

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Allendale East Area School

Conducted in July 2020



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 (ESR) 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 the school community. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Jayne Heath 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 Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Allendale East Area School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 460kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 159. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 179. The local partnership is Blue Lake.

The school has an ICSEA score of 946 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 9% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 21% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 5th year of tenure, an assistant principal in innovation and change for years 7 to 12, 2 coordinators with oversight of intervention and support reception to year 6 and mathematics and science. There are 15 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and 5 Step 9 teachers, an Aboriginal community education officer, a youth worker 1.0 FTE and a pastoral care worker.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Expand opportunities for all staff to work collaboratively in using and analysing data to support the strategic planning and implementation of targeted strategies that will raise student achievement outcomes across all year levels.**
- Direction 2** **Support the implementation of consistent and connected curriculum and pedagogical approaches through performance and development strategies that encompass focused classroom observations and formative feedback for staff.**
- Direction 3** **Strategically embed agreed and defined curriculum and pedagogical approaches to a high level of consistency in all classes to ensure delivery of learning engagement and challenge for all learners across the school.**
- Direction 4** **In collaboration with key stakeholders, develop a concise strategic plan that embodies a rigorous, focused and connected learning pathway from reception to year 12; a plan that has a focus on 'high expectation and high achievement' for student learning and clear definition about how this will be achieved.**

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

There is strong impact of implementation of the previous directions on the school's development. The principal described strategic planning processes illustrating elements of and connections between improvement priorities contained in the site improvement plan (SIP). A focus in her 1st year of tenure was creating a collaborative culture with greater emphasis on student learning. Leadership described student-led initiatives in co-constructing plans for school murals and play areas as a way of promoting this.

Teachers are positive about this collaborative culture and opportunities to review and discuss student achievement regularly. They described data overviews of student progress that gave snapshots, enabling them to plan for improvement intentionally.

Leaders described benefits of their involvement in the Small Schools Learning Improvement Cluster (SSLIC), allowing them to review data of similar schools and share strategies for improvement. They believed the SIP provided an explicit focus for these discussions.

Staff interviews and documentation highlighted structures and processes formed in performance development meetings, targeted professional learning, professional learning communities, and learning improvement sprints that fostered staff collaboration.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Improve practice and monitor strategies and actions: How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The principal described a strategic approach for teacher opportunities to work collaboratively on improving student learning. These plans were illustrated in the leaders' 'floor book' presentation using lotus diagrams connecting elements for improvement. Leaders met regularly to review SIP progress, referencing an impact tool where they documented their reflections on progress in the SIP focus areas of literacy and numeracy. While literacy and numeracy were a focus for improvement, equal importance was placed on creating student pride, connectedness and wellbeing. Student-led activities supported student and teacher collaboration while enhancing the school environment.

At the beginning of the year, teachers met to discuss the school's priorities documented in the SIP, known as 'setting up for success'. Further opportunities were provided for teachers throughout the year to monitor student progress, reflect on their practice and plan for learning. Teachers in junior primary years described regular team meetings where they engaged in evidence-based conversations about learner progress, allowing them to establish agreements of practice. In the upper primary years, teachers characterised this more as informal conversations between teachers and leaders. Secondary school teachers described processes, including meeting as a professional learning community (PLC) and using learning sprints to investigate the effectiveness of dialogic teaching strategies. Asked how they measured this, some referenced focus on the progress of 3 students in their class, use of self-audits or anecdotal observations.

In performance development planning discussions with line managers, teachers' individual goals for improvement were linked to SIP goals. Line managers had different expectations of staff and approaches to providing performance support. A few teachers detailed weekly, evidence-based reflective conversations with a leader about learner progress in their classes and their practice. Several described a standard approach in which they took part in discussions to set and reflect on their progress in meeting goals.

Several effective strategies were described by teachers and leaders as providing support to collaboratively reflect on and improve their practice. However it was evident that these varied in their consistency of expectations and approaches to improvement. Opportunities exist to develop these further and reach agreements on structures and processes that support teachers in evidence-based self-reflection and improvement of practice.

Direction 1 Maximise the impact of teacher practice on student learning by reaching agreements on highly effective and supportive evidence-based reflective processes.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

Student Influence: To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

Leaders highlighted student engagement and independence in learning as areas in need of refining. There is practice that supports authentic student agency in learning. Several teachers commented on the importance of engaging students in planning learning and allowing them to tap into their areas of interest. Early years teachers highlighted activities called 'student investigations', as an example of where students have a more significant say in constructing and presenting their learning. Students and parents spoke positively of the newly created Personal Pathways and Leadership Program years 7 to 10, which provides opportunities for students to co-design and connect their learning with the community in an area of interest and choice. They found this program engaging and challenging.

Close partnerships in learning between students and teachers in the senior secondary years are important to both. Mentor teachers designated to groups of students played an essential role in monitoring, supporting and communicating progress in learning. Several teachers described one-on-one conversations about completed work, learning progress and improvement in rubrics and performance standards. Teachers of students in the middle years present them with success criteria and learning intentions to support their learning. Ways in which they received feedback to improve include teacher comments in class, draft work, tests and assignments. Some students believed these were useful, but the quality of feedback depended on the teacher. There were few examples of students providing feedback to teachers about enhancing their learning experiences.

Leadership opportunities for students to influence school environment, represent the school and organise student events, such as fundraising, were demonstrated in elected student council activities. However, there were only pockets of authentic opportunity for students to influence and shape their learning, and little evidence of students having a language of learning to give them greater control of their education. Opportunities exist to build students up further as powerful partners in learning, using processes allowing co-designing of learning through authentic student agency.

Direction 2 Further develop authentic student agency in learning by building teacher and student capacity and reaching agreements of highly effective strategies.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Building teacher capacity: How effective are the school's professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capacity?

Several leaders illustrated the importance of building a more collaborative staff, whose work was more student-centred, improvement-driven and with high expectations. The principal detailed restructuring of the leadership structure to foster a targeted approach to create school priorities, as outlined in the SIP. Gradual building of teacher capacity achieved through professional learning in several areas included:

- forming intervention and support programs in literacy and numeracy
- task and learning design
- student wellbeing, and
- improvement of practice processes.

Teachers are positive about opportunities to attend professional learning in the school's priority areas that support their work.

Leaders engage staff in performance development processes, these are:

- performance development planning meetings
- classroom observations
- feedback, and
- time for reflection on practice.

Staff believe these processes vary in their organisation and expectations across the school. Several primary teachers commented positively on the evidence-based reflective discussions with leaders. Classroom observations were referred to by some teachers as very useful in providing them with targeted feedback. Although this was more common in the early years, it was not a standard feature across the school.

Progress in building staff capacity by linking all elements of school improvement work is considerable. The next steps include ensuring consistent performance and development processes to strengthen the collective efficacy of all teachers.

Direction 3 Strengthen teacher capacity through consistent performance and development processes where data-informed conversations are used to inform and improve planning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

At Allendale East Area School, the influence of previous directions is evident, with the school effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to support this work. Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by systems that build capacity and provide adequate conditions for student learning.

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

- Direction 1** Maximise the impact of teacher practice on student learning by reaching agreements on highly effective and supportive evidence-based reflective processes.
- Direction 2** Further develop authentic student agency in learning by building teacher and student capacity and reaching agreements of highly effective strategies.
- Direction 3** Strengthen teacher capacity through consistent performance and development processes where data-informed conversations are used to inform and improve planning.

Based on the school's current performance, Allendale East Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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 2019, 69% of year 1 and 80% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and an improvement for year 2, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 1 has been downwards, from 100% to 69%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students, 81% of year 7 students and 56% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline, for year 7, an improvement, and for year 9, little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3, NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than and for years 5, 7 and 9 within, the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 15% of year 3, 14% of year 5 and 13% of year 7, and 11% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline, from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 43%, or 3 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 67%, or 2 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 50%, or 1 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, 81% of year 7 students and 67% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 7 and 9, this result represents an improvement and for year 5 a decline, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 94% to 81%.

For 2019, years 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 23% of year 3, 5% of year 5, 13% of year 7 and no year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been downwards from 13% to 5%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, none of the 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 100%, or the 1 student from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7, and the 1 student from year 3 did not remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2019, 29% 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. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend has been upwards from 60% in 2017 to 100% in 2019.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019, no students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 83% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2019, 90% of grades achieved were at 'C-level or higher, no grades were at an 'A' level, and 20% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents a decline for the 'A' level grade and a decline for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages.

Fifty percent of students completed SACE using VET, and there were no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2019.

In terms of 2019 tertiary entrance, 50%, or 1 out of 2 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. 3 students left for full-time employment.