

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Prospect North Primary School**

Conducted in July 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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Paul Harmer, Review Principal.

## School context

Prospect North Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. The school is situated 6kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Adelaide Prospect Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 343 students, and has increased over the last 5 years, from 254 in 2014. The school is classified as Category 3 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1009.

The school population includes 21 (6%) Aboriginal students, 131 (37%) students eligible for School Card assistance, 181 (52%) students from a non-English speaking background, 18 (5%) students with disability, 149 (43%) students with English as an additional language or dialect, and 6 students in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of her 1<sup>st</sup> tenure, an assistant principal learning intervention in her 3<sup>rd</sup> tenure, an assistant principal STEM in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of tenure, and a full-time counsellor in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year. There are 17FTE teachers, including an Advanced Skills Teacher 2, 9 Step 9 teachers, 3 early career teachers, and 5 teachers with 4 to 7 years of experience. Nine new teachers and 5 new school services officers have started since 2017.

## 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:

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent has a coherent approach to curriculum been developed?

**Effective Teaching:** How well is formative assessment used to inform and refine planning?

**Student Learning:** How well do teachers work with students to set goals and targets and review their progress as a continual process?

## To what extent has a coherent approach to curriculum been developed?

How a school is organised and operates has a major effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Students require consistent, coherent curriculum and pedagogies both within and between levels of schooling as their educational development progresses.

There is a deep sense of calm in the school. Levels of student engagement across the whole school were observably high. There is a very evident positive school culture. The strong cultural diversity amongst the students is valued by families and students themselves.

The principal provides a clear direction for the school, and the vision is for each student to become self-directed in their learning. This vision has become shared and embraced by teachers and students. There are clear expectations that staff will work within and for this vision, while staff recruitment is intentionally building teaching capacity to achieve the vision. The panel found evidence of consultation with staff in the creation of the school's rationale, school values and the site improvement plan (SIP). Students knew and could talk about the school values. Parents talked to the panel about how students use the values at home.

The principal was described by teachers and parents as modelling practices as well as sharing and holding the line in regards to vision and expectations. Teacher development is being done within the same inquiry model as teachers are developing in their classroom practice. Most teachers and parents said they felt supported by the principal, but also challenged to work relentlessly in the interests of realising the shared vision for student learning. Teachers, like students, have become confident, collaborative risk takers. Staff new to the school, including the ACEO, reported strong levels of support from the principal and the leadership team. All staff value the clarity of the school's, vision, values and structures and processes.

A cycle of improvement is used by teams of teachers each term to monitor the impact of their improvement initiatives. The principal has built on a history of action-research projects in the school by focusing on identifying what's working and then scaling it up. Short rounds of prototyping are used to see if they work, then they are developed to scale. Teachers collaborate regularly, formally and informally, and performance and development is collaborative. Teachers are coached and informally supported in ongoing, needs-based ways. Teachers value the regular class walkabouts in which vertical grouping of teachers visit each other's classrooms and hear about the outcomes of practices being trialled by the teacher. Teachers are implementing their own personalised learning and the school makes resources available as needed. Teachers value the frequent observations of their practices by visitors to the school (Lead Learn school), and value the challenge of such visits, as well as the feedback they get from them. There is a focus on continuous improvement in teaching, and the school uses an inquiry-based model to realise this. This work is supplemented with access to outside expertise, for example UniSA, Social Ventures Australia, Lead Learn and Notosh.

A supportive, successful learning environment is being provided for every student, achieved through the provision of strong, successful processes for wellbeing through the Nurture program (social and emotional self-management of learning), and pedagogies for engagement. Teachers said that behaviours have significantly improved with transformative pedagogies. School services officers (SSOs) value the higher expectations and new challenges in their changing roles with students. SSOs would value more opportunities for professional learning and more SSO meetings.

Work with a design thinking model has developed a common and consistent language across the school. Students are being empowered with this language and are able to use it to articulate their learning. Teachers are using a range of new initiatives to show student learning to parents, including the SeeSaw app and Friday letter-writing.

There are many different literacy and numeracy programs being used by the school, within the guidelines of the agreement. They are coherent and common in teaching teams, but there is a lack of whole-school flow and less coherence for students between teaching teams. Parents said that children experience difficulties in coping with the demands of transition from year 1 to year 2. Some parents said there is inconsistency in the ways their children's learning is communicated, and in their knowledge of standards and benchmarks.

School priorities are fully aligned with partnership priorities, although 75% of school students are zoned out of the secondary school partnership. This has transition implications for Prospect North Primary School students. Some parents said the school has prepared their child extremely well for secondary school, whilst others said that transition has been problematic.

The school, through strong vision and leadership, has developed structures and processes for collaborative curriculum planning and assessment at the teaching team level. This includes processes for explicit literacy and numeracy skill development, strong intervention programs, and strong student engagement and development of positive learning dispositions (through inquiry and personalised

learning). However, significant numbers of students including ATSI and EALD learners are not yet demonstrating academic lift. A next step for the school is to attend to curriculum coherence for all students across the whole school and into secondary schooling.

#### **Direction 1**

**Work within the school and beyond to improve learning coherence for students at key transition points to ensure they do not lose learning momentum when they move from one level of schooling to the next.**

### **How well is formative assessment used to inform and refine planning?**

Quality ‘assessment for learning’ practices have positive effects on student learning. Such practices include:

- better use of questioning
- feedback, peer and self-assessment, and
- formative use of summative assessments.

There are high levels of teacher collaboration around evidence-based assessment and planning, evident in almost all teaching teams. The school is seeking to identify fine increments of learning growth, and is working on a review of assessment practices. Data collection and display practices in the school are varied, and teachers analyse data in more singular rather than triangulated ways. A-E data is not included in current data practices.

High-level evidence-based targeted intervention is provided, including extension of higher-band students, and social and emotional intervention. Intervention includes a range of creative and agile provisions for supporting students who have limited opportunities for support in their learning at home. SSOs reported high levels of communication with teachers about the content of student support sessions. The school seeks student feedback on the impact of intervention practices. Aboriginal students indicated they do not like being withdrawn for interventions.

The school has a literacy and numeracy committee which meets fortnightly and monitors whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements. Teachers reported a high degree of compliance with these literacy and numeracy agreements. Intentionality in the teaching of writing has been implemented consistently across the school since 2017, through a model of gradual release of responsibility.

Through the Nurture program STEM work (design planning) and personalised learning, Australian Curriculum capabilities are being strongly developed in students. Teachers and parents provided anecdotal evidence of students improving in the capabilities, and the panel noted the confidence and willingness of students to talk about their learning and experiences.

However, with the exception of the Nurture program, the panel was not provided with evidence of formal assessment of the development of capabilities. There was some evidence of assumptions that high levels of engagement will lead to higher levels of achievement for all students. Some teachers talked to the panel about the inclusion of teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and curriculum content through the STEM and personalised learning units. Not all teachers provided evidence that they are strongly aligning the explicit teaching and assessment of skills and content with STEM or personalised learning programs. All teachers are engaged in formal moderation through partnership work (maths focus); however, it appeared to the panel that in-school moderation was informal.

Many parents said they are very happy with the learning progress they know their children are making because of the high levels of work that they talk about at home. Some parents said they know about benchmarks and how their children are going in their learning against them. Parents value that students are able to move in learning at their own pace. However, some parents said they have concerns that students can 'fly under the radar' if their behaviour is not a problem; they do not get the same support as those with more extreme learning challenges.

The panel concluded that all teachers collect and use data, but the data varies in type and ways it is used. The school is well-placed to audit its current data practices to review what data is most and least useful to inform learning, what other datasets may be needed, and how data is currently being displayed for the purposes of analysis. It is important that the school always triangulates A-E data with other measures of student learning. The school is well-placed to improve the efficacy of its data practices and to analyse triangulated rather than individual datasets in order to further deepen the intentionality of teaching and ensure that literacy and numeracy skills development is being effectively differentiated and contextualised for at-risk students.

#### **Direction 2**

**Use electronic processes for recording and displaying data to create individualised student learning profiles that can be analysed deeply to improve the effectiveness of differentiation and learning for all students and, in particular, at-risk students.**

### **How well do teachers work with students to set goals and targets and review their progress as a continual process?**

The school has a shared, stated intention to develop each student as a self-directed learner. Developing student agency in their own and each other's learning is facilitated through the development of student metacognition about the learning process itself.

There is a strong and successful focus on developing student agency and self-direction in learning through transformative pedagogies. Most classes now operate in flexible learning spaces which have been intentionally developed and are well-utilized. Students have good access to reliable IT as tools for learning. There is a need to ensure future planning develops flexible learning spaces for all classes. The panel saw evidence of student metacognition in every learning space. There was plentiful evidence of student reflection about learning in all spaces. Student tour guides were very articulate about their learning and involvement in negotiation of their learning. In reception/year 1, student agency in learning is built through play and investigation, developing children's language for thinking and talking about their learning. Children described what they value about the school in terms of the quality of learning.

The school was selected to be a Lead Learn site for STEM. It is fully utilising this opportunity and has adopted a sophisticated model of design (Notosh) to inform this work. This is having a major impact on developing students as agents in their own learning and as self-directed learners.

Personalised learning has been strongly and successfully embedded across the school: connections to local and global issues, problem-solving and action, teaching others, including adults, and investigation through multiple perspectives. Skills are taught in literacy and numeracy blocks, and through targeted mini-lessons and workshops. The panel was impressed by the degree to which every student spoken to could articulate their learning. Students were enthusiastic, keen and passionate learners. When asked what gets in the way of their learning, a student said: "the law, because we were not allowed to make a

real rocket car". Students are engaged regularly in evaluating, researching, teaching, designing learning, and advocating for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

The panel found evidence that the school continuously activates student voice to accelerate learning improvement.

Student leadership is fostered through a student parliament, which is connected through class meetings to all students. Every student in years 5, 6 and 7 is a member of a parliamentary team, each of which is linked to a SIP 'improvement pillar'. One of these teams provides student feedback about whether initiatives are improving learning. Strong partnerships for learning have been developed and are continually fostered between students, teachers, leadership and families. There has been an increase in the school community through the 'building communities' parent group.

The panel found high levels of evidence of scaffolded student goal-setting with regular reflection and review. This work is across all year levels and in all learning areas. Students track their own growth in learning through learning goals, data and consistent articulation of success criteria. Students are regularly involved in self and peer assessment and involved in the design of learning and assessment.

However, care needs to be taken that teachers do not over-rely on student goal-setting and self-monitoring their learning progress. Teachers need to be vigilant in the evidence-based assessment of student learning growth.

The school has developed and taught students about alternative terminology for A-E grades (novice, apprentice, competent, practitioner and expert). Students are very skilled in using this wording for self and peer assessment and in goal-setting. This terminology has been used in the recently redrafted student report templates. Substitution of wording for A-E grading should not impact on teacher vigilance about continuous student learning improvement. Some parents said that they did not understand or like the new report format, and that there were inconsistencies between various parts of the report.

The school has developed exemplary practices, not only in the regular setting and review of student goals and targets, but in all elements of the development of student agency in and metacognition about learning. The school believes that, in time, these student skills in self-directed learning will positively impact the literacy and numeracy achievement, and academic grades of all students, including those at risk. It is important that the school ensures every student is making small increments of growth over time towards improved NAPLAN and A-E grades.

The school is well-placed to support students to more regularly and explicitly link the alternative terminology for rating of their learning with the A-E grading system. This will empower students even further in their own learning, with the dominant language of school achievement to which they will be exposed and in which they will be immersed as soon as they leave the primary level of schooling.

### **Direction 3**

**Ensure that self-directed learning is benefitting all students' learning, as measured by literacy and numeracy levels and academic grades through evidence-based, as well as teacher-judgement assessment practices.**

### **Direction 4**

**Empower students with the language and knowledge of the A-E grading system to deepen their agency with the learning capabilities they are developing in primary school within the dominant assessment currency of A-E grading that they will be expected to understand and apply in secondary schooling.**

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

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

The school has taken an explicit approach to the development of design thinking. This work is being undertaken within the Notosh model; its 5 stages include:

- immersion
- synthesis
- ideation
- prototyping, and
- feedback.

Every student is explicitly taught this design model and supported to apply it to STEM learning projects. This work is developing student metacognition about design and empowering each student with a common, consistent language to think, talk about and self-direct their own learning growth.

The school has developed a model of personal investigations used with every student at each year level. These investigations can be over one or more terms and are interest-initiated but problem-based. Students are explicitly supported to follow a process to learn deeply about an issue. They must collect multiple perspectives about the matter, and take actions from what they have learned.

Targeted teaching of skills is delivered through workshops across classes on a needs-basis. Students frequently present their findings to others and are able to confidently teach other students and adults about their methods and findings.



## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Prospect North Primary School there are sustained high expectations and a culture of improvement. There is shared leadership across the school and authentic student influence in decision-making. Professional learning and performance and development are translated into effective teaching across the school.

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

1. Work within the school and beyond to improve learning coherence for students at key transition points to ensure they do not lose learning momentum when they move from one level of schooling to the next.
2. Use electronic processes for recording and displaying data to create individualised student learning profiles that can be analysed deeply to improve the effectiveness of differentiation and learning for all students and, in particular, at-risk students.
3. Ensure that self-directed learning is benefitting all students' learning, as measured by literacy and numeracy levels and academic grades through evidence-based, as well as teacher-judgement assessment practices.
4. Empower students with the language and knowledge of the A-E grading system to deepen their agency with the learning capabilities they are developing in primary school within the dominant assessment currency of A-E grading that they will be expected to understand and apply in secondary schooling.

Based on the school's current performance, Prospect North Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS

The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.

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Marg Clark  
PRINCIPAL  
PROSPECT NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson

# 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 90.6%.

# 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).

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2017, 71% of year 1 and 62% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. In year 1, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. In year 2, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 68% of year 3 students, 62% of year 5 students, and 79% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2017 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 24% of year 3, 27% of year 5, and 35% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average, and a decline from 43% to 27% in 2015 and 2017 respectively.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 43%, or 3 of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 67%, or 8 of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.


### Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students, and 79% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 17% of year 3, 27% of year 5, and 24% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 14% in 2015 to 27% in 2017.



For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 4 of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 50%, or 2 of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.