# The Department for Education

# External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Booborowie Primary School**

Conducted in May 2018

# Review details

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.

The framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Iain Elliott, Review Principal.

# School context

Booborowie Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 180kms north of the Adelaide CBD in the township of Booborowie. The enrolment in 2018 is 21 students, and has fluctuated over the last 5 years.

The school has an ICSEA score of 970, and is classified as Category 5 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 38% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 1 child in care, and 33% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 2nd year of tenure. There are 3 teachers, working part-time (0.4FTE to 0.6FTE) and 3 school services officers supporting the intervention program.

# Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

**Improvement Agenda:** **To what extent do teachers use data to inform their planning and instruction?**

**Effective Teaching:** **How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs of all learners?**

**Student Learning:** **To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?**

## To what extent do teachers use data to inform their planning and instruction?

The Booborowie Primary School site improvement plan states that the main priority for the school is 'all students will achieve one year's growth in their learning', achieved through:
- developing and embedding systems for tracking and monitoring student achievement, and
- teachers exploring and using effective differentiation strategies that help increase student's rate of progress.

The principal stated that there was a need for teachers to make better use of data to improve their planning with a focus on extending students. Historically, the collection of student achievement data was not centrally stored or used widely in a whole-school approach. Much of the data was either held by administration or individual teachers, or not readily shared amongst the staff. Discussions around the strategies teachers use to stretch and challenge students to achieve higher outcomes have been a focus for both informal and formal conversations between the staff.

The school uses 16 diagnostic tools to measure student achievement and growth in numeracy, reading, writing, spelling and oral language, as well as 2 data tools for monitoring student wellbeing. The recording and monitoring of this data is conducted through the school's Continuous Self-Review calendar. This

calendar schedules opportunities for teachers to enter student data, update information and provide for the analysis for targeted intervention. In 2017, a student data summary was developed to provide teachers with an overview showing students' progress from year-to-year. This is the first time a whole-school approach to data collection has been implemented. Staff acknowledge the work of the principal, and recognise and support the direction that the school is taking in data management.

Staff talked about their use of data and how they use it to inform them with their planning, and were unanimous in understanding how data impacts on their pedagogical thinking. All teachers recognised that the achievement data demonstrated to them what students know and any 'gaps' in their learning. Staff indicated the school uses too many datasets, and needs to consider what tests give the best information and discontinue tests that do not offer developmental information. The assessments tool used, and the results, are regularly cross-referenced with the Australian Curriculum content descriptors by the teachers.

School services officers (SSOs) involved in the intervention learning support programs had limited access to student data in previous years, however, this changed with the introduction of the student data summary chart. Student progression data from the Multilit program (conducted by a trained SSO) is given directly to the teachers for discussion and data entry. Incidental conversations between the teachers and SSO staff on student progress information occur as needed. School services officers indicated that they would like to be provided with more structured time to be involved in regular briefings with teachers on individual student's progress.

With 38% of students verified with specific learning needs across the school, teachers use the achievement data to form part of each student's individual learning plan (ILP). Achievement data is also used to identify high-achieving students and provide targeted learning for them. It was also noted that another small group of students were waiting on assessments to verify their particular learning needs and potential support.  Consequently, all students have an individual learning plan based on their current learning needs.  Staff indicated that they tend not to refer to the data from a 'year level' perspective, but prefer to use the data to 'measure where the child is at'.

At all staff meetings, there is time set aside to focus on targeted students who are deemed 'at risk'. The specifics of these discussions are based on achievement data and the child's rate of progress both academically and socially. Teachers also refer to information from the student attitude and engagement rubric to add to the data summary for discussion. This information is then transposed to modify task designs by the teachers.

Staff indicated that they share some elements of achievement data with their students. This was exemplified in reading, where teachers discuss the child's current reading level, monitor their progress and offer strategies to improve their reading.

Students understand that the NAPLAN testing process asseses their skills in literacy and numeracy. However, every student stated teachers did not discuss the NAPLAN data results with them individually or at a class level.

During the parent/teacher interview processes, teachers shared the students' data to celebrate good growth and areas of improvement with parents. Parents were positive about the amount of information they received on their child through school interviews and student reports.

It was evident to the panel that the school's use of data is evolving. Introduction of a structured approach to record student progress has been beneficial in monitoring and accessing data to support the learning program of each student. It has enabled staff to reflect on their curriculum planning and task design. As data literacy across the school is increasing, the value of setting evidence-based targets and goals for growth in learning is becoming better understood. Further research and agreement is needed for the

school to identify specific datasets that would provide the most useful information in tracking student progress and supporting learning intentions and subject planning. By using data to support learning intentions, and involving students in the co-design, higher achievement can be expected. Teachers should work collaboratively in using and sharing data to improve their teaching practice.

**Direction 1**
**Embed a focus on individual student achievement using data to support their continuous learning progress with the expectation that each child should achieve their expected learning growth.**

## How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs of all learners?

The second goal of the school's site improvement plan is: 'teachers explore and use effective differentiation strategies that help increase student's rate of progress with a focus on professional development in developing resources to support differentiating the curriculum and teacher practice'.

Given the high population of students identified with learning needs, and a number of high-achieving students, differentiated teaching strategies are essential.

Teachers were strong in their view about differentiating the curriculum for all students, especially considering the high proportion of students with learning difficulties. Differentiated learning strategies are the centre of all planning from all staff, including a professional development focus, with emphasis on individual learning plans for every child. Teachers reported modifying several elements of their teaching practice as part of their differentiated approach to teaching. Examples included deliberately using clear and concise verbal instructions, modifying learning tasks, regular 'check-ins' with individual children, use of sensory toys to support engagement and reward systems.

A planning tool adopted by the school is allowing teachers to identify:
- the learning focus
- learning outcomes
- key steps to achieve the outcomes, and
- evidence to support the outcomes to enable a differentiated approach to task design and teaching.

This enabled teachers to focus on 1 or 2 elements of their program and track the growth of each student. The school is involved in the Brightpath writing program, with writing chosen as the curriculum focus for teachers to work towards.

The school has scheduled a specific time during staff meetings to review students at risk. The reviews consider a student's achievement progress, social or emotional changes, and update intervention support if required. This information allows teachers and SSOs to modify and monitor their learning program.

School services officers mainly assist with intervention programs targeting students with individual learning plans. All SSOs were provided with professional learning opportunities in specific programs such as MiniLit, Jolly Phonics, and programs and strategies to support students with autism. They recognised that much of the teaching work has a special needs focus, with some teaching strategies for more capable students not necessarily differentiated.

The parents were unanimous in their opinion about the extent to which the school supports students with their learning. They trusted the staff, agreeing that "teachers here go above and beyond for your child". Parents recognise individualised learning approaches throughout the school – with individual learning plans, 1:1 support on specialist programs, and the small class sizes. One parent said: "no-one is

lost in the system when it comes to student learning". Some parents indicated they would like to see ways of presenting work other than just 'pen and paper', with a more hands-on approach to learning to cater for individual learning styles. Parents appreciated regular updates on their child's progress both formally and informally.

Due to the many learning complexities of the students enrolled, levels of differentiated learning are prevalent across the school. Through use of achievement data, professional development opportunities and practical experience, teachers are becoming more confident in their understanding and practice of differentiating curriculum.

Expanding a deeper understanding of curriculum differentiation and tailoring learning for all students is the next phase of professional learning for teachers, as identified in the site improvement plan. Coupled with this is the need to determine how to measure the academic growth of individual students, using assessments that will inform effective pedagogical practices. The school is well-placed to initiate the One Child One Plan process for all students attending the school. The One Child One Plan provides the opportunity for a whole-school approach to manage learning plans for all students, enabling teachers to focus on curriculum strengths and needs, and focus on using SMARTAR goals to support student learning.

**Direction 2**
**Develop effective pedagogical practices that focus on both learning achievement and growth, and provide meaningful information to all stakeholders.**

## To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Given the diverse range of student abilities, the school had been strategic in the planning of class structures and placement of children in classes to accommodate their academic and social needs. This has enabled some younger students to work at a more advanced level without compromising their social and emotional needs.

Teaching staff were able to describe a number of strategies for students to be actively engaged and challenged with their learning. The introduction of goal-setting for the senior student cohort enabled the students to be involved in what they want to learn, determine what help they need and how they were to demonstrate their learning was one strategy used. Other strategies include:
- using a colour code for some learning tasks enabling students to select the level of challenge
- offering higher year-level work in maths, and
- discussing the Australian Curriculum subject achievement standards with individual students to encourage them to extend their thinking and respond to the learning tasks.

The students interviewed indicated that the level of work offered was a mixture of hard and easy work with a bias towards the work being easier. Teachers provide a variety of ways to do the work, and feedback about student progress was often presented as stickers, stamps or comments in their books. All students said their teacher only provided clues or prompts when the work was challenging, which "made us think harder and work things out ourselves". Mathematics was a subject that most students liked, and the use of a 'brain-break' strategy in the early years' class was commented on favourably.

The majority of parents were of the opinion that their child's learning needs were being met by the school, however, there were mixed responses on whether their child was being stretched and challenged, with some parents believing that more could be done.

The school would benefit from the development and embedding of common understandings relating to intellectual stretch and challenge from the perspectives of:

- intellectual stretch being applicable for all students and all learning areas, and
- it is most effective when tasks are designed to provide multiple entry and exit points.

Intellectual stretch does not equate to just the provision of work at a higher year level. Planned work within year levels and learning areas in the development of transforming tasks is important work for the school to undertake. In this way, a whole-school approach to intellectual stretch and challenge can become embedded practice that is known, understood and supported by students, staff and community.

**Direction 3**
**Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

**Booborowie Primary School has demonstrated growth in student achievement is at or above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context, and effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions.**

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

1. **Embed a focus on individual student achievement using data to support their continuous learning progress with the expectation that each child should achieve their expected learning growth.**

2. **Develop effective pedagogical practices that focus on both learning achievement and growth, and provide meaningful information to all stakeholders.**

3. **Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.**

**Based on the school's current performance, Booborowie Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.**

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

**The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.**

Anne Heinrich
PRINCIPAL
BOOBOROWIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

# Appendix 1

## Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.
The school attendance rate for 2017 was 90.9%.

# Appendix 2

## 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).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Booborowie Primary School over the years 2011 to 2017. This is done for 2 reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any 1 year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

**Reading**

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2011 and 2017, 6 of 15 (40%) year 1, and 6 of 15 (40%) year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2011 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 10 of 18 (56%) year 3 students, 10 of 13 (77%) year 5 students, and 6 of 10 (60%) year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2011 and 2017, 3 of 18 (17%) year 3 students, 2 of 13 (15%) year 5 students, and 2 out of 10 (20%) year 7 students, achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

Between 2011 and 2017, those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, the only student from year 3, and the only student from year 5 remain in the upper bands.

**Numeracy**

Between 2011 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicates that 13 of 19 (68%) year 3 students, 10 of 13 (77%) year 5 students, and 6 of 10 (60%) year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2011 and 2017, 4 of 19 (21%) year 3 students, 1 of 13 (8%) year 5 students, and 2 out of 10 (20%) year 7 students, achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN Reading bands.

Between 2011 and 2017, for those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 1 of 2 students from year 3, and the only student year 5 remain in the upper bands.