EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR PLAYFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in SEPTEMBER 2015

**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education
and Child Development

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

The Principal of Playford 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 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 attendance of Aboriginal students was 90.9%. The school reported overall attendance of 93.2%, which meets the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Playford Primary School is located 27 kilometres from Adelaide in the northern suburb of Craigmore. The school was newly-built in 2000, and shares modern facilities on campus with Catherine McCauley Catholic School.

The school has an ICSEA score of 972 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. There are 747 students at the school. Enrolment numbers are stable.

The school population includes 21 (3%) Aboriginal students, 91 (12%) Students with Disabilities, 69 (9%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and five students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM). There are 37% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

Sixty-one students enrolled at the school are from families working in the Australian Defence Forces. A part–time Defence School Transition Aide provides support for students and parents.

The school establishes relationships with young children and parents by running a successful Learning Together Playgroup. The DECD Adams Road Children's Centre and Pre-school is located directly opposite the school. Partnership and transition links exist with the local Craigmore High School.

The school leadership team consists of the Principal in his second and final tenure; a Senior Leader: Early Years, in her third tenure; and a Senior Leader: Year 3-7, in her fourth tenure.

A full-time School Counsellor in her second year works collaboratively to implement the Wellbeing Management Plan, including the co-ordination of the Student Civics and Services Committees.

The school is supporting teaching and learning improvement with the appointment of four internally-appointed Coordinators with responsibility for: Inquiry Learning (Reception to Year 2); Inquiry Learning (Years 3 to 7); Literacy (Spelling); and Learning Technologies. There is also a teacher working as a Literacy Coach as part of the Literacy Improvement Project.

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Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning: **How well are students achieving over time?**

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Effective Teaching: **How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

Improvement Agenda: **How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?**

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How well are students achieving over time?

An analysis of selected performance data for Playford Primary School formed the starting point to evaluate how well all students are achieving over time against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2014, 42% (44/104) of Year 1 and 58% (58/100) of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected standard at Level 17 and above, and Level 21 and above, respectively. When these results are compared to those results achieved over the previous three years, there is a downward trend since 2011 at Year 1 from 53% and at Year 2 from 78%. The results over time also indicate a downward rate of growth from Year 1 to 2 from 23% in 2012 to 12% in 2014.

In 2014, the Reading results, as measured by NAPLAN at Years 3, 5 and 7, indicate that 72% of Year 3 students, 66% of Year 5 students and 84% of Year 7 students achieved the SEA. This compares to an average of 69% overall for Years 3, 5 and 7 between 2008 and 2013. From 2012 to 2014, while there are no consistent trends at Year 3 and 5, there is a noticeable upward trend for Year 7 from 65% in 2012.

The school's Numeracy results in 2014, as measured by NAPLAN at Years 3, 5 and 7, indicate that 62% of Year 3 students, 58% of Year 5 students and 70% of Year 7 students achieved the SEA. These results for Year 3 and 5 are lower than the school's average of 66% overall between 2008 and 2013. The Year 7 result of 70% is a positive upward trend from 58% in 2012.

In relation to the proportion of students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN bands in Reading, 28% (26/90) were in Year 3, 11% (10/89) were in Year 5 and 18% (14/76) were in Year 7. From 2012 to 2014, the trend at Year 5 is downwards from 22% to 11%. There is not yet a consistent trend at Year 3 and Year 7. In 2014, seven out of the nineteen students, who achieved in the upper bands in Year 3 in 2012, remain in the upper bands. At Year 7, eight out of the ten students from Year 3 in 2010 remain in the upper bands.

In relation to the proportion of students who achieved in the upper two NAPLAN bands in Numeracy, 18% (16/90) were in Year 3, 3% (3/89) were in Year 5 and 17% (13/76) were in Year 7. This compares to an average of 13%, 6% and 9% for Years 3, 5 and 7 respectively, between 2008 and 2013. For those Year 3 students who achieved in the upper two bands in 2012, 20% (2/10) remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2014. 60% (6/10) of Year 3 students in 2010 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2014.

The school is aware that student achievement levels have been inconsistent over time. Recent analysis has also highlighted that this inconsistency includes growth from one year level to the next, and in the numbers of students achieving and retaining higher levels of learning over time, from one year level to the next.

While the upward trend in achievement at Year 7 is positive, the Review Panel found there is a need for the school to plan for continuous improvement that ensures higher levels of learning are achieved and maintained from the early years at school and every year thereafter, onwards into Year 7.

On the basis of these results, the Review Panel followed a line of inquiry related to how successfully the school was working towards raising student learning growth at the individual, class and whole-school level.

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How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

To this day, the school has not had the capacity to manage a whole-school approach to monitoring and evaluating individual progress, including growth towards benchmarking of all students achieving below the SEA.

The Review Panel heard that while some test results have been manually collected and stored in folders over the past few years, it has only been since Term 3 this year that the school has established a data management system that includes the electronic collation of agreed data sets.

The new system means that every individual teacher will now be able to track the progress of individual students in their class using the same age-appropriate data sets.

The full capability of the system to sort information in an accessible way is currently being trialled as part of the early implementation stages.

As use of the system develops, the school envisages that teaching teams will be able to use the information as a starting point to also design and utilise a range of formative assessment processes. Such processes will assist teachers to target teaching and monitor growth to ensure all students can demonstrate higher levels of achievement over time.

Direction 1
Raise student achievement by using data and formative assessment information about each child to monitor growth and progress and inform targeted teaching practices.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Students from across the school spoke to the Review Panel about how they knew they were going at school, what their teachers did and said to help them learn, and gave examples of how they felt they best learned. During classroom walkthroughs, students were observed as being on task and engaged in their learning. They talked confidently about what they were doing and explained the ways their classroom was organised to support their learning.

The 'Launching into Learning' program runs across the school each year and was shared as being a successful whole-school approach to ensuring all students are aware of school expectations. It is also valued by teachers as a time to co-construct class expectations and revisit school values, group work strategies and the school's common language used to support the development of pro-social skills.

In 2015, the school has commenced some new work to improve student achievement by developing a deeper understanding of pedagogy through the implementation of inquiry-based learning.

The review panel heard that two classroom-based coordinators are using a professional learning team model to lead and support a commitment to action. The work the staff are doing in this area includes: use of the Australian Curriculum and TfEL to design units of work; sharing resources for planning; use of a range of questioning tools; and the development of consistent language. All teachers were supporting the introduction of inquiry learning by scaffolding student use of the identified inquiry learning assets: researcher, self-manager, collaborator, thinker and communicator.

The Review Panel observed teams of teachers engaged in a process of deliberate thinking when using the Australian Curriculum to plan inquiry units. This appeared most successful in teams where the collaborative discussion was intentional and focused on using the inquiry model as a scaffold; where air time and expertise was shared and when clarifying questions were asked to shape ideas. It was also noted that staff were challenging themselves when looking for ways to involve students in aspects of 'tuning in' to the learning design. One teacher said: "we have to have good questions the students can launch from".

Some staff in group interviews also reported that that they were planning assessment tasks or rubrics to provide choice and assist students in inquiry learning.

While the Review Panel felt it was too soon to evaluate the impact of this pedagogy on student achievement, the panel verified that the school has identified process measures that will be used as part of the 2015 self–review processes. To embed inquiry learning across the school, it could be timely to also use

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the reflection opportunity to consider the place of inquiry dispositions in the school's vision of 'life-long learning'.

In the meantime, there is already evidence from students who explained to the Review Panel how well the school's focus on inquiry learning was helping them ask questions and tackle 'real' problems in groups. They said the approach gets them to think, ask questions and discover their own ways of finding things out. Students knew they could ask for help when they needed it, but were confident they could use their 'learning assets' when required. The older students were articulate when explaining the connections between the inquiry approach and learning areas, particularly in mathematics. They felt that as they did more inquiry topics they could see they had more "freedom" and that the teacher was not always telling them what they had to do. One student commented: "we pick a broad topic and exhaust all the learning you can get from it".

The school is advised to capture the level of student engagement in inquiry learning by accelerating a focus on designing assessment tasks as a lever for improvement. Such a focus will assist staff to address the range of needs of the learners in their class and enable all students to demonstrate their proficiency against the related Australian Curriculum achievement standards.

Direction 2
Support all students to demonstrate higher levels of proficiency against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards by providing assessment tasks that challenge and support them to apply their learning in new contexts.

The school is involved in the ECD Local Partnership Project to develop a Student Commission. Students involved in this work said it was 'a good dialogue' that would give more students the opportunity to have a say in their learning. They were finding out about fixed and growth mindsets and planned to share this information through buddy classes.

The Review Panel heard that some students have also been supported in class to develop strategies to take more responsibility in their learning and to accept challenge as part of learning. When asked what they do when they get stuck they said: "we do not go straight away to ask the teacher, we work things through". Some students were clear that there is not always a right or wrong answer when learning something new. Any opportunity for students to influence their own learning in authentic ways is paramount to ensuring higher levels of engagement: "When learning is fun we are more engaged and we learn more".

The school is aware that 'giving quality feedback' to and from students and teachers is also a feature of authentic student voice and, consequently, it is a priority identified in this year's Site Improvement Plan. As feedback for learning is a valid, evidence-based strategy for improvement, the school is encouraged to also accelerate the implementation of pedagogical practices that enable students to use a range of feedback processes on a regular basis.

Direction 3
Increase student engagement and achievement by strengthening pedagogical practices that empower students to pose questions, problem-solve and give and receive quality feedback about their learning.

Parents interviewed by the Review Panel found their children's teachers to be available and approachable. They appreciated good communication and valued the times when they felt teachers 'went the extra mile' to support their children. They acknowledged their accessibility to the leadership team, especially when they were new to the school and if their child had special needs and required additional help. They said that as parents they received useful information about their children's progress. Parents expect to have a proactive "two-way" partnership with the school and said that they appreciate the fact that they do. The Governing Council reported they actively encourage parents to discuss any questions or issues with the teachers or leadership team.

The Review Panel found that evidence collected during the on-site visit aligned with the positive feedback received from parents, students and staff through opinion surveys published in the 2014 Annual Report.

The final line of inquiry undertaken by the external review was related to the ongoing analysis and use of data and information at the whole school and classroom level.

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How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

The Governing Council was aware of the Site Improvement Plan and the priorities the school was implementing to improve effective teaching and raise student achievement. In 2015, the Site Improvement Plan major priorities are in the areas of Literacy and, as described previously, Inquiry Learning. The school has a Site Improvement Committee to manage the improvement plan. Designated leadership staff and committees support the ongoing implementation of Learner Wellbeing and Learning Technology priorities.

The 2014 Annual Report includes detailed analysis of a number of data sets, with specific commentary about how to achieve higher performance levels for all students, particularly in literacy. As a consequence, the 2015 Site Improvement Plan includes Running Records achievement targets for Reception to Year 2 students, Progressive Achievement Test targets for Year 3 to 7 students, and an improvement target for students participating in literacy intervention programs.

Numeracy has not been resourced as a strategic priority this year; however, the leadership team indicated that improving numeracy outcomes would be included as a result of the leadership team's current involvement in the DECD Leading Numeracy Improvement professional learning program.

The Review Panel heard that reading achievement data, 2015 targets and the process outcomes identified for spelling and writing, will be discussed as part of the school's annual review and reporting process scheduled for Term 4. At the same time, recent data and information available in relation to numeracy will also be considered to inform planning for 2016. It would be timely to also consider, at this stage, any analysis of the distribution of Australian Curriculum A-E grades, particularly in relation to assessments resulting from inquiry learning units.

Reliable, quality data enables leaders and teachers to have the confidence to make informed choices, but data on its own is not enough. Within self-review processes, the school will now need to analyse multiple measures from the classroom and cohort level in order to raise student achievement over time. This is an important emphasis for the school to have in order to ensure more students demonstrate the SEA and do so at higher levels, beyond basic proficiencies and C grades.

To guide this process of informed judgement, the school will find it useful to have clearly stated expectations that are challenging but realistic for each year level. These expectations can then be shared with students and parents and used by staff to guide their planning and monitor student progress. Target and goal-setting processes at the school and classroom level can then signal the improvement required for both year level cohorts and individual students.

The school's established performance and development processes will prove to be a good basis for furthering work of this kind, and each team's collective responsibility to ensure all students maximise their potential from one year to the next.

Direction 4
Enable all students to maximise their potential by utilising performance and development processes that support staff to implement site improvement priorities and teaching and curriculum agreements.

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OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Playford Primary School is working towards ensuring that all students are consistently achieving at higher levels across the school. The analysis and use of data and information to inform planning and instruction is on the improvement agenda, as is the development of inquiry pedagogy.

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

1. **Raise student achievement by using data and formative assessment information about each child to monitor growth and progress and inform targeted teaching practices.**

2. **Support all students to demonstrate higher levels of proficiency against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards by providing assessment tasks that challenge and support them to apply their learning in new contexts.**

3. **Increase student engagement and achievement by strengthening pedagogical practices that empower students to pose questions, problem-solve and give and receive quality feedback about their learning.**

4. **Enable all students to maximise their potential by utilising performance and development processes that support staff to implement site improvement priorities and teaching and curriculum agreements.**

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