes are a fundamental force in achieving school improvement. The Review Panel confirmed aspects of self-review processes at Nangwarry Primary School, but the depth and connectedness between strategic directions, Site Improvement Plan, class teaching and drilling down to the individual student level could not be verified.

Staff in formal and informal conversations shared their involvement of reviewing the Site Improvement Plan and targets for 2017. The data management plan was reviewed by all staff with agreements to whole-school expectations. Through conversations with staff, the Review Panel verified that, to date, data is being collected within the designated timeframe.

The analysis and use of data is an essential component of the review process in informing and shaping improvement. At a whole-school level, a new staffing position has been created that provides for a strategic approach to data collection. The focus on increasing the percentage of students achieving at appropriate standards and aiming to achieve in the higher bands must be a priority. Raw data alone is not enough unless it is used to deeply analyse root cause to identify reasons for lack of student learning growth. A triangulation of data is required so that data becomes informative and promotes conversations, comparisons and evaluations. Reliable quality data enables leaders and staff to make informed decisions and plans to target their efforts and resources.

Purposeful data conversations about the standards of student achievement and the effectiveness of school processes in supporting student growth must be had on a regular basis to track and monitor ongoing progress. It is imperative that leadership gets into classes to see what is happening. This could also be expanded with peer-to-peer observations and feedback.

It is necessary that all components of site improvement are connected and are being led by the Principal in a manner that provides consistent review, reflection and accountability with high expectations. Clear and strategic documentation supports the sustainability of approaches.

To ensure accountability both individually and collectively, staff need to understand their role in the process and become active participants in all aspects of the cycle of school improvement. There needs to be a clear and collective responsibility for school improvement to ensure growth in student learning is happening. The Review Panel can verify that all staff have a current Performance Development Plan. It is essential that the effectiveness of teacher performance and the evaluation of student achievement growth is being regularly reviewed and that conversations address this in regular Performance Development meetings.

#### **Direction 2**

**Establish a cycle of self-review to ensure that the school is evaluating the impact of the improvement agenda on student learning and achievement outcomes to identify future directions and strategies.**

#### **How effectively does the school foster a culture of learning?**

The Review Panel was able to verify that whole-school documentation exists for literacy and numeracy agreements. However, the level of uptake of these was questionable, with minimal evidence of collective and individual accountability to the agreements. A thorough school review will lead to identifying a narrow and deep focus which also targets professional learning opportunities aligned to the priorities. The leadership will then need to systemically support staff to develop a consistent understanding and approach to the focus areas through regular observations and Performance and Development meetings.

The involvement of student voice for learning is an important aspect. Students need to understand the purpose for learning and how to learn. Their inclusion in the learning process will empower them with the responsibility for self-improvement. Student comments throughout the review suggested a superficial involvement in planning and assessment tasks. Evidence on student involvement in developing assessment tasks was not verified, nor was their understanding of the criteria needed to obtain a 'C' grade or above. A few students provided evidence of how their teacher challenges them: 'additional tasks', 'higher year level work' and "she tells us what we can do to improve". The Review Panel sighted evidence of common checklists which students used to self-edit their work. In sighting student work, the Review Panel noted no written feedback on student work, with the exception of the Early Years, where evidence sighted was specific and concise. Two students spoke of the feedback their teacher provides them with to improve their work, such as re-reading and self-correcting. They also commented that learning was fun and that this year, they have improved their attitude and behaviours because their teacher believes in them.

A purposeful and strategic approach to authentic student involvement in learning will see a move to genuine and powerful learning opportunities for all.

When asked about goal-setting, only a few students articulated what their goal was. When seeking information about challenge, it became apparent that students were comfortable to be cruising, rather than inspired to challenge and identify ways for self-improvement. The Review Panel verified through the class walkthroughs that goal-setting was a common practice. However, the majority could not explain how setting goals was helping them in their learning.

All parents spoke about the improved communication from the school this year. However, they all shared their concerns to the Review Panel both in formal and informal conversations about not knowing exactly where their child is at, where they need to be, and what is happening at class level to support them to improve. Some parents commented on the need to find tutors to support their child in readiness for secondary school and "we would rather get a tutor now than wait, if we knew which areas they needed to improve".

The Review Panel could not verify a purposeful culture for learning at Nangwarry Primary School. There was a sense of complacency, rather than rigour with high expectations. With the low achievement levels over time, it is necessary to raise the standards through a deliberate focus on learning, targeting improved student learning outcomes and building teacher capacity. This will require an in-depth review and analysis of current practices and then a targeting of priorities, including professional development that will make a difference. A narrow and deep focus will be required to ensure consistency in strategic implementation of the targeted processes.

#### **Direction 3**

**Increase student engagement and raise achievement levels by strengthening the professional practice of staff to support all students to be successful and powerful learners.**

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Nangwarry Primary School has staff committed to self-improvement and a belief that they can improve student learning. The school must ensure that students are provided with a curriculum that is based on intentional planning and increased rigour to improve both levels of engagement and academic achievement. The Principal, as the instructional leader, will need to ensure coherence and consistency to the agreed strategic directions and alignment with the Site Improvement Plan.

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

1. Increase growth in student achievement by documenting and implementing consistent planning and programming, which is rigorous, evidence-based and provides for differentiation to challenge and stretch learning for all students.
2. Establish a cycle of self-review to ensure that the school is evaluating the impact of the improvement agenda on student learning and achievement outcomes to identify future directions and strategies.
3. Increase student engagement and raise achievement levels by strengthening the professional practice of staff to support all students to be successful and powerful learners.

Based on the school's current performance, Nangwarry Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2018.



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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 three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

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Karyn Prelc  
PRINCIPAL  
NANGWARRY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson

## Appendix One

### Policy compliance

*The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.*

The Principal of Nangwarry Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 94.6%.

## Appendix Two

### School Performance Overview

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD 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 Nangwarry Primary School over the years 2012 to 2016. 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 2016, 8 of 35 Year 1, and 6 of 35 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Between 2012 and 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 13 of 28 Year 3 students, 9 of 29 Year 5 students, and 11 of 22 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

One Year 3 and one Year 7 student between 2012 and 2016 achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

#### Numeracy

Between 2012 and 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 9 of 28 Year 3 students, 8 of 29 Year 5 students, and 10 of 22 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Between 2012 and 2016 no student has achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.