The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Rendelsham Primary School

Conducted in October 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 external school review 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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Vanessa Mortimer, Review Principal.

School context

Rendelsham Primary School is located 392kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is in the South East Coast and Vines Partnership. The enrolment is 26, and has fluctuated over the past 5 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 974 and is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 35% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 1st tenure.

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

Effective Teaching: **How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?**

School Community Partnerships: **How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?**

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

The principal has been a member of staff at Rendelsham Primary School for 15 years, and she won the positon of principal upon the retirement of the previous long-standing principal in term 3 2017. Previously, the school had employed a high percentage of part-time staff, which impacted on the school's ability to sustain consistency and cohesion in teaching and learning. In 2016, there were full-time teachers in each class; this structure has been sustained, and provided regular opportunities for ongoing collaboration between teachers. The principal stated that building trust with the school community and staff to ensure that all parties were now focused on a common trajectory has been significant work to initiate and embed.

The development of the 2018 site improvement plan (SIP) priorities emerged from staff analysis of NAPLAN results in reading, writing and numeracy, and the progressive assessment tests (PAT) in reading and mathematics. Staff collaboratively analysed results and noted that automaticity was an area for development in numeracy, writing and reading. Ongoing staff observations and the collection of work samples also identified fluency in reading as a further area for development.

The collective analysis of data resulted in the development of a whole-school approach to improvement as outlined in the SIP. The 2018 SIP is framed using:
- priority areas resources
- site action commitments
- targets

- timelines and dated annotations of progress.

The strategic and comprehensive approach to the development of the SIP provides clarity in the school's core work and transparency in the collective responsibility to achieve the stated priorities.

Site review processes identified the implementation of intervention programs as a priority area for development. Relevant training was undertaken, which included teachers, school services officers (SSOs) and the principal. All students from years 4 to 7 were assessed for eligibility in a math intervention program, and all students from years 1 to 4 were assessed for eligibility in a literacy intervention program.

The principal attended the training and development for both intervention programs and has subsequently mentored SSOs, who now confidently undertake intervention groups, including pre and post-assessments for individual students. SSOs reported that the students were heavily invested in progressing their learning. The principal specified that next steps are to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention programs with feedback being sought from all parties involved.

School data confirms that writing progress is a significant area for improvement across the school. NAPLAN writing data over the past 2 years indicates that only 43% of students have met SEA, with no students achieving in the higher bands. It was reported that teachers have attended a writing workshop held in the local area that focused on strengthening students' capacity to improve both the quantity and quality of their writing. Improvement in writing will be significant work for the school to undertake. Reflections from the principal included the need to focus on the development and implementation of common understandings in effective pedagogical practices in writing across the site.

The school reported that they are in the process of reviewing their current information technology (IT) resources with the intent to purchase resources that will facilitate collaborative learning within the site and with neighbouring schools, including those with secondary enrolments.

The school is currently upgrading outdoor facilities to support experiential learning that will be connected to learning in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and wellbeing. New facilities will include a waterway, mud kitchen and sandpit.

The panel was provided with extensive evidence of a school committed to informing and shaping improvement across a diverse range of aspects related to teaching, learning, wellbeing and school community partnerships.

Next steps for the school will be to strengthen the work undertaken thus far. The school is well-placed to evaluate and improve teaching and learning by developing and documenting agreed, planned and regular self-review processes relating to curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation. Documenting and sharing staff meeting conversations that track, monitor and evaluate teaching and learning will facilitate and strengthen collaboration across classes. Regular opportunities to discuss, review and document evidence-based conversations relating to the SIP will further strengthen the school's capacity to collaboratively shape improvement across the site.

Direction 1
Strengthen, embed and document ongoing self-review processes for teaching and learning as integral components of staff meetings and regularly share this work with students and the community.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

A strong sense of community was apparent within and across classes. Students know, understand and respect individual levels of achievement, and utilise the skills of peers, including older students, in a respectful manner to progress their own learning. Most students were able to articulate learning dispositions relating to effort in learning; for example, "if I persist I will get better". The panel also observed evidence of some students articulating their learning goals and their ongoing progress in various aspects of literacy.

Interviews were held with more than 50% of students. Every student interviewed indicated that they wanted to improve their learning, but were unable to articulate a range of strategies that would support improvement. The majority of students indicated that maths was the area of learning they needed to improve in. When asked what they needed to do to improve, students generally provided effort-based responses; for example, 'concentrate', 'practice', 'learn my times tables', and 'try and try again'.

Teachers, when discussing the feedback they receive from students about themselves as learners, stated that most students knew their strengths as learners and accepted that 'failing' was an integral part of learning.

Developing powerful learners includes sharing, discussing, and teaching the language of learning so that learning becomes a shared responsibility, with students being given increased responsibility for their own learning. Powerful learners know, articulate and use a range of strategies when stuck in their learning; they know how to improve and how to be successful. Students are well-placed to undertake this work.

Students at all year levels benefit from opportunities to be active participants in their own learning through sharing data and discussing reports; providing opportunities for students to know the *what* and *why* of grade allocations gives students real and explicit evidence about themselves as learners. Feedback for learning provides students with the strategies to know how to improve.

Developing processes where teachers regularly share learning progress in mandated assessments with students will further support students to reflect on and set their own current and future learning goals. Research indicates that students tend to be more motivated to achieve when setting their own goals.

The school is well-positioned to further enhance this important work by ensuring that feedback is a two-way process and is implemented across all aspects of student learning. Providing students with regular opportunities to use the language of learning develops expert learners. Two-way feedback provides students with the opportunity to give as well as receive feedback about themselves as learners.

Students at all year levels benefit from the opportunity to have authentic influence on their learning. The school is well-positioned to undertake this important work.

Direction 2
Strengthen and embed authentic student influence for learning across all year levels and learning areas, including embedding the language of learning and assessment with students and their families.

How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?

The panel observed high levels of scaffolding for learning via visual prompts, cue cards, learning routines and topic vocab. A high level of commitment from all staff to provide engaging learning opportunities was

apparent across the site. There was strong evidence of a whole-school commitment to support the wellbeing of every student.

Class teachers reported that class sizes and in-class support from SSOs enabled them to work individually with each student in every lesson; subsequently, staff knew and understood each student at a deep level. Teachers recognize and identify individual student entry points for respective areas of learning, resulting in planning and designing learning tasks that allow for individual differentiation. It was clear that all staff are highly committed to supporting learning improvement for every student.

Most students during interviews indicated that their learning was 'just right' or 'too easy', with very few students indicating that their work was challenging. 2018 NAPLAN data indicates that 40% of students in years 3, 5 and 7 achieved in the higher bands in reading, and 30% of students achieved in the higher bands in numeracy; it is important that these students know they are in the higher bands.

The school has undertaken significant work to ensure comprehensive intervention processes are in place for students identified as requiring additional support in literacy and numeracy. The school is now well-placed to focus on learning design that provides opportunities for all students to be stretched and challenged in their learning, with a particular emphasis on those students who are achieving in the higher bands.

Sharing specific assessment data with students and all staff will provide ongoing opportunities for explicit feedback to students about themselves as learners, thereby presenting opportunities for all students to identify their next steps and challenge themselves in their learning.

Developing a whole-school pedagogical approach to differentiation through collaborative learning design, assessment and moderation (LDAM) processes will provide opportunities for all students to be challenged in their learning.

Moderation processes align curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting. Staff noted during interviews that moderation was an area for ongoing development, with staff rating themselves between 2.5 and 3 on a scale from 0 to 5. They would also appreciate opportunities to moderate with peers from like year levels on a regular basis, to support their development and understanding of effective moderation processes across a range of learning areas. Staff also stated that the opportunity to moderate with peers from larger schools would provide them with clarity relating to the range within and across a specific grade allocation.

Next steps for the school are to ensure that learning opportunities are provided to encapsulate year-level curriculum entitlements. In small schools with multiple year levels this is often a significant challenge of practice. It is especially important that careful tracking and monitoring of student entitlement to the curriculum of their respective year level is routinely undertaken. Consideration could be given to developing opportunities for teachers from like schools to work together to share their current practices in planning for multiple year-level classes.

The development of curriculum maps incorporating subject-specific scope and sequences that identify content to be covered over a two-year cycle could be developed, implemented and shared across sites. In this way, provision for coherence and congruence across planning for the Australian Curriculum can be provided, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to access a viable curriculum.

Direction 3
Strengthen and embed learning design and moderation processes to ensure that all students are provided with regular opportunities to be challenged across all learning areas.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices are contributing significantly to school improvement at Rendelsham Primary School.

Effective practice in School Community Partnerships was evident at the school. The school community is very proud and supportive of their school. They developed a range of outdoor spaces that provide calm, serene and contemplative spaces, used by staff, students and parents.

Governing council members stated that maintaining school traditions was very important to the community. The traditions include a beach picnic that has operated every year since the school opened in 1882; a camp-out day for staff, students and their extended families, is also held annually.

Parents said the school culture reflects an acceptance of all students with no gender divisions and an absence of stereotypes. The culture of acceptance and belonging is firmly embedded and appreciated by staff, students, their families and the community. The school is very respected and a focal point of the community.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Rendelsham Primary School works in partnership with parents and the school community. This includes close collaboration with the preschool, which is situated on the school grounds, providing a seamless transition from preschool to school. Every staff member is strongly committed to supporting each student's personal and academic growth.

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

1. Strengthen, embed and document ongoing self-review processes for teaching and learning as integral components of staff meetings and regularly share this work with students and the community.

2. Strengthen and embed authentic student influence for learning across all year levels and learning areas, including embedding the language of learning and assessment with students and their families.

3. Strengthen and embed learning design and moderation processes to ensure that all students are provided with regular opportunities to be challenged across all learning areas.
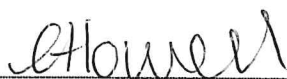
Based on the school's current performance, Rendelsham Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

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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 93%.

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. 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 Rendelsham Primary School from 2013-2018.

The school reported that, whilst Running Records for year 1 in 2014 through to 2016 were submitted, they are not represented in the School Performance Report, thus data is referenced from 2013 and 2018 only.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records.

From 2013 to 2018, 42%, or 7 of 11 year 1 students and 41%, or 11 of 27 year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2013 and 2018, the reading results as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75%, or 21 of 28 year 3 students, 77%, or 17 of 22 year 5 students, and 53%, or 9 of 17 year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2013 and 2018, 36%, or 10 of 28 year 3 students, 32%, or 7 of 22 year 5 students, and 18%, or 3 of 17 year 7 students achieved in the top 2 bands in reading.

Numeracy

Between 2013 and 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75%, or 21 of 28 year 3 students, 64%, or 14 of 22 year 5 students, and 63%, or 10 of 16 year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2013 and 2018, 21%, or 6 of 28 year 3 students, 9%, or 2 of 22 year 5 students, and 12.5%, or 2 of 16 year 7 students achieved in the top 2 bands in NAPLAN numeracy results.