

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR BALAKLAVA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 2015



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education
and Child Development

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) 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 DECD schools.

The overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Brenton Conradi, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Balaklava Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 94% which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Balaklava Primary School is located 93 kilometres north of Adelaide, a one hour drive from the northern metropolitan suburbs. The town provides services to the local area of approximately 3000 people. Mainly a farming district, the area includes hay exporters, chicken farms, silos and meat works. In recent times, an increasing number of people are moving into the area to take up affordable housing and/or employment.

The school has a national ICSEA score of 973, with 41% of families in the lower quartile. Balaklava Primary School is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage (IOED). In 2015, 33% of the students' families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The enrolment has been increasing over the past three years. Currently, there are 266 students in the school. In 2014, there were 239 students and in 2013, there were 208. Transient enrolment is monitored during the year. Last year, the rate of arrivals at the school during the year was 16%, and the departure rate was 12%.

Currently, there are 8 Aboriginal students, 37 Students with Disabilities (14%), 15 students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 4 students under the Guardianship of the Minister. There are ten classes at the school, and a small part-time class operating three mornings per week to provide intensive intervention to students with special needs.

The school liaises with the Balaklava Community Children's Centre and the neighbouring Balaklava High School. Primary students are able to attend OSHC at the Children's Centre.

The Principal of the Balaklava Primary School manages the 10 DECD school buses that cater for over 600 pre-school children and primary and secondary students attending the government and non-government sites in Balaklava. A majority of students in each class use the school bus, with some students travelling daily up to one hour each way.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in her first tenure, a Deputy Principal in his first year and the part-time School Counsellor.

Lines of inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning	How well are students achieving over time?
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?

How well are students achieving over time?

The Site Improvement Plan 2013-2015 includes specific targets that clearly indicate what improved outcomes learners will achieve or demonstrate at Balaklava Primary School. The school has recently undertaken considerable work to ensure the conditions are in place to support positive behaviour for learning.

In the early years, reading results are measured by assessing student achievement against Running Record levels. The 2014 data indicates that 63% of Year 1 students were achieving the benchmark of level 17 or above and 82% of Year 2 students were at the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) of Level 21 or above. The Year 2 results indicate an improvement on the 2011-2014 historic average of 69%.

In 2014, in Reading, 72% of Year 3 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) as measured by NAPLAN, as did 74% of Year 5 students and 67% of Year 7 students. These Year 5 results indicate an improvement on the 2008-2013 historic average of 61%.

In 2014, in Numeracy, 72% of Year 3 students achieved the SEA as measured by NAPLAN, as did 77% of Year 5 students and 57% of Year 7 students. These results indicate an improvement on the 2008-2013 historic average of 61% at Year 3, 62% at Year 5, and 53% at Year 7.

The Year 7 results over time, however, indicate a trend of declining achievement from Year 3 to Year 5 to Year 7. Using the average results for Year 7 students in similar category schools in 2014, it is informative to note as a guide that 80% of these students achieved the SEA in reading and 75% achieved the SEA in numeracy. Monitoring growth over time will assist the school to sustain positive growth from Year 3 to Year 7.

Tracking the number of students achieving and retaining scores in the higher two proficiency bands will also be important to achieve the DECD strategic objective. In 2014, 40% of Year 3 students, 19% of Year 5 students and 5% of Year 7 students achieved scores in the higher two bands in reading. In numeracy, 32% of Year 3 students, 6% of Year 5 students and 14% of Year 7 students achieved scores in the higher two proficiency bands.

The school's 2014 Annual Report includes an analysis of this downward trend showing that from Year 5 to Year 7 46.7% of Year 7 students achieved only low growth in reading, and 35.7% of Year 7 students achieved only low growth in numeracy. Statistically, across all schools, no more than 25% of all students should achieve low growth over a two-year period.

In 2014, a positive growth result was reported for the Years 3 to 5 data, where 82.5% of students achieved medium to upper growth in Reading and 79.2% in Numeracy.

The school is responding to these achievement patterns by including an integrated set of strategies aimed at achieving higher levels of learning for all students in the current Site Improvement Plan. These current improvement processes include: increasing staff engagement in the analysis of data; tracking progress

against set targets for each year level; and identifying cut scores for intervention. The regular and consistent use of 'feedback for learning' as part of formative and summative assessment is essential so students know what they need to do to improve their results.

Direction 1

Raise and sustain higher levels of achievement by using formative and summative assessment processes to inform curriculum planning and instruction and to monitor progress, track growth and improve the rate of learning of all students from Reception to Year 7.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The Review Panel heard from parents that they expect their children to be happy and to make improvement each year. They said that teachers listened to their concerns and/or made contact with them when they have concerns themselves. Parents of children with special learning needs, or with children requiring extension, were able to share examples of how their requests had been followed up. One parent described Balaklava as an 'equitable' school due to the numerous opportunities provided for families to get the support they needed for their children.

New families to the school felt they had been welcomed and those who were able to access events and attend at the school were engaging well within the community. As many families live out of town, the students catch the bus to and from school, and there are parents who do not attend frequently at the school, which limits the personal interaction teachers are able to have with parents. Staff reported that this situation was impacting on attendance at Parent Interviews and therefore the level of parent engagement to support student learning. The school was looking at ways to access the wider community of Balaklava Primary School by offering off-site opportunities for face-to-face interviews in local communities.

Governing Council members and other parents were positive about current school improvements saying they appreciated that after several changes the current leadership added stability to school directions.

Students said they felt their school was 'warm and friendly'. They talked about the common approach and language used in Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) and the three rules: Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible. They described some of their preferred teachers as people who include opportunities for lots of activity or as "someone who teaches us different ways of doing things". Some students said they liked "using rubrics in different subjects because then we know what to do". Other students said they had "no idea" what they were going to learn next. When talking about ways to improve in their learning, a few students could talk about the use of learning intentions when e.g. "the teacher writes them on the board", while others variously cited strategies like: "work harder", "try more tricky words", "be on task", or "have a goal". Students were not clear about how to get an A grade, they just thought "the teacher figures it out". Some students from composite classes were aware that their friends in the same year level did different work to them and/or that there had been occasions when they found they were repeating work they had previously covered in another class the year before.

The range of responses indicate that, although included in site improvement planning, consistent approaches to assessment and teaching are not yet embedded as continuous practice across Reception to Year 7. Strong horizontal and vertical alignment of the curriculum content for each year level is essential to support the year level Australian Curriculum achievement standards. The school may find it useful to develop a set of Australian Curriculum overviews to address continuity for all students and eliminate issues related to "coverage" in composite year level classes. Such a process can also include opportunities for students to have an authentic voice in what, why and how they are learning. Further use of student feedback and opinion surveys is encouraged.

The school has a data collection planner for the year and a comprehensive data spreadsheet that tracks the collected results of all students in the school and colour codes these results to indicate level of achievement at a point in time.

An annual 'Data Day' is held in Term 4 each year for staff to look at data to identify achievements, measure student growth across the school and make recommendations that will help identify 'where to next' for cohorts, groups and individuals. This data is then prepared for each new class. The spreadsheet includes diagnostic assessment information, test scores and the A-E grades assigned for reporting to parents. The school has developed a set of targets against which expected performance is measured at each year level.

Teachers are provided with release time twice per term to update and discuss the available data and use it to inform their teaching. Teachers said that looking at the data in these meetings and at other times was helping them know and understand what students need in their learning, as well as track their progress.

The data helps plan for a tiered approach to intervention for improvement. There is a whole-school approach to addressing students who require intensive support, and whole-class differentiation involves planning to include additional support programs for students who require skill-based intervention in reading or numeracy. Teachers said they knew they often had to "try another way" or "let go of old ways" to now address the varied needs of learners.

The correlation of data sets such as NAPLAN, Progressive Achievement Test results and Australian Curriculum A-E grades for English and/or Mathematics is just commencing. The school plans to continue, on a regular basis, as disciplined dialogue, to inform internal moderation of teacher professional judgement. This focus is essential to ensure each student has an upward trajectory in their learning path at school.

The staff reported that they appreciate and value all opportunities to work collaboratively within and across teams and committees, citing release time and NIT as extended and ongoing opportunities. Teachers also said they supported each other well and use 'go to' people when they were seeking to learn more from each other. Teachers reported to the Review Panel that they appreciated the increased opportunity for all staff to engage in professional learning together.

The 2015 Performance and Development Policy guidelines are aligned with the site improvement priorities and include classroom observation as a strategy to support effective teaching. As the policy is enacted across the site in 2015 and beyond, all teachers will be further supported to identify the professional learning they require to address the needs of the students they teach in order to ensure higher levels of learning exist for each student each year.

Direction 2

Implement the school's Performance and Development Policy (2015) to ensure that appraisal and peer feedback supports all teachers to improve learning outcomes for all students.

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

The Review Panel found that the current Site Improvement Plan (2013-2015) is clearly structured with three priority areas. Each year, through self-review processes, a focus for improvement is targeted in each priority.

In 2015, improvement is focused on: Literacy (Reading Comprehension); Curriculum and Pedagogy (Numeracy); and Student Engagement (Learning). Targets for improvement are stated for each year of the plan. Key actions are identified that staff are expected 'to commit to do so that learners are supported at the classroom level to achieve the targets'.

A Site Improvement Plan committee exists for each of the three priority areas. The committees meet after school twice per term as per the school meeting schedule. Staff reported that the meeting schedule also includes time for professional learning and for self-review activities.

A member of the leadership team works with each committee to develop a '100 Day Plan' for each improvement area to ensure that the what, how, who and when is planned and actioned. The three plans together contain key strategies that include teachers working collaboratively to: share planning,

assessment and teaching practice; engage in moderation processes; undertake peer observations; and strengthen connections with families through building a positive learning culture and environment.

Teachers who met with the Review Panel shared the latest self-review protocol used when each committee had recently met to review their progress. Each committee judged their progress to date using a set of indicators that reflected four stages of implementation. These included: organising and resourcing the change; seeing changes in the things teachers do; seeing changes in the things students do; and then seeing evidence of improvement in student learning. The Review Panel completed a data count of this feedback and found that approximately 50% of responses identified 'changes in the things teachers do' as the implementation stage achieved to date. At the time of the review, none of the strategies were yet identified as being implemented to the degree that there was evidence of impact on student learning.

Simple ongoing monitoring processes and protocols such as this one are very effective in keeping everyone on track, in the same direction and with an eye on knowing the impact on learning. Improvement is a continuous process and it requires individuals, the year level teaching teams and the Reception to Year 7 committees to be deliberate in ensuring that the final stage of improvement is realised; that is, seeing the learning outcomes that result for students from the actions taken by themselves and their teachers over time.

The Review Panel heard from staff that there was positive engagement with the improvement plans. Staff also indicated a commitment to participating in Site Improvement Committee (SIC) meetings and a willingness to share the chair and minute taking roles. The Review Panel found that a next step is to strengthen the influence of the improvement committees by further developing their role and the co-ordination across committees and with the year level teaching teams. In doing so, implementation will be better supported at the classroom level with directions sustained across Reception to Year 7.

An ongoing 2013-2015 site improvement key strategy is the 'enactment of agreements to ensure a coherent, cohesive approach across the school'. It would be timely for a professional learning discussion about the evidence-based principles of what constitutes a whole-school approach (e.g. for literacy, numeracy, assessment) to heighten the importance of collective responsibility for implementation.

Direction 3

Increase learner engagement and improve student learning outcomes by strengthening the collective responsibility and capacity of staff to lead, shape and implement whole-school agreements.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Balaklava Primary School is tracking well. The staff are positive in their approach to develop whole-school agreements to ensure continuity for students in their learning. Teachers are provided with structured time for ongoing collaborative planning and professional learning. The school is planning to use the Australian Curriculum to provide a coherent and engaging curriculum for students.

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

1. Raise and sustain higher levels of achievement by using formative and summative assessment processes to inform curriculum planning and instruction and to monitor progress, track growth and improve the rate of learning of all students from Reception to Year 7.
2. Implement the school's Performance and Development Policy (2015) to ensure that appraisal and peer feedback supports all teachers to improve learning outcomes for all students.
3. Increase learner engagement and improve student learning outcomes by strengthening the collective responsibility and capacity of staff to lead, shape and implement whole-school agreements.

Based on the school's current performance, Balaklava Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

Tricia Joseph
PRINCIPAL
BALAKLAVA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson