

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Morphett Vale Primary School**

Conducted in June 2018



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## 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 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 Simon Harding, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Tanya Oshinsky, Review Principal.

## School context

Morphett Vale Primary School caters for children from preschool through to year 7. It is situated 35kms from the Adelaide CBD and is part of the Panalatinga Partnership.

The school has an ICSEA score of 978, and is classified as Category 3 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school enrolment is 291 students, and includes 2.7% Aboriginal students, 15% students with disabilities (inclusive of 1 junior primary and 1 primary special small class), 0.3% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), and 33% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of her 1<sup>st</sup> tenure, a deputy principal in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year (managing students with disabilities), senior leader – curriculum in her 4<sup>th</sup> year (0.2FTE) and senior leader – student wellbeing in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year (0.6FTE).

## 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:

**School Community Partnerships:** How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

**Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

**Improvement Agenda:** To what extent does the school monitor student achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?

## How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

The principal shared the significant work the school has undertaken to build authentic student influence across the school. The current site improvement plan (SIP) has been developed collaboratively with all stakeholders, evident throughout all 3 pillars of Ready to Learn, Pedagogical Shift and Connecting with Community, in which student influence features significantly. To support this work, the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) team has provided critical support and training over time, as well as a coach for a period of 6 months.

One significant achievement from this work is that the school established the 'lead learners' group as part of the Pathways to Powerful Learning program. Staff worked with students across the school to establish 5 learning dispositions to build confident, resilient, engaged and successful learners:

- Mindset
- Collaboration
- Communication

- Problem-solving, and
- Self-regulation.

Students are invited to be a 'lead learner' when they consistently demonstrate these dispositions in their learning, and facilitate learning in all classes across the school at the beginning of each year on the dispositions. The lead learners now undertake important roles across the school, meeting regularly with the principal. Students also have a voice through representation on governing council sub-committees and student council.

The new initiative of three-way interviews, including students leading the conversation about their learning progress, was highlighted by parents, students and teachers, as having a positive impact on student learning and their ability to understand and articulate their learning. Before this initiative was implemented, information was provided in newsletters to parents about why student input is important and what this new process would look like. Parents stated that they valued these meetings and their child's involvement in leading some of the discussion about their learning. Some stated they would like these forums to happen more frequently. The use of online communication is another strategy the school has begun to implement in many classes. This process is supporting students to share and talk about their learning with parents. Parents' awareness of student influence on their learning has increased, while teachers and leaders noted there is increased parent engagement in their child's learning.

Students identified how teachers assist them with their improvement, sharing that feedback was central to improvement, and that good feedback is constructive and not necessarily harsh. Students also shared that a chance to provide and receive feedback from peers is something that improves their work. Teachers indicated a range of strategies they are using, including verbal and written feedback, peer feedback, posing questions, use of 'I can..' statements, formative discussions, pre and post-tests and exit slips. Teachers' perceptions about what effective feedback for learning looks like across the school and how they share this information with students varies. Embedding common understandings and practices relating to effective feedback will continue to strengthen feedback for learning for all students.

The leadership team are supportive of staff. As a relatively new team, they have spent time building trust with teachers through a willingness to be both responsive and proactive in modelling and providing training for staff in a range of forums to support changes. The SIP action plans highlight the use of literacy, numeracy and STEM as areas for teachers to focus on to build student influence into the learning. Teachers shared that they all have increasing student influence as a priority focus in their professional development plans. Some students expressed that they have input into their learning through choice, and 1 student stated that: "at times, we can teach the teacher". Students at all levels benefit from having opportunities to be active participants in their own learning. It was acknowledged by both leadership and teachers that although there is good practice in the school, strengthening teacher and student capacity and consistency across the school is an area for further growth. Provision of planned opportunities for staff and students to work collaboratively in this area will further strengthen authentic student influence in their learning.

#### **Direction 1**

**Strengthen student influence on learning more broadly across the school by supporting teachers to release, through collaboration, greater responsibility to students for their learning.**

## **To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?**

When staff focus on high expectations for students and deliver high-quality learning tasks with the aim to stretch and challenge students then opportunities to maximise learning can be realised. Developing students' confidence to take risks in their learning will benefit outcomes for student learning.

Students value and respect staff, and are happy to be at school; they could articulate why learning is important, and believe the most important aspect of being at school is to be learning new things. Students who suggested others things, like making new friends, clarified their thinking by saying: "If you have good friends, they help you learn". Many of the students interviewed expressed that their work is challenging more than 50% of the time. When asked about how they learn best, a student replied with "Teachers push us harder, beyond where we thought we could go". They could provide the panel with a range of strategies they use to work through times where they are finding learning harder. For some students goal-setting was a feature of what the next steps in their learning will be, however, while the panel heard from most students that they had some involvement in goal-setting, there was no consistent practice across the school. Teachers stated that they are working collaboratively to strengthen processes with students to more effectively set individual student learning goals with their students.

The school has been active in seeking perception data from students about how they learn best. The panel found strong evidence of the work the school has undertaken in relation to Growth Mindsets and the relevance of being in the learning pit across all groups interviewed. It is important to act on these perceptions, so as not to restrict students from achieving high standards of which they are capable. Strategic and regular review and implementation of perception data around how students believe they best learn will continue to inform both students and staff in their next steps for learning. Linking this to the whole-school approach to embed Growth Mindset language and actions, students will continue to strengthen the range of skills and strategies they can use to sustain positive learning dispositions.

Parents shared that written reports the school offered twice a year are providing them with clear information about their child's progress. Teachers know their children, and are approachable and willing to make time to discuss their progress. Another initiative the parents valued was the use of electronic media to share information about student progress with parents more readily, which assists with regular information sharing on what their child was doing. Some parents stated they would like increased clarity about how the work displayed fits with the expectations of teachers. Teachers shared that, while they are all using this tool, they have varying levels of confidence, leading to some inconsistency across the school in how and what information was provided through this sharing approach.

Teachers articulated strategies they use to include stretch and challenge into learning, such as increasing authentic student influence through using the Australian Curriculum achievement standards with students to plan tasks, multiple entry points, open-ended tasks, and peer mentoring opportunities. They could identify ways their successes, including students recognising and celebrating the 'journey' not just the answer, students being able to articulate their learning with others, and the engagement and passion with which the students work on a task. Teachers shared ways they are working to improve their practice. It was evident to the panel that teachers worked collaboratively and in a supportive environment as they willingly sought advice from leadership and peers to improve their practice.

### **Direction 2**

**Provide time to critically reflect, consolidate and strengthen teacher capacity across the school, to work with students to effectively embed intellectual stretch and challenge into daily classroom learning design, and to set clear, measurable individual learning goals.**

## **To what extent does the school monitor student achievement and review effectiveness of processes and strategies?**

There is a strong understanding and culture throughout the school community that the child is at the centre of everything the school does. The school has strategically provided opportunities for staff to regularly discuss their work, inclusive of how students are progressing both formally and informally. One strategy is non-instruction time (NIT) aligned for like year-level teachers enabling release at similar times to support collaborative work across the school. Staff seek opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to improve their practice with the aim of improving learning outcomes for students.

The school has recently provided an online database for all student data, including system and school-based datasets. All teachers are now using this online system to support their work in relation to data-informed practice. When discussing the use of data at a class and cohort level, teachers referred to a range of uses, including grouping students (both ability and opportunities for peer teaching), goal-setting, determining gaps in learning to target teaching, and identification of students who may need intervention.

Individual teachers use a variety of diagnostic assessment data to support learning and modify teaching strategies, including NAPLAN and PAT-R and -M, and cross-referencing with class datasets, such as A-E grades. All staff discussed how differentiation in their planning and teaching enhances the engagement of students. The use of differentiated learning strategies varied across the school through individual goal-setting and the use of success criteria. While there has been work undertaken by leadership to support teachers, further work in this area would strengthen the capacity of teachers to more effectively triangulate datasets for intentional teaching and learning.

Targeted invention programs, run by SSOs, are in place to support student learning in maths and English. Teachers value the work of the SSOs supporting student learning through these programs, however, they see benefit from strengthening communication about the progress of students in these programs through formal opportunities to meet and review strategies with SSOs.

Staff, students and parents have been instrumental in the development of the current site improvement plan (SIP). Staff have ownership of the priorities in the plan; their professional development plans are also aligned to site priorities. Every teacher is part of a work group to develop action plans and monitor progress of these plans. Regular documented and dedicated time is set aside at staff meetings for these groups to meet and evaluate the effectiveness of processes put in place.

The school is moving into a consolidation and review phase of their implementation to critically reflect on the effectiveness of current strategies. Clear literacy and numeracy agreements have been recently established, and provide all staff with clear expectations, timelines and congruence of understanding across the school. One example of the school's responsiveness to connecting with the community was in relation to preschool-to-school transition. Evidence was provided across a range of sources where parents raised a concern to improve the transition process. The school consulted with a range of community members and established more comprehensive practices, which have enhanced students' and their families' experiences, throughout the process.

Staff shared that they value the opportunities they have for professional learning in conjunction with Partnership priorities. Teachers have found the tri-school moderation opportunities positive, and leading to informed practice. The broadening of teaching staff attending the training opportunities with Social Ventures Australia has been welcomed by staff as building their capacity in priority areas. School

leadership is valued for their willingness to work alongside and mentor and model practices to support teachers in priority areas across the school.

The effective use of data across the school varied amongst the staff. The work already done to build the capacity of staff to collate and analyse data independently to inform whole-school planning and classroom practice is to be commended. It is important to strengthen clear and agreed practices across the school in the use of data for planning of innovative learning/task design, sharing with students to assist in developing powerful learners, and to strategically inform further approaches/practices to best support student learning outcomes.

### **Direction 3**

**Strengthen teacher capacity to collate, analyse and respond to a range of datasets at the student, class and whole-school level, to more effectively inform learning design and teacher practice.**

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Morphett Vale Primary School.

Effective practice in school community partnerships was evident at the school. The school has done significant work towards building effective practices of authentic student influence on their learning and school life, particularly with the lead learners group. Lead learners are represented on governing council sub-committees, are part of consultation in the establishment and review of the site improvement plan, and support other students to be better learners.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Morphett Vale Primary School has demonstrated a commitment to improvement characterised by high expectations for students. The school has effective leadership working with the community to provide strategic direction and planning. Teachers are provided with, and effectively use, structured time for ongoing, collaborative professional learning and reflection on practice.

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

1. Strengthen student influence on learning more broadly across the school by supporting teachers to release, through collaboration, greater responsibility to students for their learning.
2. Provide time to critically reflect, consolidate and strengthen teacher capacity across the school, to work with students to effectively embed intellectual stretch and challenge into daily classroom learning design, and to set clear, measurable individual learning goals.
3. Strengthen teacher capacity to collate, analyse and respond to a range of datasets at the student, class and whole-school level, to more effectively inform learning design and teacher practice.

Based on the school's current performance, Morphett Vale 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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Rachel McLennan  
PRINCIPAL  
MORPHETT VALE 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 90.3%.

# 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, 81% of year 1 and 71% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement for both the year 1 and 2 students from the historic baseline average.

There has been an upwards trends for year 1, from 50% in 2015 to 81% in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, and 81% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

The trend for year 5 has been downwards, from 90% in 2013 to 67% in 2017.

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

In 2017, 17% of year 3, 14% of year 5, and 13% of year 7 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 42%, or 5 of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 33%, or 1 of 3 students from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.

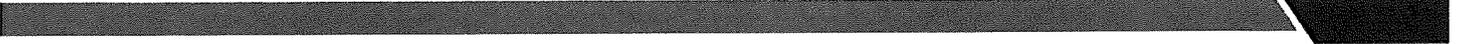
### Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 69% of year 5 students, and 68% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2017, 17% of year 3, 11% of year 5, and 7% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 26% in 2015 to 7% in 2017.



For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 3 of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 100%, or the 1 student at year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.