

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Ardrossan Area School**

Conducted in August 2019



## Review details

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 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 is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Joe Priollo, Review Principal.

## Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Support Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Ardrossan Area School caters of students from reception to year 12. It is situated 150kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 148 students. Enrolment has steadily declined over the last 5 years.

The school is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 957. The local partnership is Southern Yorke.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 7% students with a verified disability, 45% of families eligible for School Card assistance and 2% of students of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the first year of their tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal, one senior leader for the early and primary years and one senior leader in wellbeing.

There are 14 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers.

## The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Identify and implement successful strategies that support teachers to modify teaching in response to evidence from assessment.
- Direction 2** Accelerate learning by supporting teachers to develop a deeper understanding of how to cater for the varied needs of learners through differentiated curriculum and pedagogical approaches.
- Direction 3** Increase opportunities for high-level learning and engagement by providing opportunities for students to have input into learning and assessment tasks.

### What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

Most teachers report that the concept of differentiated practice has a higher profile at the school in 2019. Leaders have undertaken professional learning to deepen their understanding of differentiated approaches to planning and practice, and have shared this with teaching staff. Planning documents confirm that teachers make accommodations for students with differing needs, deliberately scaffolding access to tasks and varying expectations. In the main, this relates to students not at standard. The intent to address the needs of students at, or exceeding, benchmarks was apparent across the school, and at this point is characterised by ability grouping or exiting high performing students to a separate lesson, once a week. The opportunity for teachers to utilise and analyse student achievement data to better design learning that extends *all* students' abilities, within the class and throughout the day, is the next step for the school. This concept is elaborated further against Line of Inquiry 3 in this report.

Student influence within the learning agenda has also been afforded greater significance. Many students discuss setting learning goals and monitoring their progress through reading levels. Leaders and some teachers report that time is dedicated for teachers and students to discuss progressive achievement test (PAT) results each year. During the process of consultation designed to review and develop the school's vision, student input was sought and contributions considered.

Formative assessment practices have been explored by staff and a number of strategies implemented. The panel heard and saw evidence of approaches that included 'no hands-up', exit cards and random questioning. Teachers described ongoing observations and discussion with students allowing them to modify approaches 'in the moment'. As the panel also saw evidence of closed questioning techniques operating, and limited formative feedback, it is apparent that further work regarding the consistent application of formative assessment processes will be of benefit. However, work undertaken to respond to the 2015 ESR directions is fully acknowledged by the panel.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

*How well does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?*

Evidence regarding the school's work in this area was highly confirming. The process to design the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) was reportedly a consultative one and this was endorsed through conversations with teachers. Every staff member with whom the panel spoke with articulated the school's priorities with confidence. The data used to inform the goals and targets included NAPLAN, PAT and Running Record assessments and the challenges of practice (COPs) are clearly aligned with the priorities. Every teacher discussed the connection between their Professional Development program (PDP) and the SIP actions. Two of the three performance goals are informed by the COPs.

To regularly evaluate implementation of agreed practices, classroom observations are conducted in term two and surveys initiated to determine effective practice and any obstacles that may have arisen. The panel commends the strategic, collective approach to improvement planning and self-review that is evident at the school. An opportunity to further deepen this work is apparent, as the school can now work towards quantifying their progress. In the main, teachers express uncertainty regarding how the school assesses performance towards achieving the targets. Whilst one staff member discussed a meeting designed to enable self-review, this was not widely understood. Regular, collective forums that monitor implementation through analysis of data and evidence will contribute to the accurate identification of the school's progress to improve student learning.

**Direction 1 Identify progress towards improvement targets by using evidence and data as evaluation measures and ensuring collective understanding of the school's ongoing development.**

### EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

*How effectively are teachers using evidence based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?*

The school's recently developed vision, states an intent to raise students' ability to think critically and creatively. A number of high yield strategies have been explored to progress this intent. An approach to numeracy that requires students to solve problems and think divergently has been introduced in reception to year 8. Students in some classes explain that the teacher doesn't accept the most 'obvious' answer and prompts them to think more deeply about concepts. The formative assessment strategies have seen some students encouraged to ask, rather than answer, questions and to develop a collaborative approach to discussing their thinking. Success criteria, performance standards and learning intentions have been explored by staff and in some classes provide students opportunities to self-monitor and direct their progress.

The panel agrees that these strategies contribute significantly to student agency and encourages the school to continue to engage with a coherent and committed approach to embed them across the school.

Whilst students have accessed some engaging learning opportunities within the community and through special, whole-school projects, the panel sourced limited evidence that challenging pedagogy is delivered consistently within classes. Many students discuss learning through text books and the utilisation of worksheets was common. Given the school's focus on questioning techniques, it remains apparent that many students respond to closed questions and are scaffolded to provide 'correct' answers.

Planning documents provided made evident that in one learning area, teaching is deliberately designed to provoke thinking and to engage students in processes of inquiry and deepen their cognition. Students in the visual arts access learning that scaffolds them to pose questions and hypotheses, experiment, research ideas to make evaluative judgements and conclusions. In addition, this learning is seamlessly designed to progress their tier two vocabulary skills, one of the school's challenges of practice. The panel agrees that using this planned approach as a model, greater opportunity for students to extend their creative and critical thinking will be developed.

**Direction 2**      **Develop students' capacity to think creatively and critically through teaching that is strategically planned to engage students in processes of inquiry and exploration and enables them to apply their learning in varying contexts.**

## **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

***To what extent do data, evidence and analysis of students' learning needs shape professional learning and performance and development?***

Systems that build teachers' capacity have been strategically designed to align with improvement imperatives. Regular meetings, observations and feedback focus on teachers' capacity to implement strategies within the SIP and to raise students' literacy and numeracy outcomes. Almost all staff report that this system positively impacts their practice.

As aforementioned, differentiated practice has a much higher profile at the school in 2019. Teachers review students' progress and aim to address areas of need, often through grouping. Whilst a few staff report that differentiated practice supports students exceeding standards, evidence was sourced that these students are usually included in ability groups and are provided with the next year level's work or extra work. Evidence that data is used to design learning for students to challenge their potential regularly, within their learning environment, was limited.

A wide range of valid data is sourced and collated by leaders and shared with staff. Some staff with whom the panel spoke discussed their deep analysis of literacy data in using this to inform not just ability groups, but to identify students' miscues. Some staff reported that data was 'available' should they choose to access it, whilst others discussed a need to further develop their capacity to use data strategically.

In term three, the school will convene professional learning communities (PLCs). This initiative is in the conceptual stages. The panel encourages leaders to consider how these forums may be deliberately designed to support teachers to use data analytically to inform and plan for the needs of all learners, including those exceeding standards.

**Direction 3**      **Ensure teaching is designed to meet the needs of each student, in class through professional learning systems that build teachers' capacity to analyse achievement data and understand the implication this has for their planning.**

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Ardrossan Area School, effective leadership provides strategic direction and planning and the school's improvement processes are collectively conducted, evidence-based and targeted. The school's direction and aspiration is broadly understood and valued. Commitment from staff and families is high. A recent increased focus on connections with the community, characterised as authentic learning opportunities for students, has ensured engagement of the learners and raised the school's profile across the region. A strong sense of community pride is evident.

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

- Direction 1** Identify progress towards improvement targets by using evidence and data as evaluation measures and ensuring collective understanding of the school's ongoing development.
- Direction 2** Develop students' capacity to think creatively and critically through teaching that is strategically planned to engage students in processes of inquiry and exploration and enables them to apply their learning in varying contexts.
- Direction 3** Ensure teaching is designed to meet the needs of each student, in class through professional learning systems that build teachers' capacity to analyse achievement data and understand the implication this has for their planning.

Based on the school's current performance, Ardrossan Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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Andrew Wells  
A/DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS



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Margaret Roads  
PRINCIPAL  
ARDROSSAN AREA SCHOOL



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GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

# Appendix 1

## 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 2018, 73% of year 1 and 60% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change at year 1 and a decline at year 2, from the historic baseline average.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 60% of year 5 students, 68% of year 7 students and 75% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 9, this result represents an improvement, for year 5 this represents a decline, and for year 7, this represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 9 has been upwards, from 50% to 75% respectively.

For 2018, year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 33% of year 3, 20% of year 5, 11% of year 7, and 0% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 40% or 2 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 33% or 1 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 0% or 0 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 0% or 0 of 1 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 73% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, 79% of year 7 students and 75% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7 this result represents little or no change, and for year 9, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 43% to 67% respectively.

For 2018, year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 20% of year 3, 13% of year 5, 16% of year 7 and 13% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100% or 1 of 1 students from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, 67% or 2 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 25% or 1 of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 100% or 1 of 1 students from year 7 remains in the upper bands at year 9.

## SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 52% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects 95% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 75% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 100% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 9% of grades were at an 'A' level and 48% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for C- or higher and 'A' grade achievement, and little or no change for 'B' grade achievement from the respective historic baseline averages.

Seventy five percent of students completed SACE using VET.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 100%, or 1 out of 1 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.