

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### Report for Hillcrest Primary School

Conducted in March 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 Simon Harding, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Shane Misso, 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:
  - Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO)
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Hillcrest Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 10kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 381. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 232. The local partnership is Flinders Park 4.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1033, and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 9% students with disabilities, 57% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 1 child in care and 18% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of their 2<sup>nd</sup> tenure. There is a deputy principal – data, improvement and innovation and an assistant principal with a focus on literacy and numeracy – intervention and improvement.

There are 20 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 5 Step 9 teachers.

## The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1**    **Build on understanding of intellectual stretch, and develop whole-school agreements about practice, to ensure all students experience challenging and engaging learning sustained over time, designed to enable them to achieve an A or B, as measured by the Australian Curriculum, and on higher NAPLAN bands.**
- Direction 2**    **Build a coherent, school wide approach to continuous improvement in teacher capacity to ensure professional learning and performance and development is translated into effective teaching across the school.**
- Direction 3**    **Widen parent involvement at the school through more formalised and regular structures and processes to enable families to be involved more deeply as partners in their children’s learning, and in the continuous improvement of the school.**

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

The principal clearly outlined in her presentation the work which has been undertaken by the school towards achieving the previous directions. The directions have been closely aligned and explicitly underpinned the priorities of site improvement work. Teachers could also articulate what actions they had put in place linked to the directions and could make informed judgements about how effectively these actions impacted on the implementation of the directions.

Common approaches in literacy and numeracy are being adopted and teachers have valued the targeted work to support the implementation. There are clear expectations from leadership about implementation and a continued focus on higher order thinking. Students have continued to achieve at high levels over time and the documenting of whole-school agreements is being planned.

Professional learning and staff professional plans have and continue to be closely aligned to the site improvement priorities. Professional learning is prioritised in staff meetings and the establishment of

professional learning teams is providing opportunities to build capacity of staff through teachers leading these groups.

The school has provided opportunities for parent involvement and built membership on various committees inclusive of the governing council. Parent workshops are offered for parents of reception children and there is a strong commitment by the whole school community to school events.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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

It is evident the school uses a range of processes to support their improvement work throughout the implementation cycle. The staff are focused on improvement of student achievement and on building their capacity to best support the students. Leadership and staff stated that decisions are taken using evidence-based datasets and considering effect sizes for growth. The targets are aspirational with a focus on attaining and maintaining higher band achievement. Members of the Governing Council are aware of the priorities in the plan and are able to share actions the school has taken to support the priority areas. They stated their views are heard and progress of the plan is regularly shared and discussed at governing council meetings.

Staff stated that the development and review of the site improvement plan (SIP) includes high levels of consultation and their opinions and feedback are valued. This has led to ownership and commitment to the SIP by staff. Staff are able to clearly articulate actions they have taken in relation to their practice which are focused on the priorities in the SIP. It is evident staff have a clear view of why decisions are taken, what is necessary to enact the plans of action and what they want to achieve in relation to changes in their practice and improved student outcomes. Leadership regularly review and evaluate the progress of plans of action and the impact on both learning and outcomes for students. A pupil free day is scheduled to review and evaluate the progress of actions taken and revisit the priorities as a whole staff, along with a significant focus taken at the beginning of the year. Staff commented that while leadership take a lead role in the ongoing review and evaluation of the plan many believe they all ultimately have a role and responsibility in this area. Strengthening processes to support staff to more effectively review and evaluate impact against the success criteria both individually and collectively will continue to enhance the school improvement strategies.

**Direction 1      Strengthen capacity of staff to review and evaluate the impact of the SIP actions using the success criteria in addition to the targets and impacts on teaching and learning.**

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

It was clear from the principal that the school is committed to working towards developing effective and consistent pedagogy across the school. There is a focused approach to professional learning which supports the implementation of high-yield approaches inclusive of the recent initiative of Read, Write, Ink across the early years which is now embedded across this section of the school. The school is using a similar process with their focus on building common understandings and practices in literacy across the primary years of schooling. Professional learning is highly valued across the staff and is closely aligned to the SIP priorities. School service officers (SSOs) commented about the opportunities they have to attend professional learning building capacity in their roles to support students in line with the priorities of the SIP.

Many students talked about the importance of having a growth mindset and the value of 'struggle' in learning new things. They could provide examples of how their teachers challenge them in their learning and that they feel confident in tackling these tasks as teachers provide good support in their learning. Students were not as clear when articulating the next steps in their learning. They could provide some examples of how data is shared with them. However they are looking for further opportunities to be clear where they are at and what they need to do to improve. Parents also expressed that there are opportunities for their children to be challenged in their learning.

Teachers shared strategies they use to provide challenge through examples such as designing open-ended tasks with multiple entry points. Teachers have been developing their capacity in this area and have had the support of leadership modelling and supporting them throughout this process. There is evidence of effective use of learning intentions with students and some use of individual student learning goals being used to support students in their learning. The breadth of knowledge and practices to inform students of their next steps and effective task design to challenge all learners varied across the staff. Strengthening common understandings and consistent practices in these areas, inclusive of using the existing staff expertise, is an area that the school is well placed to take.

**Direction 2 Provide students with clear information about next steps in their learning through strengthening common understandings and practices which support students to monitor their progress and co-design their learning.**

## CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

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

It was evident in the principal presentation and supported throughout other discussions that staff have a high level of commitment and collective responsibility to build their own capacity through self-reflection and professional learning. They also focus on building the capacity of the students to be successful and aspirational learners. Staff are willing to take on new challenges and innovation in teaching practice, are clearly integral to decisions taken and are keen to learn from each other. They will investigate and develop new practices which they believe will benefit learning outcomes for students and share their practice. This has led to approaches being adopted more widely across the school. Leadership have clear and high expectations of themselves and others and are willing to work alongside staff and model the implementation of expected practices. Staff professional development plans are closely aligned to the SIP.

Parents often stated that staff are willing to provide effective communication about their child's learning in a variety of ways and they are supportive of the teachers and their work. They believe the reporting processes in place, both formal and informal, provide them with a good understanding of their child's progress. Students are aware that teachers are using data to form groups for learning and where necessary 'fill the gaps' in their learning. Parents also stated that their children could articulate their learning.

The restructure of the Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) has provided the opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues of like year levels which is valued by staff. Teachers have been encouraged to lead these groups, building the capacity of those staff. Leadership have clear expectations and accountability measures in relation to the work of the PLTs which support the priorities of the SIP. Staff are sharing strategies and practice building an increasing understanding of each other's work and a consistency of practice. Deepening these collegiate discussions towards authentic critical collaboration will continue to strengthen this work.

**Direction 3 Foster innovation and change of high yield approaches through continuing to develop teachers' capacity to critically collaborate and reflect on practices, building on the high achievement for all learners.**

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

It is evident that there is strong cohesion and trust across the school community in how the school works and supports children in their learning. There are high expectations of student achievement and it is seen in the community as a school of choice. The community acknowledge the commitment by leadership and staff to both the wellbeing and learning of the students.

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

- Direction 1**    **Strengthen capacity of staff to review and evaluate the impact of the SIP actions using the success criteria in addition to the targets and impacts on teaching and learning.**
- Direction 2**    **Provide students with clear information about next steps in their learning through strengthening common understandings and practices which support students to monitor their progress and co-design their learning.**
- Direction 3**    **Foster innovation and change of high yield approaches through continuing to develop teachers' capacity to critically collaborate and reflect on practices, building on the high achievement for all learners.**

Based on the school's current performance, Hillcrest Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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Andrew Wells  
A/DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS



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Lissa Hutter  
PRINCIPAL  
HILLCREST PRIMARY SCHOOL



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GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON  
Karien Marshall

# 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, 80% of year 1 and 73% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement for both year 1 and year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 90% of year 5 students and 86% 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.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for years 5 and 7 have been upwards, from 82% to 90% for year 5 and 70% to 86% for year 7.

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

In 2019, 65% of year 3, 37% of year 5 and 10% 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, 59%, or 10 out of 17 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 87% of year 3 students, 84% of year 5 students and 81% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement and for years 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline averages.

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

In 2019, 38% of year 3, 21% of year 5 and 24% 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, 33%, or 5 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 71%, or 5 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.