

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

## EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

# REPORT FOR MODBURY WEST SCHOOL R-7

Conducted in October 2015



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education  
and Child Development

### **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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"*

*This External School Review has evaluated:*

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

*The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.*

*This External School Review was conducted by Lyn Arnold, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Deborah Hemming, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of Modbury West School R-7 has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Site Induction Policy – the school has processes in place for managing site induction, but no specific policy. A relevant policy is being developed.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school was found to be compliant with this policy, and has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 92.3%, which is marginally below the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Modbury West School R-7 is situated 15km northeast of the Adelaide CBD. In 2014, 365 students were enrolled in Reception to Year 7, with approximately 20% of students from a non-English speaking background. Enrolments have been growing steadily over time, from 346 in 2011 to 399 students in 2015. The school is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage, and has an ICSEA score of 988.

In 2014, the school population included 6% Aboriginal students, 4% Students with Disabilities, 10% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 25% of families eligible for School Card assistance. The Junior Primary and Primary Schools amalgamated at the beginning of 2011 after working under one leadership team for a number of years.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in her fifth year of tenure, who has recently been re-appointed for a further five years, together with an Assistant Principal: Student Engagement and Wellbeing, and an Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning.

### Lines of inquiry

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

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>To what extent are teachers' pedagogies reflective of whole-school agreements?</b>
	<b>To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?</b>

### How well are students achieving over time?

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 91% of Year 3 students, 74% of Year 5 students and 85% of Year 7 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In relation to students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in 2015, 49% were in Year 3, 26% were in Year 5 and 30% were in Year 7. This compares to an average of 38%, 18% and 20% for Years 3, 5 and 7 respectively over the previous five years, 2010 to 2014, indicating an upward trend at Year 3, Year 5, and Year 7 results over time.

Of those students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in reading, 10 of 11 students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 7 of 14 students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This compares to an average of five students retained in the upper bands at both Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7 between 2008 and 2014.

In 2015, numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of Year 3 students, 78% of Year 5 students and 88% of Year 7 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Of the students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher bands for numeracy in 2015, 29% were in Year 3, 19% were in Year 5 and 18% were in Year 7. This compares to an average of 27%, 8% and 12% for Years 3, 5 and 7 respectively, over the previous five years, 2010 to 2014.

Examination of results for the retention of students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in numeracy shows that 5 of 8 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 in 2013 to Year 5 in 2015, and 4 of 9 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 to 7, 2011 to 2015. This compares to an average of three students being retained in the upper bands for Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7 respectively, between 2008 and 2014.

On the basis of discussions relating to the student achievement data, the school's context, and improvement priorities, the Review Panel explored a Line of Inquiry relating to the extent to which teacher pedagogies reflect whole-school agreements, and how assessment is being used to inform curriculum planning and instruction. During the review, a further Line of Inquiry emerged that explored how performance development processes improve teaching and learning programs.

### To what extent are teachers' pedagogies reflective of whole-school agreements?

In 2011, when the school amalgamated, the staff began development of the Literacy Agreement. The school now has a range of common agreements about what will be taught explicitly using the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, in both literacy and mathematics. The school has also developed a Literacy Data Collection schedule, outlining the types of data to be collected at each year level. A similar approach is under development to support the teaching, learning and monitoring of mathematics and numeracy. Examination of the data collection documentation shows a range of diagnostic tools are utilised, with reference to the NAPLAN results in respective year levels. At the time of external review, the Australian

Curriculum (AC) Achievement Standard in each learning area/subject is reported to parents twice a year in A-E format, but is not included in the data schedule.

Through discussions with the leadership and examination of school documentation, the Review Panel found the School Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities, elements of the whole-school agreements and professional learning are aligned, and that actions, outcomes and future directions for planned school improvement are well-documented in the Annual Report.

In support of the SIP priorities, over the past few years, teachers have engaged in a range of Professional Learning opportunities with their colleagues and external facilitators. Additionally, Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) provide a forum for decision-making based on evidence of student achievement and progress. As a result, teachers outlined to the Review Panel a number of sound pedagogical practices that reflect the whole-school agreements and SIP priorities.

Not all of these pedagogical practices were embedded consistently across the school at the time of the External School Review. However, examination of student work samples and interviews with students about their learning have shown strong evidence of teachers integrating numerous aspects of practices identified in whole-school agreements into their teaching and learning programs.

In general, the staff presented to the Panel as open and receptive to change. They expressed positive attitudes towards continuous improvement, and were motivated to explore ways to meet the learning needs of their students effectively. In particular, they expressed interest in understanding how to take their professional practice to the next level of effectiveness. This positive, collective disposition provides the school with an excellent opportunity to examine the interconnected nature and coherence of school-wide approaches and pedagogies, the extent to which these are implemented effectively in classroom practice, and the associated impact on student learning outcomes. In addition to identifying aspects of current good practice, the PLTs can provide a forum for teachers to share, model and support the effective implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms to ensure coherence from the perspective of students as they progress through the Reception to Year 7 years of schooling.

#### **Direction 1**

**Support continuous improvement in student learning outcomes by evaluating the extent to which whole-school agreements and pedagogies are embedded effectively into classroom practice.**

As noted previously, the school is in the process of developing a whole-school agreement to support the teaching, learning and monitoring of mathematics and numeracy. A timeline for the anticipated implementation and evaluative stages of the agreement should be outlined. This is to ensure the improvement strategies in the SIP, such as the further development of a common understanding of quality teaching practices and effective whole-school teaching and learning processes, are realised in a timely manner for all students. Furthermore, the outcomes of the evaluation of the existing literacy whole-school agreement, particularly in relation to effective pedagogies, will support this process by providing valuable insights that, in turn, can inform the mathematics and numeracy agreement.

#### **Direction 2**

**Lift student achievement by ensuring the implementation, in a timely manner, of a coherent, evidence-based, school-wide approach for the teaching and learning of numeracy and mathematics.**

#### **To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?**

Students are very articulate, and reflect a good self-concept of themselves as learners. They perceived the school to be a safe and supportive environment for learning, and report a sense of belonging. Similarly, parents and Governing Council representatives are generally happy with the education the school provides to their children, and they spoke of the school being well-regarded and having a good reputation in the community. They are supportive of the school's approach to teaching and learning and, in particular, acknowledge and appreciate the school's efforts to ensure children with special needs are well-catered for across the school.

Leadership and teacher comments, together with documentation, show diverse diagnostic and formative data sets are collated and analysed regularly to track and assess student progress. There is also a visual data

wall in the staff area illustrating students' reading progress across the school. This data is used effectively by teachers to inform curriculum planning and instruction, and identify students for intervention programs.

The school has made a considerable investment in professional learning opportunities for teachers to familiarise themselves with the Australian Curriculum, and contemporary pedagogies for meeting the needs of a range of learners that align with school improvement priorities. In addition to externally-provided professional learning, there is regular sharing of practice in both Professional Learning Teams (PLTs), and whole-staff meetings. Consequently, all teachers are integrating aspects of this professional learning into their classroom practice, and all teachers are planning and designing instruction using the Australian Curriculum (AC) framework and reporting to parents against the AC standards.

Discussions with teachers revealed that, at the time of the Review, the school viewed the process of reporting student achievement against the Australian Curriculum standards using A-E grades as a mandatory requirement for reporting to parents, but not as a data source to inform the teaching, learning and assessing cycle in support of improvement and progress in students' learning achievements. In order to assist teachers to move decisively in this direction, leadership should explore ways to further strengthen teachers' capacity to connect the school's scheduled data sources with the AC standards and A-E assessments, and design assessment tasks that provide clear evidence of students demonstrating skills at levels other than a 'C'; that is, 'at standard'.

Some teachers are using rubrics to help students recognise the different levels of achievement they could strive for and reach. Teachers also recognised that students could benefit from more support in understanding: how they are being assessed, what they are being assessed against, and how to improve their learning outcomes. These teacher observations were supported by students' comments. Discussions with all groups of students revealed that, for the various pieces of work they shared, most were unclear on the learning intentions, and had only a basic understanding of what the success criteria were, how their work was graded, why they received the grade they did, or how to improve their work.

### **Direction 3**

**Improve student outcomes by supporting teachers and students to benchmark learning and achievement over time against the SEA, and implementing transparent strategies across the school for sharing assessment criteria with students and parents.**

The school has a range of interventions to meet the needs of 'students of concern', and teachers move students in and out of these interventions on a needs basis. Some teachers in their reflections and discussions during staff meetings acknowledged the emphasis on lower achievers, and recognised a need to extend all students more. Similarly, a significant number of students also spoke of the work posing little to no real challenge, and that this was because their teachers 'try to make learning as easy as possible'.

Overall, the Review Panel found that the teachers and students are ready and willing to actively build and maintain a positive and challenging learning environment underpinned by high expectations and activities that help students transfer and transform learning using higher-order and critical thinking skills. Leadership should provide opportunities for teachers to build their capacity to design learning challenges that will lift students' achievement to higher proficiency levels, and similarly build the capacity of students to influence their learning in positive and constructive ways. In support of this outcome, leadership also should explore ways to articulate the school's expectations for student learning and achievement in relation to intellectual challenge through formalised PDPs. These should be linked to the SIP and strengthen teacher practice in alignment with student achievement outcomes.

### **Direction 4**

**Increase the number of students achieving at the higher levels of proficiency, and maintain high expectations of student engagement in relevant and purposeful learning, by creating authentic opportunities for students to engage in rigorous and challenging learning.**

### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Modbury West School R-7 is tracking well. Multiple data sources are used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school level, and effective leadership is providing strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. Teachers are using the Australian Curriculum to provide a coherent curriculum for students.

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

1. Support continuous improvement in student learning outcomes by evaluating the extent to which whole-school agreements and pedagogies are embedded effectively into classroom practice.
2. Lift student achievement by ensuring the implementation, in a timely manner, of a coherent, evidence-based, school-wide approach for the teaching and learning of numeracy and mathematics.
3. Improve student outcomes by supporting teachers and students to benchmark learning and achievement over time against the SEA, and implementing transparent strategies across the school for sharing assessment criteria with students and parents.
4. Increase the number of students achieving at the higher levels of proficiency, and maintain high expectations of student engagement in relevant and purposeful learning, by creating authentic opportunities for students to engage in rigorous and challenging learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Modbury West School R-7 will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss  
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REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT

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.

Deb Hancock  
PRINCIPAL  
MODBURY WEST SCHOOL R-7

Governing Council Chairperson