

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Kongorong Primary School

Conducted in May 2018



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 Rebecca Moore, Review Principal.

School context

Kongorong Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 439kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is currently 56 students and it has been stable over the last 5 years. The school

has an ICSEA score of 970 and is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% students with disabilities and 9% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 4th year of her 1st tenure.

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:

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

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school's self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

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

Maximising learning opportunities for students can be realised when teachers focus on high expectations and deliver quality learning programs which aim to stretch and challenge students. Building students' self-confidence to take risks in their learning has a positive impact on learning outcomes.

The learning data collected at a system level over time indicates, on average, relative high percentage of students at Kongorong Primary School are achieving at or above the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). While it is difficult to see trends from year-to-year due to relatively low numbers of students in each year level the 2017 numeracy achievement for years 3 and 5 is an improvement from the historic average. The results, on average, are a solid base from which to work across the school to deepen strategies of challenge and stretch for students in their learning.

Students value and respect all staff. They see the school as a place for learning and are grateful for the recently expanded opportunities they have, including the newly established 'farm', Canberra camp and participation in the regional choir program. The older students all stated that learning new things is the most important focus of school and could clearly articulate reasons why, including having the chance to attend university and getting a good job. While younger students had a higher percentage responding *making new friends* (63%) and *learning new things* (25%), they often stated that the need to have friends is to assist them in their learning. Students stated that their teachers made the learning fun, which they recognise, as improving their engagement with the learning.

Across the students interviewed, they indicated that around 30% of their work, over any given week was hard. They could articulate strategies they use when work is harder, including leaving it and coming back later. It is important to act on these perceptions to ensure that students are challenged and stretched, and achieve the high standards that data demonstrates they are capable of. The regular implementation and review of how students perceive they learn best will continue to inform both teachers and students about

their next steps in learning. During student interviews and classroom walk throughs children talked about having a *growth mindset* and being *in the learning pit* to encourage them to persist when they feel challenged in their learning. One year 7 student stated , ‘Thinking negatively brings about a negative outcome.’ These approaches can be further strengthened across the school so students view this as a natural part of learning and they continue to build a range of skills and strategies to maintain positive learning dispositions.

The parents recognised that the engagement of students with their work was evidenced in the way their children talked about their work and leaning activities with interest. The parents identified the new initiatives, stated earlier in the report, are having a positive impact on their child’s engagement. Parents stated that one of the strengths of the school is the care and interest staff take in all students, across the school, impacting positively on the children’s learning.

Teachers shared a number of strategies they are using to incorporate stretch and challenged into their practice. They are both professional and collaborative in their approach to improvement in this area and to deliver quality learning opportunities for students which are based on evidence and research. Although the site improvement plan makes mention of stretch and challenge in literacy and numeracy, it would benefit from further clarity about specific teaching strategies teachers could implement to optimise the stretch in the design of learning.

The school is well placed to identify a number of agreed high leverage teaching strategies for intellectual stretch to implement across the school, built on common understandings and agreements to sustain high level outcomes for students.

Direction 1

Implement consistent teaching strategies across the school, which effectively integrate and embed intellectual stretch and challenge for all students through teaching and learning.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The principal, in her presentation, shared that the strategic use of data was a growth area across the school. Recently, a new school-wide tracking and monitoring schedule has been developed, focusing on the individual child. It has a range of data, including literacy, numeracy (both system and school), attendance and interventions (where relevant). Time is set aside at every staff meeting to update, reflect and celebrate progress of students.

During the staff meeting run by the review officer, staff analysed the triangulation of literacy and numeracy datasets, which included Running Records, NAPLAN , PAT-R and PAT-M and A-E allocations. Discussions included some difference between the datasets and the A-E allocations. They questioned whether their task design was allowing students to achieve an ‘A’ grade and that there would benefit from further work in the triangulation of data and moderation of work samples. Staff shared that moderation was challenging in a small site, and that some work has begun with other small schools, with time allocated at regular intervals to support development in this area.

When older students were asked about how they know what to do to improve they shared ideas including have a positive mindset, never give up, take time and think more. They could articulate different forms of testing including pre and post testing and formal standardised tests. They shared that these tests assisted teachers to plan for future learning, know where students were up to and to inform them of their progress. Students identified that they are involved in using information to set individual goals. In some classes, this is well-developed, ongoing, with students articulating their goals; however, school-wide expectations in

relation to the use of individual goal-setting is still relatively new, and could be implemented more consistently in conjunction with the increased focus on data currently undertaken by staff.

Parents shared that the reporting processes the school has in place were providing them with the information they require in relation to the progress of their child. They stated that staff are very approachable and responsive if they have a concern about their child's progress.

Teachers indicated a number of ways they provided feedback for students to inform students of their progress, such as written, oral, and providing 'little' questions to encourage students to do the thinking and next steps.

Staff identified the need to ensure time is allocated for reflection and feedback both during, and at the end of lessons. Effective feedback identifies what students are doing well, what the areas of improvement are, and provides the learner with strategies to achieve that improvement.

Teachers shared, and it was observed during classroom walkthroughs, that they use rubrics and learning intentions, with their classes, to assist students to make explicit what students need to learn. Students could identify the specific learning they had strengths in. When asked how they knew they were good at that particular area of learning many responses related to liking the subject, being 'good at it', and/or it comes easily. Students who know and understand the learning intentions and success criteria, and are actively involved in self-assessment processes at all stages of learning, are then more able to become active participants in their own learning. Students will be well-positioned to understand why they receive a particular grade and know what they need to do to improve. Further work to strengthen the use of learning intentions and success criteria along with the strategic use of data will support improved learning outcomes for students.

Direction 2

Strengthen the capacity of teachers to embed consistent practice and high-yield strategies for effective feedback and goal-setting, in conjunction with strategic use of data to support students in their learning.

How effective are the school's self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

There is a responsibility of all schools to put in place structures and systems to support a process of continual self-review. These include the development of the site improvement plan (SIP), committee structures, intervention and student support, performance management and professional learning to support the priorities for improvement. It is important that this process is consultative and collaborative requiring data and evidence to monitor progress and to inform future decisions.

The principal shared in her presentation how the current SIP is closely aligned with Partnership priorities and how she has worked with staff, to more closely, focus on the student data in the formulation of the current priorities. The SIP identifies 3 key development ideals for Kongorong Primary School:

- attendance
- literacy, and
- numeracy.

These form the foundation of the school's improvement strategy. The review panel recorded that staff acknowledged the work of the principal and recognise and support the direction that the school is taking. The staff are collegiate, honest and student-focused. Their practices are strengthened through their willingness to actively collaborate with each other and in opportunities beyond the school.

The principal and staff shared the work they are undertaking in numeracy. Each teacher, as part of the professional development plan (PDP), is currently involved in a *learning sprint* (investigation of evidence-

based solutions) with a focus on developing students' number skills. Teachers meet with the principal once a term to discuss their professional plan. Regular time for teachers to share and reflect on both student progress and explicit teaching strategies is planned each week at staff meetings. Numeracy improvement is also being supported, through the release of teachers, and working with teachers from other small schools in moderating student work. In conjunction, to support this priority, 2 intervention programs have been introduced at the school recently, *Toosmart* and *Quicksmart*, for targeted students.

These programs are run by school services officers (SSOs), who provide support in classrooms and through intervention programs. Processes would be strengthened through a more formalised approach at regular intervals to support the ongoing monitoring of these programs and planning/sharing with teachers. SSOs shared that they have opportunities to attend professional learning to support their work. Teachers will be attending professional learning in a strategy to inform and improve their practice. The principal has strategically used available funding to support this work. During semester 2 it is planned that learning sprint focus will be on supporting the literacy priority. This work could be strengthened through their current investigations and the development of school-wide agreements in both literacy and numeracy.

There is a strong culture throughout the school community of the child being at the centre of everything the school does. Parents commented that it is one of the reasons they choose to send their child to the school. Through discussions with parents, including governing council, there was evidence provided to the panel that they are regularly consulted, their opinions are valued and they felt included in decisions made at the school. Parents are supportive of the leadership and the decisions that are taken, and demonstrated awareness of the site priorities. In particular, the attendance priority, the work done by the principal and staff to inform parents of the importance of regular attendance through communication and a parent meeting has been valued by the community. This has been followed-up with visible targets, class awards and text messages sent to parents to celebrate days where the school has 100% attendance. These initiatives have had a positive impact on student attendance, a key priority in the site improvement plan.

The principal has established a range of good structures to support the improvement work across the school inclusive of the focus on student progress through the use of data to establish priorities. The school can further strengthen the ongoing development of the SIP through continuing to build teacher capacity and ownership of student data, and data implications for intentional teaching when reviewing the priorities, through current investigations.

Direction 3

Collaboratively strengthen and embed teacher ownership of and capacity to use student data, ensuring it is at the centre of self review processes to inform future SIP priorities.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Kongorong Primary School.

Effective practice in school and community partnerships was evident at the school. The governing council and wider parent community work in close partnership across the school setting. Parents have trust in the principal and staff in the provision of a quality education for their children. The school community appreciate the high level of consultation and know their opinions are valued. This relationship is strengthened by ongoing open dialogue and commitment to working together, resulting in a united community with strong support in the school's endeavours.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Kongorong Primary School has effective leadership providing strategic direction, planning and targeted intervention, and is strengthening its culture of improvement with high expectations for students.

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

1. **Implement consistent teaching strategies across the school which effectively integrate and embed intellectual stretch and challenge for all students through everyday teaching and learning.**
2. **Strengthen the capacity of teachers to embed consistent practice and high yield strategies for effective feedback and goal setting in conjunction with strategic use of data to support students in their learning.**
3. **Collaboratively strengthen and embed teacher ownership of and capacity to use student data, ensuring it is at the centre of self review processes to inform future SIP priorities.**

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

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 92.1%.

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, 83% of year 1 and no year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 students, and a decline for the year 2 students from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 2 has been downwards, from 33% in 2015 to nil percent in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 86% of year 3 students, 60% of year 5 students, and 80% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, and a decline for years 5 and 7, from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2017, 14% of year 3, 20% of year 5, and nil percent 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, 33%, or 1 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017. There were no students retained in the upper 2 bands from year 3 to 7 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% of year 3 students, 80% of year 5 students and 80% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and little or no change for year 7 from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 50% in 2015 to 100% in 2017.

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, 14% of year 3, nil percent of year 5 and 20% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy 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 numeracy, 33%, or 1 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017. There were no students in year 3 retained in the upper 2 bands at year 7 in 2017.