

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

## EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

# REPORT FOR PENNINGTON SCHOOL R-7

Conducted in July 2016



**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 framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and June Goode, Review Principal.*

### Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Pennington School R-7 has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

#### Part 1 Governance: Item 1

As a newly amalgamated school, the governance structure is currently a School Council, not a Governing Council. The School Council has been elected and constituted as per the relevant guidelines provided by DECD.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 87.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### School context

Pennington School R-7 caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 13kms north-west of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Inner West local Partnership. The current enrolment is 333 students, and in 2015, the enrolment was 355 students. The school began in its current form in 2015, when Pennington Primary and Junior Primary Schools amalgamated. The school is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 924.

The school population includes 20% Aboriginal students, 9% Students with Disabilities, 65% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 74% of students of English as an Additional Language or Dialect background, 1 ICAN student, and 6 students under the Guardianship of the Minister. In 2015, 57% of Reception students were assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains in the *Australian Early Development Census*. This is up from 33.3% in 2013. In the Middle Years Developmental Index in 2015, Year 6 and 7 students had low levels of perseverance and high levels of worries.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 2nd year of her current tenure at the school, 3 Senior Leaders, including an Assistant Principal: Australian Curriculum R-7, an Assistant Principal: IELC Leader, and a Primary School Counsellor. The current Principal was Principal of Pennington Primary School 2010-14. There are 21 teachers, including 6 in the early years of their career, and 14 Step 9 teachers.

### School Performance Overview

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).*

#### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 46% of Year 1 and 44% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average in both Year 1 and 2.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 58% of Year 3 students, 35% of Year 5 students, and 55% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result

represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 46% in 2013 to 55% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across DECD schools. For 2015 Year 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved lower than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 11% of Year 3, 13% of Year 5 and 5% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 80%, or 4 of 5 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 17%, or 1 of 6 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years, the trend of Year 3 to 5 upper band retention is upwards, from 33% in 2013 to 80% in 2015.

### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 39% of Year 3 students, 48% of Year 5 students and 53% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 38% in 2013 to 48% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved lower than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. For 2015 Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved lower in Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 3% of Year 3, 19% of Year 5, and 10% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 75%, or 3 of 4 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and none of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

### Lines of Inquiry

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

**Student Learning:** To what extent do students perceive school to be a place in which they undertake purposeful and relevant learning?

**Effective Teaching:** To what degree are the school's agreements about learning illustrated in every classroom?

**Improvement Agenda:** How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

**To what extent do students perceive school to be a place in which they undertake purposeful and relevant learning?**

During the review at Pennington School R-7, the panel was provided with strong evidence that student learning is at the heart of the school's core business. The panel found that literacy teaching and learning is scaffolded across the school in all *Waves* of teaching. Parents stated that teachers are good at judging what is needed next for students' learning. The quality of SSO support is recognised and valued by all groups of stakeholders. Parents are satisfied with the amount and quality of additional support offered at the school. There is clear coherence for students between mainstream and intervention programs. Teachers and leaders described to the panel convincing school structures to ensure regular and robust goal-setting and communication between classroom and support teachers, and SSOs.

Students identified to the panel that teachers encourage positive learning dispositions in students. *Play is the Way* is being implemented strongly, and is valued by teachers for the common and effective language it provides to foster social and emotional self-management in students. Parents value the school highly for the safety, security and care it offers students, and the friendly, supportive atmosphere it provides for families. Parents said that children are shown respect and are taught to respect each other. There is definite valuing of Aboriginal culture. Parents are given many opportunities to have a say in the school, and are continuously invited to come in and be a part of the school. Parents said they recognise the dedication of teachers to the students, and credit teachers with being proactive in home-school communication.

During the review, the panel was provided with evidence in its conversations with staff and students that all teachers state learning intentions and discuss success criteria with students some of the time in order to support learning. This is particularly so in maths. Some teachers told the panel that they are considering the value of using this approach outside of numeracy, in particular, in their literacy teaching. Students verified to the panel their teachers' use of success criteria and learning intentions, and what it means for them in their learning. Students articulated the value of knowing the learning intention/s. Parents identified to the panel that teachers want children to be successful, and teachers genuinely rejoice in student successes. Parents said that they consider that their children are succeeding. Parents see evidence of their children's progress in their reading, writing, and spoken English. Additionally, teachers provide parents with accessible formal and informal reports about student learning and achievements. A next step for the school is to increase the quality of success criteria from lower order (accuracy, effort, neatness) to higher order (descriptors that will drive up individual attainment).

The Review Panel was provided with consistent evidence across the school of teachers' use of multiple strategies to activate the agency of students in learning. Such strategies are used by specialist, as well as mainstream classroom teachers, and include use of assessment rubrics, self and peer assessment, feedback for learning, provision of learning intentions and success criteria, reflection, student target-setting, sharing of standards and student achievement data with students, and negotiating content and pedagogy with students. Specialist teachers talked to the panel about their success in engaging challenging students through different learning modes in Non-Instruction Time (NIT) subjects. NIT teachers described how they are linking student learning in music, drama and the newly-introduced *Auslan* Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program.

Classroom teachers told the panel that the implementation of the whole-school numeracy agreement is supporting teachers to design learning tasks that build in intellectual quality and stretch. The panel found evidence that there is recognition amongst teachers that problematizing provides intellectual stretch. Each teacher is provided with support for a term each year to plan and implement inquiry-based HASS units. The panel saw evidence in one classroom of the application of digital technologies as a tool for learning, and heard from parents and students that there is some extension of higher-band students. Parents stated that teachers develop students as critical and creative thinkers. It is now appropriate for the school to explicitly broaden its conceptualisation of intellectual stretch and to consistently build intellectual stretch into all learning design. By setting challenging learning tasks, and framing higher-order questions across the curriculum, the school will consistently provide opportunities for all students to demonstrate higher-order learning. It is an important next step for the school to be involved in such intellectually stretching learning design and teachers' application of digital technologies as a tool for teaching and the demonstration of higher-order learning.

**Direction 1**

**Deepen the intellectual stretch and quality of all learning through the application of a range of pedagogies that enable all students continual access to a challenging and engaging curriculum that is sustained over time.**

**To what degree are the school's agreements about learning illustrated in every classroom?**

During the review, the panel found evidence that the school is providing strong coherence and connectedness for teachers and SSOs between the school's improvement agenda, Training and Development (T&D), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), termly reviews of student achievement data with a line manager and support teachers, and performance and development processes. The links that the school ensures within and between these structures are providing a coherent narrative for teachers and SSOs about their work. This is recognised and valued by staff. Staff told the panel that the model of T&D in staff meetings to reinforce Site Improvement Plan (SIP) strategies and targets is effective and valuable. New teachers said they are well-supported with T&D so they can quickly comply with school agreements, and value the quality induction that is consistently provided over an extended period, as well as the thorough, consistent whole-school processes and structures within which they are able to understand their roles and responsibilities. Non-classroom teachers value PLC time with classroom teachers, and can see the relevance of this collaboration to the continuous improvement in the effectiveness of their work. A next step for the school is to provide some regular time to non-classroom teachers to collaboratively facilitate planning and curriculum and pedagogical connectedness.

The panel heard from the Leadership Team about the extensive work that has been undertaken since amalgamation 18 months ago to unite the school in a common moral purpose and to describe, in common agreements, the school's expectations of the teachers' work. The panel was provided with evidence from all teachers, R-7, that they have become deeply committed to these school agreements. The panel concluded that teachers and SSOs have a clear sense of purpose for the whole-school agreements, and that they are valued for the consistency and coherence they provide. The panel found that the explicit teaching and learning model used for the teaching of writing, and the numeracy block model, are strongly embedded in all classes and facilitate quality learning design. There is consistent implementation of the genre teaching map. Such practices are facilitating explicit differentiated practice in all waves of teaching. A next step for the school is to support teachers to apply this backwards design planning and explicit, differentiated teaching, for continuous improvement in all aspects of student fluency in literacy and numeracy.

**Direction 2**

**Extend learning design for explicit teaching across the curriculum to increase the percentage of students achieving the SEA and in the higher proficiency bands, as measured by NAPLAN.**

**How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?**

As a result of their meeting with staff, the panel concluded that all teachers fluently collect and record student learning data in accordance with the school assessment map, and that the value of using an electronic recording system has been rapidly understood. One teacher said: "Scorelink makes you know your kids". In addition, the review meetings that are held each term with a line manager, and the use of data in PLCs, is supporting teachers to develop an evidence-base for their learning design. Teachers also said that the review meetings support leaders to know students, and this is valued by teachers. The panel could conclude that teachers have developed shared ownership of student learning outcomes, that the quality of teacher and SSO relationships and collaboration is high, and that staff show great pride in evidence-based student learning. Teachers told the panel that they find that the review meetings are challenging and well-paced to support self-improvement in teaching practice. A next step for the school is to ensure that the emphasis of review meetings for teachers focuses as much on the differentiation of

Wave 1 teaching as it currently does on the identification of students for intervention.

The panel found evidence that teachers are aware of the value of data to inform intentional teaching, and some teachers, at times, use data to inform the grouping of students to enable differentiation in Wave 1 teaching. The student learning data is shared and transparent and, therefore, accessible for the analytic purposes for which it needs to be used. There are strong data protocols at Pennington School R-7. Students told the panel that some teachers use data with students to inform standards-based learning targets. The panel found that students are very interested in their own achievement data. In the Year 4-7 group students could articulate to the panel the value of data, why teachers collect it and what they use it for. A next step for the school is to ensure that the demands of data collection and management are kept manageable for teachers.

Teachers, SSOs and students talked to the panel about the challenges of student behaviour. Teachers and students identify regular and high-level disruption to learning by the behaviour of some students. The panel found that there is inconsistency between classes in the way that student behaviour is monitored. Not all classes document steps taken in class prior to a student's behaviour being referred for leadership intervention. A next step for the school is to apply the high levels of data literacy that have developed at the school to the deepening of evidence-based student behaviour management.

**Direction 3**

**Extend, at the classroom level, the use of an evidence-base to inform structures and processes for the management of student behaviour to increase and sustain high academic expectations and a culture of improvement.**

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Pennington School R-7 demonstrates shared vision, strategic planning, actions and interventions that are data-informed and sustained over time. At the school, professional learning and performance development is translated into effective teaching across the school. There are highly effective regular and strategic self-review processes. These result in evidence-based and standards-driven findings, which are acted upon in the evaluation of programs and strategies to determine effectiveness in relation to student achievement and growth.

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

1. Deepen the intellectual stretch and quality of all learning through the application of a range of pedagogies that enable all students continual access to a challenging and engaging curriculum that is sustained over time.
2. Extend learning design for explicit teaching across the curriculum to increase the percentage of students achieving the SEA and in the higher proficiency bands, as measured by NAPLAN.
3. Extend, at the classroom level, the use of an evidence-base to inform structures and processes for the management of student behaviour to increase and sustain high academic expectations and a culture of improvement.

Based on the school's current performance, Pennington School R-7 will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

Georgina Grinsted  
PRINCIPAL  
PENNINGTON SCHOOL R-7

Governing Council Chairperson