Department for Education
External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Coorara Primary School

Conducted in August 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 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 Debbie Grzeczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lyn Bretag, 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)
    - Students
    - Teachers

School context

Coorara Primary School caters for reception to year 7. It is situated 26kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 234. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 197. The local partnership is Panalatinga.

The school has an ICSEA score of 956, and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 9% Aboriginal students, 19% students with disabilities, 1% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 59% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 8th year of tenure, a deputy principal and student wellbeing leader. The school hosts an area primary special class.

There are 18 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 3 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **Engage and challenge all students in their learning through building the capacity of teachers to design learning based on authentic student feedback.**

Direction 2   **Improve student growth and achievement in numeracy by embedding effective evidence-based pedagogy through the influence of professional learning teams.**

Direction 3   **Engage students further in their learning by making learning intentions explicit, success criteria clear and learner dispositions congruent with community-agreed expectations.**

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

Previous ESR directions had a high profile and drove the improvement agenda. The production of a comprehensive range of agreed documents outlining key expectations of teacher practice provided a consistent approach and supported student learning. Leaders support teachers to refine their practice. This has a positive influence on student outcomes, and is reflected in improved achievement results. Staff now engage with and track and monitor individual student data.

The directions and the new school improvement model have driven quality professional learning, which challenged and stretched teacher capabilities. Professional learning, delivered by outside providers and leaders during staff meetings, resulted in effective pedagogy in numeracy and reading being embedded practice. A stronger focus on learner dispositions and student feedback is still an area of further growth for the school.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform the next steps?

The leadership team provides strategic leadership and understanding of how to further improve learner outcomes at Coorara Primary School. The clarity and narrow focus of the school improvement plan (SIP) is supported by the alignment of professional learning, professional development processes and professional learning communities, driving the improvement agenda. Leaders provide high-level accountability through structured observations and walkthroughs, giving formative feedback to teachers and supporting them to further refine their practice to deliver on the SIP goals.

Teachers collectively engaged in the creation of the current updated SIP through allocated staff meeting time. Inclusion of support staff in this process will optimise staff ownership of the SIP. Explicitly connecting newsletter and social media items to the SIP focus areas will increase parent and student understanding of the school's direction.

Teachers and leadership staff review the SIP as part of a continuous process of review and evaluation. Staff track 3 students, shaping ongoing data conversations with leadership staff. Professional learning communities meet regularly to review and evaluate progress that defines the next steps to support student learning.

Staff competently engage with a range of student data supported by a comprehensive data schedule. Data is displayed on a central data wall and regularly updated. As teachers are tracking and monitoring individual student data effectively, their next steps are refining data and identifying trends and patterns. Increasing staff data literacy skills to collectively disaggregate data of high-priority groups, such as Aboriginal students and students in higher bands, will further refine and sharpen teacher practice.

'Drilling down and disaggregating' data provides staff with the opportunity to interrogate data for identified groups of students and highlights patterns that can be hidden within aggregated datasets. Collectively evaluating how specific groups are improving enables staff to consider their practice and pedagogy, informs planning processes and influences the next steps for student learning.

Direction 1   **Strengthen tracking and monitoring of student progress by closely analysing priority groups, particularly Aboriginal students, to monitor progress and identify trends that will inform practice and interventions.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Students are supported in their learning by teachers who seek to continually refine and improve their practice. Leaders work with staff to document the 'Coorara way' of doing things, including clear expectations of teacher practice. Staff use a range of proven pedagogical practices to support student learning and provide a high degree of consistency across all classes. There is coherent intent with goal-setting, and all students have individual goals, but the focus, explicitness and updating depends on individual teachers. Students are engaged with, and can articulate their learning, with most knowing key elements of their data. Transferring the high-yield strategies evidenced in math and English to other curriculum areas will further support student learning.

Teachers know their students and engage with a range of individual student achievement and growth data. This drives intervention delivered through a mixture of credible programs and school services officer support. All identified students have an individual learning plan, providing clarity and a comprehensive tool to personalise student learning. Teachers use pre-assessment to refine planning and post-assessment to track student growth.

All staff track data to identify students, but there is variance in how it is used to inform differentiated student learning. Some students talked of their work being 'too easy' and a few talked of repeating work, with new learning occurring towards the end of a unit of work. Students want to be challenged and given harder work to push and stretch their learning. Some staff provide students with self-assessment rubrics, but these only reflect 3 levels: below standard, at standard and above standard. Tasks viewed in bookwork, through discussions and observations, presented limited opportunity to achieve higher grades. Extending rubrics to reflect A to E achievement will assist teachers to design tasks where students are able to reach higher grades. More opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes will assist in improving and offering stretch and challenge for all students as routine practice. Teachers highlighted differentiation, stretch and challenge as areas for further support.

Direction 2   **Strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.**

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school provide conditions for effective student learning?

There is a vibrant and confident student community who feel strongly connected to adults within the school. Student leaders see their role closely aligned to sports day and fundraising but external to learning. A student representative council has not operated in recent years, resulting in some students feeling disempowered. Older students wish to contribute to the school, but felt they lacked a forum to discuss ideas. Some classes had class meetings, but structures are not currently in place to progress ideas forward. Leadership plans to expand student leadership have been impacted by COVID-19, which provides opportunity to develop pathways forward with student comment on the proposed new structures.

Staff support conditions for student learning by displaying a common set of class visuals throughout all classes. These are purposeful, carefully chosen and provide clarity and a sense of predictability for students. A few classes are saturated with teacher-produced resources which negates their impact. Cutting back visual supports to key agreed resources will provide consistency and coherence. The inclusion of exemplar pieces of student work in displays to provide aspirational examples will further support student learning.

Students want to feed back on their class set-up, which included seating designs and class displays, as well as increased ownership of their learning. Some teachers routinely ask for, and act on student feedback, but this was not evidenced as consistent practice. A few teachers share the curriculum with students and the next step is providing opportunities to co-design learning. Implementing and embedding processes enabling all students to have regular input into their learning, will deepen their ownership of, and promote their sense of selves as learners.

The majority of students felt they could have increased influence in their learning. Students talked of being presented with choices in lessons but these were mostly teacher-driven. Student ownership of learning is in its early stages. The current focus on learner dispositions and growth mindsets is known by students and parents and there is opportunity to further develop this within each classroom. Embedding learner dispositions will enable students to influence their learning and see themselves as learners.

Direction 3   **Enable students to authentically own their learning through further development of student forums and the consistent implementation of teaching pedagogies.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Staff at Coorara Primary School are a highly collaborative team who express a genuine desire to improve outcomes for all students. The principal has a relentless focus on improvement and works effectively with the leadership team to support staff in a strategic and systematic manner. Staff feel supported by leadership and reflect that feedback they receive has had the biggest impact on their practice. The narrow and deep improvement focus supports staff to master an area of change, providing opportunity to expand this knowledge across all curriculum areas. Students are confident, can articulate their learning and reflect a deep sense of pride in their school. Parents and governing council are supportive and appreciate positive communication with staff.

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

Direction 1   **Strengthen tracking and monitoring of student progress by closely analysing priority groups, particularly Aboriginal students, to monitor progress and identify trends that will inform practice and interventions.**

Direction 2   **Strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.**

Direction 3   **Enable students to authentically own their learning through further development of student forums and the consistent implementation of teaching pedagogies.**

Based on the school's current performance, Coorara Primary 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, 85% of year 1 and 93% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 88% of year 3 students, 95% of year 5 students and 88% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 38% of year 3, 29% of year 5 and 13% of year 7 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 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 60%, or 3 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 29%, or 2 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 72% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 22% of year 3, 19% of year 5 and 17% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 3 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 1 out of 1 student from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.