

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Elizabeth Downs Primary School

Conducted in June 2021



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 Maxine McSherry, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Liam Whitwell, 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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives.
 - Leaders
 - School Services Officers (SSOs) and Bilingual School Services Officers (BSSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Aboriginal Community Education Officer and Aboriginal Education Teacher.
 - Teachers from the mainstream and the Intensive English Language Program (IELP)
 - Volunteers.

School context

Elizabeth Downs Primary School caters for students in reception to year 7. It is situated approximately 34kms from the Adelaide CBD and the local partnership is Uylebury.

The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 319 children in mainstream and 80 students in the Intensive English Language Program (IELP). Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 354 students, comprising 254 students in the mainstream and 100 students in the IELP. There are currently 10 mainstream classes, including 1 Highly Structured class (IESP funded) and 6 IELP classes.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 878 and is classified as Category 1 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 11% Aboriginal students, 13% students with disabilities, 11% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 3% children in care and 88% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

There are a preschool, occasional care, and playgroup on-site. The preschool facilitates 2 groups per week, catering for 44 students.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal new to the school in 2020 and now in the 2nd year of a 6-year tenure, as well as the following:

- Deputy Principal
- senior leader (IELP) in the 4th year of a 6-year tenure
- senior leader wellbeing in the 1st year of a 3-year tenure
- two Band 1 leaders were appointed in 2021, a teaching and learning (data focus) leader in the mainstream and an early years teaching and learning leader in the preschool.

There are 19 teachers, including 5 in the early years of their career and 9 Step 9 teachers in the mainstream. There are 6 IELP teachers. On-site, there are 25 school support officers (SSOs), 1 Aboriginal Community Education Officer (ACEO) and 6 bilingual school support officers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Raise the level of student achievement by collaboratively designing, implementing and resourcing a strategic and systematic approach to leading learning improvement.**
- Direction 2** **Establish processes for teachers and students to engage regularly in opportunities that monitor the effectiveness of the strategic approaches and the impact on learning.**
- Direction 3** **Build the schools capacity to improve student achievement by engaging teaching teams in regular disciplined dialogue that informs collaborative planning and tracks the progress of individual students.**
- Direction 4** **Support teachers to work in partnership to plan and design learning tasks and use formative assessment processes to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of the learners in every lesson.**

Direction 5 Ensure that safe conditions for rigorous learning exist across the school and that wellbeing for learning policies, practices and procedures empower all students to be resilient and thrive as capable and connected citizens.

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

The principal reported that teachers are working in teams to establish whole-class learning goals based on relevant data and aligned to the school improvement plan. This approach is leading to educators now developing a common language when reviewing and discussing student learning.

There is a consistent and rigorous approach to teaching synthetic phonics and reading, leading to an increase in students reaching benchmark in the phonics test and Running Records assessment. Guided reading is embedded across the school.

A representative school improvement team, with representation from all year levels, has been established. Team members share information with their professional teams, driving impact at the classroom level. Introduction and use of curriculum units by some teachers significantly improved their teaching and learning program.

The school is working with the 'Made better Human' organisation to create a new vision and set of values, and further develop a school culture of safe conditions for rigorous learning. All leaders are intentionally committed to spending quality time in classrooms, and supporting the monitoring and tracking of student achievement.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school use evidence from student achievement and growth data to inform relevant and high-impact goals and targets for improvement?

The Principal and leadership team are articulate in discussing the school improvement planning cycle, collection and use of data and their challenge of practice. Internal and external expertise and evidence-based research is being used to inform school improvement planning. The school improvement team was created to track and monitor goal implementation.

A review of the data collection schedule identified a range of summative assessments being implemented without specific intent. This resulted in the collaborative establishment of a new data collection agreement that is understood and enacted by all teachers. Data storage was recently moved from Scorelink to Microsoft Teams, allowing anytime access for all staff. Teachers were aware of their responsibility in updating the data, with individuals at different stages of expertise in reporting against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards.

Using the available data, students are grouped for purpose (letter and sounds program, guided reading) during the literacy block. Teachers reported this approach led to students progressing through the phases of letters and sounds quicker. The school is well-placed to build on this work, and determine how they can transfer the current data collection and analysis in literacy to other areas of the Australian Curriculum.

Prior to this year, many children were in a range of withdrawal programs for intervention, with data showing limited evidence of improvement. This was addressed through the strategic placement of SSOs in classrooms. The impact of this strategy will be monitored throughout the year.

A diverse range of pedagogies were seen in classrooms, from traditional to student-centred. Developing further understandings about effective pedagogy and building a consistent approach could add value to the work already undertaken. Teachers reported they would value opportunities to observe in each other's classrooms to further support their own professional development and to develop a deeper understanding of student achievement at and across year levels.

Governing Council members were aware of the literacy and numeracy focus at the school and the whole-school commitment to ensure all children are supported in their learning.

Direction 1 Analyse and prioritise data to identify strengths and the next steps in planning, teaching and assessing using the Australian Curriculum.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Early career teachers valued classroom observations and feedback in a supportive model, describing a safe environment where they can seek help.

Using formative and summative assessment data to inform practice is embedded in the IELP with children on individual plans to achieve their goals in readiness for exit to mainstream classrooms. IELP teachers were articulate about student feedback to improve learning, and students described their growth points. Children in the mainstream were starting to develop an understanding of themselves as learners.

Teachers' use of formative assessment differs. Some teachers used checklists and others were trialling rubrics. Building a whole-school understanding of formative assessment and its use to inform and refine planning would add strength to curriculum planning and student outcomes. Student involvement in self and peer assessment was an area of identified growth.

Students identified working harder, staying on-task or doing more homework, as strategies to achieve a higher grade. Further exploration around A-E grades with staff and students, and co-designing assessment criteria, will help students understand if they are on-track and what they need to do to improve. Some staff were cautious in discussing grades with students based on social and emotional needs, the whole-school exploration of wellbeing for learning and learning for wellbeing will support these conversations.

Parents valued the strong collaboration between the school and preschool team and provided clear examples of how data is used to inform differentiation at transition. An increased commitment to literacy learning in the preschool was cited by parents as positive.

Data for Aboriginal students is reviewed at the start of the year by the Aboriginal Education Teacher and shared with classroom teachers. Teachers are responsible for tracking and monitoring students' progress during the year.

School services officers in specific intervention roles gather and share data and collaboratively determine future instruction. They discussed visual boards they used to share progress with students including graph charts and 'my personal best' posters.

Direction 2 Develop a whole-school understanding of formative assessment and implement consistently to further support student achievement.

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning and high expectations of achievement for all learners?

The panel found strong evidence of effective collaboration and communication amongst all staff with a shared responsibility to lead learning. There is strong commitment from staff to ensure that each child is valued and cared for. Implementation of the Berry Street model and the language of growth mindset is helping create safe and responsive conditions for learning. 'Book looks' and 'Learning Walks' are intentionally used across the school to monitor teaching and learning.

The Principal outlined a clear expectation that individual plans with targeted goals and timeframes are created for all children not achieving the standard of educational achievement.

Learning achievements and milestones are celebrated through Facebook, assemblies, awards and Governing Council presentations. Building student agency to ensure that children can be powerful partners in the learning process, by setting collaborative, targeted goals, could further strengthen high expectations and achievement at the individual and whole-school level.

Behaviour and attendance were identified as barriers to learning, with the school providing a responsive, committed approach to address both areas for targeted groups.

Senior students take part in a camp at the start of each year to identify their role as school leaders. Ongoing opportunities for students to demonstrate and develop leadership would further strengthen students as school leaders, with authentic opportunities to influence aspects of school improvement.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) is well-resourced and provides opportunities for challenge through involvement in Robo Cup and lunch time activities (robotics and flying drones). The school is to be commended for their work as a pilot school in the Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality program. A select group of students access the program and are co-designing a virtual tour of the school for the school website. Selection for inter-school sports was an area identified by students as something to which they aspire.

The Stephanie Alexander Garden and Cooking Program is accessed by all children and was identified by students as an area of learning they highly valued. Observations confirmed high levels of engagement and enjoyment with authentic learning taking place.

Direction 3 Support each child to continually improve their achievement through data-sharing and collaboratively setting individual goals and targets with children.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Elizabeth Downs Primary School is a caring and responsive setting within a complex community. Strategic processes are in place to identify strengths and growth points and set goals for improvement. Leaders are committed to providing an environment where teachers can teach and children can learn. Teachers are committed to professional networking and collaboration. Cultural diversity is valued within the school and students identify their school as a safe environment with supportive teachers.

The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1** Analyse and prioritise data to identify strengths and the next steps in planning, teaching and assessing using the Australian Curriculum.
- Direction 2** Develop a whole-school understanding of formative assessment and implement consistently to further support student achievement.
- Direction 3** Support each child to continually improve their achievement through data-sharing and collaboratively setting individual goals and targets with children.

Based on the school's current performance, Elizabeth Downs Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



Danielle Chadwick
A/Director
Review, Improvement and Accountability



Anne Millard
Executive Director
Partnerships, Schools and Preschools



Teresa Harriott
Principal
Elizabeth Downs Primary School



Governing Council Chairperson

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, 33% of year 1 and 31% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little change from the historic baseline average for year 1 and an improvement for year 2.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 49% of year 3 students, 54% of year 5 students and 44% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

For year 3, this result represents a positive return to the historic baseline average, and for years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

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

In 2019, 9% of year 3, and no year 5 or 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 60% of year 3 students, 19% of year 5 students and 44% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average and is the highest result to date.

For years 5 and 7, this result is a decrease from 2018 and remains within the historic range.

For year 3, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

For years 5 and 7, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 3% of year 3, no year 5 and 2% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.