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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR FULHAM NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in July 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 Lyn Arnold, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Vonnie Dolling, 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 Fulham North Primary School 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:

- Volunteers in Education – under development.
- Cyber Safety – under development.

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

School context

Fulham North Primary School is 10kms west of Adelaide. In 2014, the enrolment was 435 students and enrolments have been increasing steadily in recent years. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage, and has an ICSEA score of 1056.

The school population includes 4% Students with Disabilities, 15% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 13% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of an experienced Principal in his first year at the school, an Assistant Principal, and a Coordinator, Teaching and Learning.

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:	**To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**
Effective Leadership:	**To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?**

How well are students achieving over time?

In 2014, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of Year 3 students, 79% of Year 5 students and 77% of Year 7 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Between 2012 and 2014, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards from 81% in 2012 to 89% in 2014.

In relation to students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands, 57% were in Year 3, 28% were in Year 5 and 15% were in Year 7. This compares to an average of 41%, 26% and 27% for Years 3, 5 and 7 respectively, over the previous five years, 2009 to 2013, indicating an upward trend in Year 3 results and a downward trend in Year 7 results.

For those students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in reading, 14 of 22 (64%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2014 and 6 of 23 (27%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2014. This compares to an average of 42% and 27% upper band retention for Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7 respectively, between 2008 and 2013.

In 2014, numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of Year 3 students, 72% of Year 5 students and 77% of Year 7 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Of students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher bands for numeracy, 49% were in Year 3, 19% were in Year 5 and 17% were in Year 7. This compares to an average of 27%, 24% and 25% for Years 3, 5 and 7 respectively, over the previous five years, 2009 to 2013. In NAPLAN reading results, the data shows that there has been an upward trend at Year 3 over time.

Examination of results for the retention of students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in numeracy shows that 9 of 18 (50%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2014 and 4 of 10 (40%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2014. This compares to an average of 65% and 81% upper band retention for Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7 respectively, between 2008 and 2013.

While Year 3 results indicate upward trends in literacy and numeracy over time, two observations can be made from the 2014 data. The first is that between 12 and 16 students did not achieve the SEA in literacy or numeracy in Years 5 and 7. The second is the incremental decrease in the number, and lower retention rates of students, achieving in the higher bands from Year 3 to 7. On this basis, the Review Panel explored two Lines of Inquiry related to the extent to which differentiated teaching is utilised to meet the needs of diverse learners, and the extent to which the culture of the school supports more students to experience higher levels of achievement.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Differentiated teaching to meet the needs of diverse learners involves the provision of multiple learning pathways so students can have access to learning opportunities that best match their capacity to learn.

Across the school, Year 1 to 7 students are grouped by skill or ability. That is, based on perceived similar ability, students are streamed into three groups of high, moderate or low/at risk levels of achievement of language and mathematics. One teacher, due to composite year-level distribution, forms within-class ability groups for maths and skill-based groups for language. In other instances, the three ability groups from single year-level

and composite year-level classes are organised into homogenous groups, with a nominated teacher leading the teaching and learning program for a particular ability group throughout the year.

Part of the teachers' rationale for ability grouping is that the curriculum can be better targeted to students' levels of understanding, and that it makes planning and delivery more streamlined. Teachers, in their reflections of practice, acknowledged that while students are broadly grouped by ability, different student needs do exist within the groups. Students, however, spoke of everyone getting the same work within their ability group, which was supported by the work examples they shared with the Panel. Even within their ability groups, it is important that differentiated teaching and learning is provided to support the diverse needs of learners.

If the school continues ability streaming, rigorous monitoring and valid evaluative processes, it will prove useful to monitor and track: (a) the impact of ability grouping on students' attitudes to learning and engagement; and (b) if the practice and associated outcomes are effective and equitable for all three groups. The school should also explore other grouping options that support differentiated teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners. For example, flexible within-class mixed ability groupings and high-ability pairings have been found to have a positive impact and effect on student learning.

Direction 1
Support quality learning outcomes for all students by engaging in ongoing monitoring and critical evaluation of the equity and effect of differentiated learning approaches utilised to meet the diverse needs of learners.

The Review Panel also explored the ways in which students at the school experience opportunities for intellectual challenge that match their learning capacity, and receive formative and summative feedback.

The school motto is 'through knowledge to wisdom', and there are six core values: communication, confidence, getting along, lifelong learning, organisation and persistence. These values are taught explicitly across the school. Teachers spoke of "expecting more from the higher-levelled students". Similarly, students and parents spoke of capable learners doing higher levels of work. There were some examples of teachers providing open-ended tasks to extend high achievers. The utilisation of upward expansion, that is, doing the next year level's work, demonstrates an awareness of the need to provide intellectual challenge for some students. The next step is to design learning opportunities that encourage deeper, wider and greater complexity of thinking and problem-solving for all students at their current level of learning.

The sharing of learning intentions and the use of rubrics are other ways some teachers provide formative feedback to students. Students explained they have rubrics for most things and the Year 6 and 7 students sometimes make their own. Discussions with students revealed, even with a rubric, they rely on teacher comments to know if they are doing well or not. Teachers should continue to utilise rubrics, the sharing of learning intentions, and implement other formative feedback and assessment. As this practice is in its early stages, it is not fully embedded, so leadership needs to provide ongoing support to ensure teachers continue to build their capacity, over time, to develop a range of effective formative feedback strategies that engage students authentically in the evaluation of their learning.

The Panel observed examples of summative assessment, and teachers have engaged in professional learning for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum standards. While having an awareness of the standards, some teachers expressed concerns about assigning anything other than a 'C', indicating the students' work is at standard. This has led to the practice of incorporating plus and minus clarifications into students' grades. The school should provide opportunities for teachers to further develop their capacity to design assessments that enable students to demonstrate capacity at each level of proficiency.

The school will also benefit from exploring consistent processes for making assessment tasks and marking criteria transparent, and for providing regular quality feedback that assists students and parents to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning and progress in a timely and effective way.

Direction 2
Build teachers' capacity to provide quality formative and summative feedback that helps students to achieve assessment criteria, benchmark their progress, and improve continuously against standards.

Through discussions with parents, it became clear to the Panel that they are involved and keen to support their children's learning, and appreciate regular updates regarding the progress their child is making in their learning. They also expressed a high level of interest and ownership in what happens at the school. Parent comments further indicated that communication via diaries and communication apps is not consistent practice across the school. The development of a whole-school agreement that details the minimum communication that teachers will provide to parents on a regular basis, for example, weekly or fortnightly, about the learning program and their child's progress, will prove beneficial. While some teachers may wish to provide additional information to parents, and some parents will seek further information when appropriate, the aim is to ensure consistency, and help parents be informed of their child's progress on a regular and ongoing basis.

Direction 3
Improve student achievement by enabling parents to be involved as partners in their child's learning through a coordinated and consistent communication strategy and approach.

To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

The school has developed a number of whole-school agreements relating to reading, grammar and spelling, and has documented a plan for the collection of assessment data. Teachers are implementing the Australian Curriculum (AC) as it is rolled out.

In support of these whole-school agreements, and the Site Improvement Plan (SIP), teachers have engaged in a range of professional learning opportunities (e.g. TfEL, powerful learning, growth mindsets and thinking skills) through staff and partnership meetings, and additional expert presentations. Observations and discussions revealed there are elements of these approaches emerging in some teachers' practice.

Powerful learning is another emerging pedagogical approach. It focuses on developing students' higher-order thinking capacities, self-confidence, and team skills through continuous feedback, reflection and revision to meet high standards. At the time of the review, some teachers referred to higher-order thinking skills and multiple intelligences in their reflections on practice. The work samples the Panel saw also revealed some instances of authentic open-ended, real-world topics or assessment tasks being implemented that foster powerful learning processes. Students, however, spoke consistently of learning, achievement and success in terms of incorrect and correct response, which appears to be linked to the weekly or fortnightly testing of spelling, dictation and Mathematics to determine student progress. Irrespective of what the teachers' intentions may be, the nature of the tests combined with the current design of learning and assessments and students' mindsets, can create an arbitrary ceiling for demonstrating complexity of thinking that, in turn, inhibits the pursuit of higher standards.

Students value their school and their experience of schooling in general, and want to achieve. This fact, together with the achievement data and Panel observations, suggests there is considerable benefit in developing practices that enable more students to achieve in the higher proficiency bands of literacy and numeracy, and sustain that level of proficiency over time.

School leadership should support learning teams to explore how student-centred practices and pedagogy that promote high expectations and improve student learning outcomes can be further developed across all year levels.

Direction 4
Promote high expectations for student learning to increase the number of students achieving at the higher levels of proficiency by critically evaluating current practices, and how these support the implementation of improvement priorities; in particular, promoting opportunities for students to be challenged and engaged in rich, purposeful tasks in meaningful contexts.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Fulham North Primary School is tracking well in that teachers are engaging with the Australian Curriculum implementation and students show respect for each other and demonstrate a sense of belonging to a caring, safe school community.

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

1. **Support quality learning outcomes for all students by engaging in ongoing monitoring and critical evaluation of the equity and effect of differentiated learning approaches utilised to meet the diverse needs of learners.**
2. **Build teachers' capacity to provide quality formative and summative feedback that helps students to achieve assessment criteria, benchmark their progress, and improve continuously against standards.**
3. **Improve student achievement by enabling parents to be involved as partners in their child's learning through a coordinated and consistent communication strategy and approach.**
4. **Promote high expectations for student learning to increase the number of students achieving at the higher levels of proficiency by critically evaluating current practices, and how these support the implementation of improvement priorities; in particular, promoting opportunities for students to be** challenged and engaged in rich, purposeful tasks in meaningful contexts.

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

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL
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.

Steve Marshall
PRINCIPAL
FULHAM NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson