

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR WOODEND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in November 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"*

*This External School Review has evaluated:*

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

*The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.*

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

*This External School Review was conducted by Julie Hardy Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Fione Love, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of Woodend Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Cyber Safety: Cyber Safety is addressed explicitly through the Social Media and Digital Technology Acceptable Use Policy.
- Bullying Data: A bullying audit has been conducted, analysed and followed up annually with ongoing monitoring of bullying reports and interventions. Results will be reported to the Governing Council twice annually from 2016.
- Individual Learning Plans for Aboriginal students will be completed by Term 4 2015.
- Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum is being taught in all classes in 2015.
- Employee grievance processes will be formalised and documented.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 93.5%, which exceeds the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Woodend Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school situated in the southern metropolitan area. Enrolments have been increasing from 574 in 2010 to approximately 660 students enrolled in 2015. The school is classified as DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage Category 7 and has an Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) score of 1063.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 4% Students with Disabilities, less than 1% students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), 4% of students for whom English is an Additional Dialect or Language (EALD), and 11% of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The Leadership Team consists of a Principal, Deputy Principal, Senior Leader: Curriculum and Senior Leader: Digital Technologies

### Lines of inquiry

*During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:*

- Student Learning:**            **How are students achieving over time?**
- To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?**
- Effective Teaching:**        **How well do teachers design tasks to engage students and to build on their prior skills and knowledge?**
- School Community Partnerships:** **How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

### How well are students achieving over time?

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 93% of Year 3 students, 75% of Year 5 students and 83% of Year 7 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This represents an upward trend at Year 3, from 85% in 2013 to 93% in 2015. For numeracy, in 2015, the percentage of students who achieved the SEA or above was 82% at Year 3, 76% at Year 5 and 85% at Year 7.

In reading, 45% of Year 3 students, 25% of Year 5 students and 25% of Year 7 achieved in the two highest proficiency bands of NAPLAN in 2015. In numeracy, 28% of Year 3 students, 10% of Year 5 students and 17% of Year 7 students achieved in the two highest proficiency bands. For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 14 of 26 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 14 of 27 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. In numeracy, 4 of 15 students remained in the upper proficiency bands from Year 3 to 5 and 10 of 22 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 to 7.

The challenge for the school is to increase and sustain the proportion of students demonstrating high level learning and achieving in the higher proficiency bands as they progress through the school. Based on the analysis of achievement data in literacy and numeracy, as well as school-based data analysis provided by the Principal, the Review Panel focused on the impact of processes being developed through the school's strategic plan to raise achievement.

An important element for improvement considered through the External School Review process is the effective use of student achievement data to monitor and evaluate how effectively students are achieving over time. It is therefore crucial for schools to gather, collate, and analyse a range of valid and reliable data, and determine what the data can tell them about how they can help students be more successful.

Panel members heard how teachers at Woodend Primary School collect a range of useful evidence of student learning at classroom level and modify their teaching programs to better cater for students' learning needs. At the time of the review, the school was developing a system to collect and analyse reliable and valid data to track and monitor students' learning outcomes as they progress through the school, and to inform school planning.

### Direction 1

**Ensure all students make expected or greater than expected progress by collecting and analysing reliable and easily-accessible data, and regularly monitoring progress of individual students and cohorts from Reception to Year 7.**

### To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

At Woodend Primary School, the focus over time has been on developing “powerful learners who know how to learn; are able to think and respond to the unfamiliar with confidence and clarity; are able to critique, create and communicate; and are able to make a positive difference to the lives and learning of others.” In 2015-17, school improvement priorities are: Multi-Literacies and Numeracy, Creativity and Critical Thinking and Powerful Learners.

In recent years, a focus on digital technologies has supported school improvement. The panel heard how the school Edublog provides an avenue for staff to access data about student learning, professional learning, share ideas and views, as well as be involved in consultation processes. Facebook and Edmodo also provide avenues for two-way communication with parents, and are at the centre of the parent engagement focus being led through the Governing Council. The panel heard that digital technologies are used to varying degrees to engage and challenge students, and noted the opportunity to build on the good practice that has begun and ensure all students benefit.

Effective pedagogy is central to engagement and challenge. The Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) is the pedagogical framework incorporating the most recent evidence and understanding about learning and teaching, which South Australian educators use to maximise student engagement and achievement. The panel heard how the TfEL has wide influence on teaching approaches at Woodend Primary School, supported by regular input from a specialist TfEL coach.

To further support the coherence of teaching approaches, teachers work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and are given planned time to reflect on classroom practices and their impact on student learning. PLCs meet three times a term and the panel heard how teachers also meet informally in teaching teams. There is an expectation that staff remain current in their understanding of educational research and practice, and all teachers who spoke to the panel were actively engaged in professional learning through PLCs. Teachers who talked to the panel were committed to translating the learning from PLCs into classroom action through trialling and sharing. Staff reported that PLCs were highly valued.

The panel saw evidence of pedagogy and learning tasks that are designed to support the needs of a range of learners. Teaching programs are structured, sequenced and referenced to the Australian Curriculum. Open-ended tasks are commonly designed to cater for varied needs, and the work being undertaken on transforming tasks to create intellectual stretch was being shared through PLCs.

When discussing challenge with staff, parents and students, the panel noted a considerable variation in views. Teachers talked about some independent and high-achieving students challenging themselves, but also reluctance by some to engage with tasks they find difficult. Students reported varying degrees of challenge in their learning and also reported feeling frustrated and even angry when they found work difficult. The school’s current focus is on building resilience, aiming to increase students’ ability to struggle with challenging tasks and seek creative solutions. The panel noted the opportunity to strengthen this approach to ensure students have regular opportunities to work at their point of challenge.

#### **Direction 2**

**Increase the proportion of students achieving high proficiency bands by evaluating pedagogies that support engagement and challenge, gaining a whole-school community understanding and ensuring successful strategies are evident across the school.**

### How well do teachers design tasks to engage students and to build on their prior skills and knowledge?

In discussions with students, the panel noted high levels of student interest and motivation evident when students described activities that connect with their interests and have an element of self-direction. Students identified inquiry, geography and self-directed projects such as the “Memories” and “Life and Times” projects, which were being undertaken by upper primary students at the time of the review. Teachers identified “Genius Hour” as another opportunity for self-directed learning. Teachers work actively to build and maintain

positive learning environments and the panel noted productive use of learning spaces that support flexible learning.

The panel saw evidence of a range of teaching strategies evident with appropriate levels of scaffolding to support learning. Some teachers and students talked about the way that students' prior knowledge is used as a starting point when designing tasks, and how assessment criteria are negotiated with students as part of task design. The panel noted variation in the degree to which rubrics and assessment criteria describe progressively higher levels of skill development and complexity.

One way of increasing engagement and interest in learning is by providing opportunities for students to reflect on teaching and learning. The TfEL Compass is an online professional learning tool for teachers to reflect on their teaching and learning practices through self-reflection and feedback from students and trusted colleagues, and has been made available as a resource through the school's Edublog. However, at the time of the review, the Compass was not widely used by teachers to reflect upon their practice.

The panel saw commonality in strategies designed to engage students in their learning, for example, negotiating learning and assessment criteria, and noted the opportunity to support students to build skills over time by developing a suite of agreed strategies that are used across the school.

### **Direction 3**

**Accelerate learning growth by ensuring challenge and intellectual stretch is consistently evident in learning tasks, and students have opportunities to regularly engage in and demonstrate high level learning.**

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

Children and young people, when given the chance, can express their views effectively, if sometimes simply, about teaching and learning. Their input can take many forms, for example discussion, feedback, opinion surveys, group representation, and focus teams, but what each suggests is a level of involvement and investment that can be a powerful tool for improving performance and closing the achievement gap.

At Woodend Primary School, the school vision reflects students' opinions and aspirations, which were sought through the vision development process. The vision strongly guides work at the school and focuses on what the school wants for its students. The Student Representative Council (SRC) has representatives from classes across the school, and undertakes a number of roles designed to influence peers and impact on learning. Students who spoke with the panel talked about developing their personal and social capabilities, particularly in terms of understanding relationships and being role models for others. Student leaders talked about their work in leading the SRC and engaging members in learning about impulsivity.

The panel heard about opportunities for students to be involved in decision-making in authentic contexts within the school. At the time of the review, input was being sought in relation to the Kitchen Garden Program from students, teachers and parents. The school utilises a variety of methods to collect student opinions and perceptions.

In relation to student input into learning design, the panel heard that teachers negotiate learning tasks and success criteria with students to varying degrees. Students talked about receiving feedback about their learning in both written and verbal form. The panel heard that students felt feedback was general in nature and gave them a sense of "how they are going", rather than specific feedback about their achievement and what they need to do to improve. Teachers identified further work in formative assessment and feedback as a way of providing an avenue for students to have greater ownership of their learning. Some students who talked to the panel spoke about teachers seeking feedback about the effectiveness of teaching strategies; however, this was not a consistent practice. The panel noted the opportunity for this to be used more consistently.

### **Direction 4**

**Increase the proportion of students achieving in the highest proficiency bands by strengthening student influence on designing and evaluating their learning at classroom level.**

### **OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015**

**Woodend Primary School is tracking well. Good performance is evident through a culture of continuous reflection and improvement and a holistic approach to teaching and learning.**

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

- 1. Ensure all students make expected or greater than expected progress by collecting and analysing reliable and easily-accessible data, and regularly monitoring progress of individual students and cohorts from Reception to Year 7.**
- 2. Increase the proportion of students achieving high proficiency bands by evaluating pedagogies that support engagement and challenge, gaining a whole-school community understanding and ensuring successful strategies are evident across the school.**
- 3. Accelerate learning growth by ensuring challenge and intellectual stretch is consistently evident in learning tasks, and students have opportunities to regularly engage in and demonstrate high level learning.**
- 4. Increase the proportion of students achieving in the highest proficiency bands by strengthening student influence on designing and evaluating their learning at classroom level.**

**Based on the school's current performance, Woodend Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.**