

# **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## **On-track evaluation report for Kangarilla Primary School**

One-year return conducted in August 2018



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3-year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the External School Review report is available on the school website.

In some cases, when the review panel finds cause for concern about the levels of achievement and growth, together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school will be advised that they will be visited again in a year.

Schools with a 1-year return are assisted during the intervening period by the education director and other department staff to ensure they receive coordinated, targeted and systematic support. Intervention is concentrated on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement.

During this process, which occurs 12-15 months after the initial visit, a review panel determines the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school's priority improvement plan was the main document used as the basis for this review.

**The review visit was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate, and David Cowles, Review Principal.**

**This On-Track Evaluation report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Kangarilla Primary School in June 2017.**



## Directions from the External School Review report

### June 2017

1. Provide more challenging and purposeful tasks for students that require higher-order thinking, and are connected to the real world.
2. Ensure all planning and actions undertaken by the school are based on the review and reflection of evidence-based information about the value of immediate past actions and strategies
3. Ensure that the school's moral purpose, to deliver continuously improving academic learning for students, is understood and owned by members of the school community and enacted by teachers through their practice.
4. Ensure that the school community as a whole and teachers in the classroom make data-informed judgements about student learning, and translate the results of data and evidence into targeted actions, which are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness towards improvement

### Additional information about the school context

The principal has advised that she has reduced her teaching time, from 0.6FTE to 0.5FTE, and now works in the upper primary class 0.5FTE, working alongside a teacher who also undertakes the role of pastoral care worker.

Another teacher moved from teaching 0.5FTE in the year 5/6/7 class to full-time in the reception/1/2. The year 3/4 teacher was on long service leave in term 2, replaced by an early career teacher for that period.

Since 2013 student enrolment has declined, from 45 students in 2018 to 36 students. At the time of the on-track evaluation, the school had received an additional 8 enrolments, bringing the total enrolment to 44.

### Development of a priority improvement plan

The principal has advised that, initially she and the then principal consultant (PC), wrote the initial draft of the priority improvement plan (PIP) in the final week of term 4 2017.

In 2018, an officer from the Learning Improvement division (LID), the PC and principal, wrote an updated draft plan. Early in the 1<sup>st</sup> term, the PIP was further reviewed by the Senior Leader Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP) and the principal to provide more detail. Due to changes in the department's partnership structures, the school was allocated a new education director (ED), PC and support officer from LID.

The school provided clear, documented evidence of the development and monitoring of the PIP at strategic intervals.

The plan was sent to the Executive Director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools in term 1 2018.

### Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

The SLLIP has provided ongoing support through the provision of professional development, as well as 1-to-1 support for staff in the following areas: learning design and moderation, planning, assessment, annotation of work samples, and portfolio development.

The principal, together with a neighbouring principal, co-presented modules 1 and 2 of the task design unit to staff from both schools earlier this year. The principal reported that modules 3 and 4 will be presented in September, with the 2 principals collaboratively presenting the professional learning.



Kangarilla Primary School is currently involved in Lead Learn Educator Improvement Cycle (school initiative both in 2017 and 2018).

The new support officer from LID facilitated 2 staff meetings on the whole-school literacy agreement, reviewed the site improvement plan, and the whole-school numeracy plan. The principal and the PC spoke about data and investigated spider graphs for showing data. The ED and PC observed all classroom teachers over 3 visits.

The principal reported that the professional learning undertaken had provided significant leverage to progress school improvement, this included the following:

- The collection and use of data to inform practice.
- Professional development with the SLLIP that supported consistency in planning against the Australian Curriculum.
- A comprehensive review of whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements currently being implemented across the school.
- Observable changes in pedagogical practices were now evident in classrooms. The principal noted that professional development provided by the SLLIP has significantly supported staff in strengthening their pedagogical practices.
- The school has been involved in a Lead Learn project for the past 2 years. The principal reported that this initiative has focused on valuing student voice to bring about changes in classroom pedagogical practices.
- Week 6 Partnership staff meetings provide ongoing professional learning and opportunities for staff to strategically select and access professional learning.

## **Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the priority improvement plan**

### **Direction 1**

**Provide more challenging and purposeful tasks for students that require higher-order thinking, and are connected to the real world.**

#### **On-track evidence**

The principal reported that building staff capacity and targeted training and development were the 2 significant levers used to increase challenging and purposeful learning for students. The principal has reduced her teaching time, which allowed her to mentor and, subsequently, build the capacity of staff.

Professional learning in task design, learning and assessment design was provided by the SLLIP. Staff appreciated work undertaken by the SLLIP, and believe it supported them in developing confidence in designing learning to successfully differentiate learning tasks for all students. Evidence was provided via portfolios that included tasks designed to stretch students in their learning.

The ED and PC have observed teaching in all classes, and discussed with teachers the yearly and term overviews, unit and lesson plans. Discussions with the ED and PC were focused on how literacy and numeracy lessons were differentiated to account for the learning needs of students. Notes from the observations by the ED and PC included the following statement: "Lesson plans for all year levels included differentiation to accommodate student learning profiles, including high-band, below SEA and NEP".

Staff, at interviews held during the on-track evaluation described a variety of ways in which they engaged and challenged students in their learning; this included, but was not limited to: making sure each task has a 'hook', pairing a 'novice' with an 'expert', and providing opportunities for 'hands-on' learning.



Some staff reported that, initially, students were resistant to undertake any challenges in their learning and would avoid work that challenged them. Over time, and with strategic planning and support from the teacher, challenge is now celebrated within the class. Evidence of this was provided via a range of examples, including students who are now confident to articulate when they are struggling and when they are an expert. Other staff noted that sharing examples of when they are 'in the pit' supports students to understand that challenge is an integral part of learning.

Students in the upper primary class participate in 'CreARTive', where students select a project they want to pursue, 30mins of class time is provided, and the remainder of the work is undertaken outside of school hours. The majority of students indicated to the panel that they were highly engaged when undertaking learning in this aspect. The school has developed a philosophy that underpins CreARTive, which is aligned to the Australian Curriculum Critical and Creative Thinking learning continuum. A rubric has been designed to reference proficiency and learning outcomes of both the project and learning.

When asked what would a new teacher coming to Kangarilla Primary School need to know to help students become excellent learners, students responded that "they would need to know the level of learning for each student, the expectations and goals of each student and that each student needs to be challenged in their learning".

Documentation of strategic and comprehensive planning for differentiation and challenge at a school level was provided to the panel, in which staff rated their proficiency across focus areas of learning and task design, assessment planning and curriculum overviews.

There is evidence of a developing culture where challenge is planned, acknowledged and celebrated. Some staff are including students in the co-construction of self and peer assessments and in determining success criteria for learning.

The school has introduced the concept and language of growth mindset, and the panel observed students articulating where they were positioned in the learning pit. Several students indicated that when they were combined with other classes, the learning held little challenge for them.

### **Review panel evaluation**

The school has conscientiously worked to develop consistency and congruence in developing and strengthening opportunities for students to engage in challenging and meaningful learning across the site. There is evidence of significant effort in ensuring that students are provided with regular opportunities to be challenged in their learning. Student learning dispositions now reflect an understanding that challenge is integral to success in learning.

Next steps for the school will be to develop processes and practices to ensure that all students are provided with the opportunity to be challenged across all learning areas. Several older students indicated that some areas of learning taught at a whole-school level provided little challenge for them. This is often a significant challenge of practice for small schools, but one that is pivotal in ensuring that students are challenged across all areas of learning.

The site has recently identified some students with high intellectual potential, several students have been assessed and others have been verified. Ensuring these students are appropriately challenged will be important work for the school to sustain. The school is now well-positioned to embed purposeful, differentiated challenge and higher-order thinking as integral components within and across all areas of learning, in all classes, for all students.

### **Direction 2**

**Ensure all planning and actions undertaken by the school are based on the review and reflection of evidence-based information about the value of immediate past actions and strategies.**



## On-track evidence

It was reported that, initially, students were involved in 1 week of 'brain ticking' and one week of 'genius hour' as part of multi-age group learning. Each fortnight groups would rotate to a different staff member and activity. The 'genius hour' activities were hands-on problem-solving activities with a maths focus. 'Brain ticking' students worked in gardening, cooking, STEAM, art, construction or tinkering.

At the end of term 2, staff reviewed the 'brain ticking/genius hour' concept. Staff have subsequently developed a philosophy based on positive learning dispositions that now underpins 'brain ticking', and planning is aligned to the Creative and Critical Thinking learning continuum from the Australian Curriculum.

Staff developed rubrics across all 'brain ticking' topics used to assess students each week. Brain ticking is currently being trialled over 2 five-week cycles, providing students with the opportunity to participate in deeper learning on a topic of their choice. The process is scheduled for review at the end of term 3, when 2 five-week cycles have been completed.

The school engaged with the Lead Learn Educator Improvement Cycle learning program, where teachers' practice was filmed, the videos were viewed and later shared with trusted peers from neighbouring sites. Teachers reported that viewing their practice had resulted in the identification of personal areas for growth and supported them in determining strategies to improve their pedagogical practice.

At the conclusion of the professional learning, a teacher reflected: "The cycle made me consider the students' perspectives in-depth, and review my lesson planning to incorporate more contextual connections and relevance for student engagement in learning".

Staff subsequently indicated that that they would like to undertake additional observations in neighbouring sites. Discussion points for each visit were developed to ensure consistency across observations and allow for congruence when collaboratively reflecting upon their return to school. Reflective practice processes, including 'what might I do differently?' were used to support staff to identify next steps in their learning journey.

As an integral component of the numeracy and literacy plus expectations, the school has reviewed and developed whole-school literacy and numeracy plans. The principal reported that teacher planning is now intentional, focused and includes differentiation.

## Review panel evaluation

The panel was provided with comprehensive evidence across a diverse range of learning areas, including an extensive series of detailed planning documents, learning portfolios, observation notes and staff interviews. Planning and actions are now strategically based on the review and reflection of evidence-based information. The school is well-positioned to extend strategic review processes across all areas of the curriculum. Specific reference to the areas of learning that are currently taught as a whole site will be a significant starting point. The school has developed strong relationships with like schools and, as such, is well-positioned to undertake this work with peers from like sites.

## Direction 3

**Ensure that the school's moral purpose, to deliver continuously improving academic learning for students, is understood and owned by members of the school community and enacted by teachers through their practice.**



## **On-track evidence**

The collaborative review and implementation of the 2018 literacy and numeracy plans have been pivotal in the provision of improved academic learning opportunities for students. The documents provide a framework for all staff to work from, ensuring consistency and congruence in effective teaching and learning across the site.

The principal reported that staff identified NAPLAN writing as an area for improvement. Staff elected to establish a 'writing improvement' group, which meets each Monday after school. This time is used to share ideas, collaboratively moderate writing samples and provide examples of annotated student work samples. The sharing of genre-specific knowledge and the development of rubrics to support students to self-assess their writing has also been discussed, resulting in teachers adapting rubrics to meet the specific needs of the students in their class.

Writing samples are shared at each meeting. Evidence of improvements was observed in the quality of work presented and in the annotation of work samples. It was noted by staff that the quality of student work improved after students were shown examples of NAPLAN writing samples across a range of levels.

Teachers have collected and annotated writing samples for all students. These annotations are an integral component of individual student portfolios, which provide a useful tool for students, teachers and parents to track and monitor growth over time.

Staff reported that the use of rubrics in writing has been a significant factor in supporting students to identify their strengths and areas for development, providing students with the opportunity to be partners in their own learning.

All staff have contributed to the development of the 2018 literacy and numeracy agreements. Teachers are currently undertaking professional learning in numeracy on Big Ideas in Number. At the time of the OTE, staff were in the process of familiarising themselves with the Big Ideas in Number diagnostic assessment tools and in undertaking assessments to establish baseline data across the site.

Parents were provided with an introduction to open-ended maths tasks for older students at an open evening run by the class teacher early in the school year. Responses from parents were varied, from finding the tasks confronting, to appreciating that their child would understand the concept and was not solely focused on achieving the correct answer.

The chairperson of the governing council stated that, initially, parents were worried when they heard that the school had been identified as a one-year return site. Since then, there have been significant improvements in communication and feedback from the school, including teachers being very approachable and notably improved communication processes. The chairperson also reported that communication processes included a school Facebook page, articles in the community newsletter and local newspapers, the Skoolbag app and ClassDojo for parents.

The school is strategically determined to be involved in community events and to have articles and photos in the local newspapers at least twice a term.

All students interviewed indicated that they wanted to improve in their learning, and identified the areas they wanted to improve in; however, not all students could articulate what they needed to do to improve.

## **Review panel evaluation**

It was clear that the school has worked persistently to provide students with ongoing opportunities to engage in relevant, academic learning. Teachers have undertaken extensive professional learning to improve their practice, and were strongly supported through the provision of an extensive range of professional learning opportunities from multiple sources, including the LET, LID and SLLIP. Collaboration with like sites and the Partnership were also significant supporting factors.



The panel interviewed all teachers and observed classroom environments and practice; visible scaffolds for learning were present in all classes, including success criteria and learning intentions and individual learning goals set by students. There are high levels of collaboration and commitment from staff to ensure that effective teaching is embedded across the site.

Next steps for the school will be to embed a common language for learning that is focused on students knowing and articulating strategies to improve, what to do when their work is too easy and when it is too hard. Students are well-placed to become equal partners in their learning through planned and regular opportunities to provide and receive feedback for improvement, work collaboratively with staff in task design and, consequently, guide their own learning.

#### **Direction 4**

**Ensure that the school community as a whole and teachers in the classroom make data-informed judgements about student learning, and translate the results of data and evidence into targeted actions, which are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness towards improvement.**

#### **On-track evidence**

The school provided extensive evidence of data used to inform teaching practice and student learning across a wide range of datasets, including tracking student progress via the triangulation and alignment of the Australian Curriculum with the PAT and NAPLAN assessments over 3 years. The school has established a data wall aligned with year level, class and individual perspectives. The data is discussed in staff meetings, used for planning purposes and also referred to on data days.

Staff, students and governing council members were involved in the development of the 2018 SIP. The principal reported that the governing council members provided valuable feedback to improve accessibility of the SIP to all stakeholders. As a result of feedback from the council, the SIP has been revised and is now presented in clear, plain English, with limited use of departmental acronyms.

At the end of 2017, as part of the school review processes, students with high achievement and low growth were identified; results were plotted and compared with previous scores to identify growth.

Analysis from the perspective of year level groups was used to determine teaching points. Analysis of PAT-M and -R results determined strengths and areas for improvement; this information was subsequently included in individual student reports.

Student reports are designed to include comprehensive datasets that indicate growth over time, and are differentiated with one report for students from reception to year 2 and another for students from year 3 to 7.

The reports include a comprehensive summary of up to 19 different datasets that track individual student progress in each aspect over time. A-E data is also included in the reports.

Professional learning in Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation has supported improved assessment task design. An example was provided where a teacher realised that the task they were planning would not provide students with the opportunity to achieve an A or B grade and, subsequently, revised her planning.

Staff provided extensive evidence of using data to inform practice, including but not limited to: pre and post-testing, students setting and reviewing their personal learning goals, and the triangulation of data.

Staff indicated the following as areas for development in using data to inform practice: expert advice on how to read the data, making time to understand the test and providing appropriate support to students, as well as rethinking the way comprehension is taught.



### **Review panel evaluation**

The school has developed comprehensive practices and processes to track and monitor a range of datasets across a range of learning areas and perspectives. The school has a variety of datasets; however, it is apparent that not all staff know and understand the rationale behind each of the datasets or how they impact on teaching practice.

Next steps for the school will be to review datasets from the perspective of their purpose, accessibility and efficacy in informing and shaping effective pedagogical practice. Developing a whole-site agreement of essential assessments within and across levels of schooling that are understood, valued and inform teaching, will be important work for the site to undertake. The school is well-positioned to undertake work in this area.



## Outcomes of the on-track evaluation

Based on the evidence provided, Kangarilla Primary School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions.

At Kangarilla Primary School a culture of improvement characterised by high expectations for students is developing. The panel observed effective teaching that engages and challenges students.

The review panel found that:

- All staff are heavily invested in working collaboratively to ensure the students at Kangarilla Primary School receive a challenging, high-quality education.
- The staff are committed to continually improve their practice and work in an encouraging and collaborative manner to support each other in learning.
- The school has accepted and adopted support and advice provided since the External School Review in June 2017. They are to be commended for the quantity and quality of work undertaken since the ESR in June 2017.
- The community appreciate the improvements in teaching and learning at the site.
- The school was strongly supported by the department's personnel in progressing their pedagogical practices.
- The strategic work of the ED and the PC has been and will be pivotal in supporting the school to embed and sustain the comprehensive change agenda the school has undertaken.

The principal will continue to work with the Education Director to implement the External School Review directions.

Based on current performance, Kangarilla Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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