

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

On-track evaluation report for Tantanoola Primary School

One-year return conducted in March 2019



On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3-year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the ESR report is available on the school website.

The external school review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

In some cases, when the review panel identifies limited achievement and growth, together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school is advised that they will be visited again in 1 rather than 3 years' time (1-year return).

Schools with a 1-year return are assisted by the education director and other department staff to receive additional coordinated and targeted support. This intervention is focussed on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve improved student learning results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement.

Following intervention, which occurs for 12-15 months after the ESR, a review panel conducts an on-track evaluation (and produces an on-track evaluation report) to determine the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school improvement plan (SIP) is the main document used to inform the on-track evaluation (OTE).

This OTE visit was conducted by Phil Garner, Review Officer, of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate, and Vanessa Mortimer, Review Principal.

The OTE report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Tantanoola Primary School in August 2017.

Directions from the External School Review report

August 2017

- Direction 1** Develop a strategic approach to school improvement by engaging all stakeholders in formal self-review, ensuring that the staff professional learning program is coherent with site and school priorities, and establishing rigorous performance and development processes aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- Direction 2** Build student engagement and agency, and further personalise learning, by sharing learning intentions from the Australian Curriculum (AC) and supporting students to set and achieve SMARTAR (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound, Agreed and Reviewed) learning goals.
- Direction 3** Raise student achievement by regularly and collaboratively considering, analysing and responding to student achievement data and evidence of learning at individual, cohort and whole-school levels.

Additional information about the school context

A new principal was appointed to the school from the beginning of 2019 as well as an additional 0.4FTE teacher. The school welcomed a new student in 2019, bringing total enrolments to 13 students.

Development of a priority improvement plan (PIP)/school improvement plan (SIP)

The priority improvement plan (PIP) was developed by the previous principal, and endorsed by the education director.

The plan was sent to the executive director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools in term 4, 2017.

Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

During 2018, the implementation of the PIP was monitored by the former principal. The education director supported the principal throughout 2018, with professional guidance, support and termly reviews of the PIP.

Joint professional development sessions with partnership schools occurred throughout 2018 and professional teaching and learning workshops in writing were attended by staff. Release from classroom duties was given to teachers to work on aspects of the plan.

The school was supported by the partnership Senior Leader Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP) in the analysis of student data, and reviewing the site's literacy learning policy.

Time was also allocated, in the form of school closure days, to evaluate the progress of the PIP.

Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the priority improvement plan

Direction 1 Develop a strategic approach to school improvement by engaging all stakeholders in formal self-review, ensuring that the staff professional learning program is coherent with Site and Partnership priorities, and establishing rigorous performance and development processes aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

On-track evidence

While the staff at the school were aware of the PIP, there was significant uncertainty and confusion around their interpretation of what the directions actually involved. The former principal of the school owned and managed the process of self-review with limited involvement from staff. Conversations and meetings have occurred since the last review and comprehensive minutes have been recorded, however the strategic planning for improvement has yet to be translated into effective classroom or school practices.

Staff have engaged in professional learning opportunities but little evidence is available to reflect any change in classroom practice or performance improvement.

A performance development process was introduced during 2018, however staff had limited ownership over the process or the plans. Staff goals were chosen, written and reviewed by the principal. Staff indicated a lack of effective support during this process and as a result there were no significant changes to classroom practice. It was reported that several informal classroom observations occurred during 2018, however no pre-observation meetings, feedback or follow-up meetings were arranged. The process was seen by teachers as a less than rigorous exercise.

The new principal has introduced a model of released responsibility to increase staff involvement in the SIP process, creating opportunities for individual ownership and collective responsibility. It is envisaged that staff will be more confident and proficient in targeting and reflecting on their learning over time. Staff indicated they have experienced recent change including scaffolded support, strategic thinking and shared directions this term.

Review panel evaluation

The panel found little evidence to suggest that direction one has been achieved, despite the significant support and resources provided to the school. Self-review and evaluation processes are still to be embedded in school practices. Effective collaborative professional learning opportunities including observation, coaching and mentoring need to be developed and initiated. While the review team acknowledges the strategic leadership of the newly appointed principal, the school is still in the initial stages of developing a professional and inclusive culture of learning and improvement.

Key action to incorporate into the school's planning

The previous direction has not been achieved. This direction and associated actions will need to continue to be a focus for school improvement.

Revised Direction 1 Develop a strategic approach to school improvement by engaging all stakeholders in formal self-review, ensuring that the staff professional learning program is coherent with Site and Partnership priorities, and establishing rigorous performance and development processes aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Direction 2 Build student engagement and agency, and further personalise learning, by sharing learning intentions from the AC and supporting students to set and achieve SMARTAR (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound, Agreed and Reviewed) learning goals.

On-track evidence

The review panel noted little evidence of effective teacher planning or learning design. Balanced timetabling of the curriculum is not an embedded practice in the school with AC being modified and tailored to cater for the R-7 range of students. This has had the effect of key learning areas not being covered sequentially or adequately. Staff acknowledged that differentiating the curriculum to cater for the individual learning needs of students in a multi-age R-7 classroom is challenging.

The use of learning intentions or success criteria in the design of teaching and learning is limited. Students measured their success by going up in reading levels, completing work quickly or having more spelling words. Students could articulate the goals set for them in writing, however they had little ownership of the content or the review process. The use of the SMARTAR process for goal setting was not evident. Students rated a significant amount of their learning as being too easy, not challenging or lacking engagement, with feedback on their learning featuring comments on effort rather than process.

The current principal has implemented a process for professional development with a focus on working collaboratively to change classroom practice. All planning processes and expectations are currently under review and professional development has been organised around effective learning design. This has the potential to enable the differentiation of learning in a strategic way that will lead to improved student engagement and learning achievement.

Review panel evaluation

Using the AC in learning design is a critical aspect of the teaching and learning process that precedes the sharing of learning intentions, success criteria, assessment and goal setting. The continuity of learning across the years of schooling is clearly not evident. Students indicated to the panel that they have limited understanding of what or why they are learning. The learning process for students, while individualised, has not been personalised. With little evidence to suggest that this direction has been achieved the direction and associated actions will need to continue to be a focus for school improvement.

Key actions to incorporate into the school's planning

The wellbeing aspects of the school vision appear to be embedded in the culture of the school. "Stimulating environment and students achieving their personal best" from the PIP will need to be unpacked to ensure they also become an integral part of the school's culture.

- Implement a collaborative focus on professional development around effective learning design.
- Develop authentic student agency to increase student ownership of their learning and improve engagement.
- Focus on developing formative assessment practices to inform differentiated learning design.

Revised Direction 2 Work collaboratively to design and plan teaching and learning programs that are responsive to student needs and the AC with a focus on student engagement, challenge and student agency, including supporting students to set and achieve SMARTAR learning goals.

Direction 3 Raise student achievement by regularly and collaboratively considering, analysing and responding to student achievement data and evidence of learning at individual, cohort and whole-school levels.

On-track evidence

Following the 2017 review, individual data folders were introduced in an attempt to collect samples of student learning. The intention was to critically analyse this evidence in order to target individual learning and improve student achievement. However, the majority of work samples collected were not assessed or moderated. Rubrics existed in the folders without any clear link to classroom learning or practice.

Due to a lack of strategic direction on how to use student data effectively to support the teaching and learning, staff considered them to be a “waste of time.”

Under the guidance of the current principal, student achievement data is beginning to be used collaboratively to set goals for learning in writing. A new data schedule has been introduced but is yet to be linked to classroom planning.

Review panel evaluation

The review panel concluded that the school is still developing an understanding of how the analysis of student assessment data can drive the next steps in learning and how it influences the design of learning.

The focus on the analysis and use of student achievement data this year is now enabling the staff to view data as a tool to influence teaching and learning, school improvement and student achievement. A shared understanding of the purpose of data collection and subsequent analysis is becoming evident. A new data schedule has been collaboratively developed that will be used to drive planning and influence classroom practice.

Key action to incorporate into the school’s planning

- Collaboratively analyse available student achievement data including PAT-M and PAT-R, and track student progress in their learning.
- Use the evidence of data analysis to inform the next steps in teaching and learning.

Revised Direction 3 Raise student achievement by regularly and collaboratively considering, analysing and responding to student achievement data and evidence of learning at individual, cohort and whole-school levels.

Outcomes of the on-track evaluation

Based on the evidence provided, Tantanoola Primary School is not yet on-track to effectively implement the ESR directions.

- The school has undertaken limited response to the previous ESR directions.
- There is limited evidence of a consistent, evidence-based pedagogical approach or coherent curriculum.
- Teaching is not consistently informed by analysis of assessment and feedback data and differentiated planning is limited.

The review panel found that the appointment of a new principal to the school at the beginning of 2019 is beginning to have a positive effect on the strategic direction of the school. However, it will require consistent, collaborative and ongoing development of a sustainable self-review process, effective teaching and learning and rigorous improvement processes to achieve and sustain learning improvement over time.

The principal will continue to work with the education director to implement the findings of the ESR report August, 2017 and in particular the findings of the OTE process and revised directions. The education director will continue to ensure coordinated, targeted and systematic support is provided to the school for the next 12 months.

Revised Direction 1 Develop a strategic approach to school improvement by engaging all stakeholders in formal self-review, ensuring that the staff professional learning program is coherent with Site and Partnership priorities, and establishing rigorous performance and development processes aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Revised Direction 2 Work collaboratively to design and plan teaching and learning programs that are responsive to student needs and the AC with a focus on student engagement, challenge and student agency, including supporting students to set and achieve SMARTAR learning goals.

Revised Direction 3 Raise student achievement by regularly and collaboratively considering, analysing and responding to student achievement data and evidence of learning at individual, cohort and whole-school levels.

Based on current performance, Tantanoola Primary School will be externally reviewed again in March 2020.



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