EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Tantanoola Primary School

Conducted in August 2017

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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sheree Mader, Review Principal.

School context

Tantanoola Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 401kms south-east of Adelaide in the township of Tantanoola, and is part of the South East Coast and Vines Partnership, within the Mt Gambier Portfolio. The school was first established in 1883 and now includes a DECD Play Centre. The current school enrolment is 11 students from Years 2 to 6. Enrolments have been declining over time, from 60 in 2009, but have remained steady since 2014.

The school has an ICSEA score of 973, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. There is one student verified as a student with a disability, according to the DECD criteria. Approximately a quarter of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in a one-year temporary position for the fourth consecutive year.

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 Line 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 two key areas and one line of enquiry from the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching and Student Learning: **How effectively are teachers engaging, supporting and challenging students in their learning?**

How effectively are teachers engaging, supporting and challenging students in their learning?

Tantanoola Primary School is a small school that is well-resourced with spacious grounds, gardens and outdoor areas, as well as bright indoor learning spaces, some of which have been adapted for particular purposes. The school connects with its local and broader community in a range of ways. The Principal reported that local residents come into the school, such as those from the Family History Group, to support and enrich school learning programs. Students are involved in the yearly local community Cancer Council 'Biggest Morning Tea' fundraiser, regular excursions, and the annual whole-school camp, which are well-supported by families.

The Review Panel met with a group of parents representing six of the eight families who have children at the school. Parents reinforced the strong connection with the school community that is facilitated by informative communication to the Governing Council, fortnightly newsletters and on-site blackboards. Parents were positive about communication that was not just focused on the negative. One parent shared an example where she received a text message to let her know that her child was having a good day. The panel heard that the school provides a range of engaging learning experiences for students, such as attending school musicals from two nearby schools, and parents considered these positively so that students "are not stuck in a classroom all the time". Parents appreciate the 'smallness' of the school setting as enabling one-to-one support for their children and referred to trusting relationships with school staff.

During 2013, processes were undertaken to review and revise the school values. This resulted in a school Statement of Rights with accompanying responsibilities framed around the four areas of Learning, Conflict, Safety and Treatment. Whilst the panel noticed that high value is placed on positive working relationships at the school, it was not apparent to the panel that the use of the Statement of Rights framework was an integral part of building these relationships.

The Tantanoola Primary School 2017 Site Improvement Plan (SIP) has five priorities. The commitment to improving the learning experiences of students is demonstrated through the identification of fifteen school priority areas over the past three years. 'Real and enduring improvement in student outcomes is ongoing

and challenging work' (ESR Framework). Engaging in self-review, involving both analysis of performance and the evaluation of practices, programs and improvement strategies informs future improvement priorities. The panel heard and saw that, although it was reported that there are ongoing reflective conversations, at present, there are no structured self-review processes to review and document the impact of strategies on teaching and learning. The panel was not able to consider perceptions from satisfaction or reflective surveys about learning from staff, families or students.

Self-review is a key driver for improvement. Effective school improvement is cyclical, and continuous monitoring and evaluation will lead to iterative review and planning that sustains a clear focus and builds teacher capacity, as well as improving student achievement and growth over time. Currently, Tantanoola Primary School is capable of reviewing the outcomes of recent priorities to document and implement agreed pedagogies and approaches that characterise the school, and to identify the next steps for improvement that will make the most difference to student learning.

The school has demonstrated a willingness to participate in professional learning for staff through connection with the Education and Child Development (ECD) Partnership. Teaching staff have been involved in the Millicent High School Year 7/8 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Transition Project, and attend twilight sessions focused on developing pedagogy aligned with the STEM learning areas. To counter professional isolation, staff at the school have joined with staff from two local small schools in two shared staff meetings to date. Research shows schools that value professional learning for staff that builds capacity in a few evidence-based teaching strategies or techniques support the school's collective effectiveness. It is critical that a positive professional learning culture promotes collaborative work that is narrow and deep, with a focus on results for students.

Increasingly, it is recognised that teaching practice that is de-privatised supports a culture of professional sharing, experimentation and critique. Performance and development processes were reported to and observed by the panel to be relatively informal. Engagement with and use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) to guide performance planning will provide rigor and support teaching staff to develop their practice by trialling, implementing and embedding aspects of professional learning that are aligned to Site and Partnership priorities. Connecting professional learning with curriculum and pedagogy development through performance and development practices and collaborative work will ensure coherent school improvement.

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.

During the on-site visit, the panel undertook a school tour led by two students, and met with all students present in two focus groups held in their classroom. In conversations with students, the panel asked: "What helps you to get better in your learning?" Students talked about being confident, practising and learning from mistakes. One student referred to "having goals to get better on, and when we've done it, we do another one". The panel heard from all students that this was a very new practice, supported by the Principal, where each child has three goals in the learning aspects of writing and visual arts. Most students could remember most of their goals, and two students referred to goals that would assist their learning, namely: "Say more things on the floor" and "Focus by not getting distracted by others". The panel heard from students that they had shared these goals with their families. Developing this practice by supporting students to use evidence of their learning to set goals that are SMARTAR (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Agreed and Reviewed), will build student ownership in learning and further personalise learning.

Students were also asked: "How do you know how you are going with your learning?" Responses were limited to being told by the teacher, or if they were able to complete a maths worksheet initially, or after it had been reviewed. Two students referred to learning their times tables through the *Quicksmart* program. Each student was asked to share an artefact or sample of their learning with a panel member and the focus group. Students talked with the group about what they had done, but were unable to articulate in terms of what they had learnt. In some cases, student responses verified that a planned engagement strategy had been successful, but the panel did not see evidence of students engaging with learning intent to build understanding of what they were learning and why. Sharing learning intentions will support students in their goal-setting and enable the development by teachers and students of clear and transparent success criteria. In turn, this makes clear to students what they need to do to achieve and improve, and helps to create useful

feedback, both through personal reflection and from others, particularly teachers and peers.

An ongoing challenge for the school is to implement the Australian Curriculum across several year levels in one class. The panel heard from the teacher and students that students generally work individually on set tasks. The school provides access to a designated desktop computer for each student and online programs, including *Literacy Planet*, *Boost Maths*, *Spellogram* and *Mathletics*, are individually set for each student. The panel heard from the Principal and parents that some individual students are accessing specific authentic learning opportunities according to their interests and passions. An example was discussed where a Year 6 student is involved in YELP (South East Young Environmental Leaders' Program). The parent reports that the student is motivated and engaged by this learning and is preparing "an environmental garden plan for the whole school".

Mapping the learning outcomes of activities and experiences with and for students will document curriculum implementation and confirm that the curriculum entitlement for all students is being met. The panel saw evidence that student learning against the Visual Arts learning sequence is being tracked on an individual basis and stored in an Individual Learning Profile. In 2016, the school had a SIP priority: *Teach the Music Curriculum.* This priority ensured that "music and dance programs have been delivered to all students… this year" (Annual Report 2016). Further consideration of appropriate curriculum and tracking structures and processes that can be put in place to manage learning in bands and learning areas across the school, including connecting curriculum through integrated units of work, will be helpful in ensuring that the curriculum is coherent from the perspective of learners as they progress through the school.

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

As part of the External School Review (ESR), the Review Panel examined student achievement data from system-based and school-based records prior to and during the on-site visit. Achievement of students in relation to the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) is a critical measure of success. In 2016, all Year 3, 5 and 7 non-exempt students (5) at the school achieved the SEA, as measured by NAPLAN results in Reading and Numeracy. One student was exempt from those aspects of the tests. Examination of student performance data over time indicates that a key challenge for Tantanoola Primary School is to support students in demonstrating high levels of achievement and sustaining these over time.

Keeping cumulative records of student achievement and progress is a critical first step. The panel heard and saw that an Individual Learning Profile folder was prepared for each student in Term 2, 2017. These include copies of Running Records, spelling tests, writing goals and reading observational comments. Embedding into practice triangulated data from a range of sources to compile a rich picture of each child's learning progress will be a critical next step. The panel investigated the results from Progress Achievement Tests (PAT) in both Reading and Numeracy, with the teacher and Principal. Use of these instruments is required in all DECD schools and the panel heard that Tantanoola Primary School has also administered the PAT in Science this year. A key use of the PAT is for diagnostic purposes, to identify what a student knows and can do, in order to plan the next steps in the teaching and learning cycle. The PAT Teaching Resources Centre is a useful tool for planning for individual and group explicit teaching. The panel found no evidence that the PAT is used in this way, and recommends using PAT to determine and teach strategies that students can use, as well as to demonstrate growth and progress of individuals and cohorts over time.

Using data and evidence of learning with students, and to target teaching, will support each learner in moving forward. Feedback can then be linked to data and evidence. The panel saw that written feedback had been offered to students in the form of comments that support improved writing. A school-based assessment schedule indicates that, as part of the school priority to *improve students' writing,* a writing audit was scheduled for each term this year. Using evidence of student learning in this way ensures that teaching builds on the knowledge and skills that each student is already demonstrating. Employing recognised frames of reference, such as the Language and Literature Levels, the NAPLAN marking guide, and ACARA annotated work samples, throughout the process, will support and build consistency of teacher judgement in evaluating student learning.

The panel saw evidence that assessments of students' reading are made through Running Records. Taken on an ongoing basis, Running Records provide informative records, which enable teachers to determine what students are doing as they are reading, observe the strategies students use while they are problem-solving,

and make informed teaching decisions. The panel heard that students read regularly, and appropriate Running Records are taken every term. Data available to the panel indicates that in 2016, none of the seven students in Years 1 and 2 achieved the SEA in Reading using Running Records levels as the indicator. The panel concludes that setting growth targets for students will support monitoring and improvement in reading progress.

The school is keen to ensure that students are accessing available and tested programs with support from an adult, and have recently invested in providing additional support time from a School Services Officer (SSO) in the classroom. All students are accessing the *Quicksmart* numeracy intervention program. *Quicksmart* often works with students in pairs, providing one-to-one support designed to increase fluency and automaticity in maths for students who are low performers. Using evidence-based information to target resources will ensure that high-impact interventions are implemented to students in need. Ongoing monitoring of progress will ensure that each student is accessing the programs that are right for them.

Contemporary models of education through schooling are aimed at all students being effective learners. This requires them to not only be able to demonstrate knowledge and skill in particular processes and procedures (fluency), but also to adapt their learning to new situations. Students from across the school shared a range of work samples with the panel, with most demonstrating an emphasis on developing fluency in literacy and numeracy. Designing learning that develops higher-order thinking will enable transfer of skills and processes to new contexts, and using evidence to select pedagogies to support the needs of a range of learners will improve students' academic outcomes and learning dispositions. Using data and evidence-based discussions as part of regular school business will inform and build a culture of continuous improvement.

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 EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Tantanoola Primary School is a school that works in partnership with parents and the local community. A strategic focus on evaluation and review of school strategies and performance will support a coherent approach to learning and teaching.

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

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.

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

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

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

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.

Moira Neagle
PRINCIPAL
TANTANOOLA PRIMARY SCHOOL

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 Tantanoola 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 94.7%.

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. 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. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Tantanoola Primary School from 2012- 2016.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. From 2012 to 2016, 3 of 12 (25%) Year 1 students, and 3 of 11 (27%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

From 2012 to 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 6 of 12 (50%) Year 3, 10 of 12 (83%) Year 5 students and 8 of 11 (73%) Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement of the DECD SEA.

In NAPLAN Reading, from 2012 to 2016, 5 of 12 (42%) Year 3, 1 of 12 (8%) Year 5, and none of the 11 Year 7 students achieved in the top two bands.

Of the total 2 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in NAPLAN Reading in Year 3, over 2012-2014, none remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2014-2016. Since 2010, 1 student who tested at higher bands in Year 3 has been tracked through to Year 7. This student was not retained in the higher bands.

Numeracy

From 2012 to 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 6 of 12 (50%) Year 3, 7 of 12 (58%) Year 5 students and 8 of 11 (73%) Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA

In NAPLAN Numeracy, from 2012 to 2016, 4 of 12 (33%) Year 3, none of the 12 Year 5, and none of the 11 Year 7 students achieved in the top two bands.

The 1 student who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in Year 3 over 2012-2014, did not remain in the upper bands at Year 5. Since 2010, there are no students who have achieved in the higher two bands at Year 3 and been tracked through to Year 7.