

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ROXBY DOWNS AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in September 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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability, Tony Lunniss and Helyn Strokowsky, Review Principals.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Roxby Downs Area 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 87.4%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Roxby Downs Area School is located approximately 570km north of Adelaide. It has an enrolment of approximately 600 students, catering for students from Reception to Year 12. The enrolment has been relatively stable over the past 5 years, but may be impacted by a current restructuring initiative by the region's major employer, BHP Billiton.

The school has an ICSEA score of 961, and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The disparity between the ICSEA and DECD category is due to the factoring of family income as a component of the latter. The school population includes 7% (45) Students with a Disability, 7% (43) Aboriginal students and three (3) students under the Guardianship of the Minister. Approximately 5% (30) of families are eligible for School Card assistance. Around 15 students travel by bus from Andamooka Primary School to engage with the Year 7 to 12 programs.

Transience of students and staff is a factor within the Roxby Downs Area School context. The Principal reported student movement to/from the school in the order of approximately 20% of the student population each year.

The school has a DECD Preschool located adjacent to the school, and a Trade Training Centre onsite. There is a Special Class located on site catering for Reception to Year 12 students with a range of complex disabilities.

The school operates under the guidance of a Principal, Deputy Principal, Senior Leader (Reception to Year 6), Senior Leader (Years 7 to 12), Junior School Coordinator, Middle School Coordinator, Senior School Coordinator, School Counsellors (x2) and an ICT Coordinator.

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?
Effective Leadership:	How effectively does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?

How well are students achieving over time?

In the early years, reading achievement is monitored against Running Records. An analysis of reading achievement (based on Running Records) through Years 1 and 2, from 2011 to 2014, indicates that an average of 43% of Year 1 students achieved the expected DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA), and at Year 2, 59% achieved the SEA. A downward trend is noted in the ratio of students achieving the SEA at Year 1, over the years from 2012 to 2014, from 59% to 28%.

The reading achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), shows an average of 73% of Year 3, 64% of Year 5, 65% of Year 7 and 56% of Year 9 students at, or above, the SEA. There has been a positive trend of improvement in the percentages of Year 3 students achieving at, or above, the SEA at Year 3 for the past four years. The 2014 percentage at SEA for each of the above year levels was the following: Year 3 (85%), Year 5 (72%), Year 7 (68%) and Year 9 (59%).

The 2014 NAPLAN student progress result in reading between 2012 and 2014, showed 25% of students (from Year 3 to 5), 28% of students (from Year 5 to 7) and 38% of students (from Year 7 to 9) had demonstrated high growth. This is compared to a state average of 25% who achieved high growth between assessments.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher reading bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last 7 years, there was, on average, 28% at Year 3, 17% at Year 5, 14% at Year 7 and 8% at Year 9, in the top two bands. Of the 30 tracked students who achieved in the top two bands in reading at Year 3 from 2008, there were 9 who remained in the upper two bands through to Year 7.

The numeracy achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), shows an average of 69% of Year 3, 64% of Year 5, 58% of Year 7 and 51% of Year 9 students at, or above, the SEA. There are no discernible trend patterns at any of the above year levels over the last three years. The 2014 percentage at SEA for each of the above year levels was the following: Year 3 (67%), Year 5 (68%), Year 7 (62%) and Year 9 (57%).

The 2014 NAPLAN student progress result in numeracy between 2012 and 2014, showed 31% of students (from Year 3 to 5), 10% of students (from Year 5 to 7) and 26% of students (from Year 7 to 9) had demonstrated high growth. This is compared to a state average of 25% who achieve high growth between assessments.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher numeracy bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last seven years, there was, on average, 15% at Year 3, 10% at Year 5, 8% at Year 7 and 6% of Year 9 students in the top two bands. Of the 14 students who achieved in the top two bands in numeracy at Year 3 from 2008, there were 2 who remained in the upper two bands through to Year 7.

The school is commended for offering a wide variety of SACE subjects. From 2013 to 2014, the ratio of 'C-grades', or above, in SACE (Years 11/12) increased from 84% to 91%. There has also been an improved trend of SACE completion rates out of potential completers from 40% in 2011 to 96% in 2014. There has been another increase, from 2013 (87%) to 2014 (91%), in the ratio of 'C-grades', or above, assigned to attempted SACE subjects at the school. In 2011, the comparative percentage for this aspect of student performance was 65%.

The challenge for the school is to get higher percentages of students in the upper two bands for reading and numeracy and retain them at these higher levels as they progress through school.

Direction 1

Improve reading and numeracy achievement, and retention in upper bands across Reception to Year 12, through the consistent implementation of agreed, effective and evidence-based pedagogical approaches.

The Principal's presentation cited a positive learning environment, where a culture of change is evident amongst the staff and a culture of sharing and openness is supported by a leadership team that demonstrates a strong work ethic. A range of initiatives was implemented across the school during the past 18 months, inclusive of staff performance and development, teacher planning and programming for learning, data collection and analysis, intervention for students requiring additional support, student health program (Fliipsyde) and Computer Aided Design (CAD).

The Principal described staff understanding and ownership of site improvement planning that maintained a focus on 'raising standards'. The Principal and leadership team established clear structures and processes to further engage staff in improving teaching and learning to realise this goal. A foundation of this work was described in terms of establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLC) across the staff.

The Principal was cognisant of the requirement to support the needs of emergent teachers and leaders in the school and resourced their professional learning and development to meet this need. To reinforce this view, the Principal stated: "I want to build higher expectations for staff and for students."

The Principal described his role to influence the goals and aspirations of students across the school. As a consequence, he has established a process of having teachers set personal goals, grades and attitudes for learning with all students, from Reception to Year 10, to raise expectations. To support this work, the staff had focused on learning data to "differentiate the curriculum based on the needs of students." With student transience a contextual factor at Roxby Downs Area School, the effective and timely acquisition of data to support planning and implementation of learning for these students was viewed as being critical.

As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel pursued the following Line of Inquiry.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Common expectations were established and verified for student behaviour, teacher programming, class management and teacher performance and development across the school. These agreed expectations were verified through staff, student and Governing Council comment. Consistency in expectations and standards for learning are considered important for students in the context of Roxby Downs Area School – a context comprising student and staff mobility.

There was verified evidence that teaching staff engaged in a range of professional learning opportunities related to the defined school priorities of numeracy, literacy and wellbeing. Examples of staff engagement with this work included: implementation of Sheena Cameron comprehension strategies and Anne Baker Maths strategies from Reception to Year 6; Senior Secondary staff attending SACE improvement seminars and team reflection on their practice to 'look beyond' SACE completion to higher level expectations of achievement.

Staff commented on the importance of translating evidence-based teaching practices from professional learning into consistent classroom practice across all classes. Staff confirmed that the PLCs operating across

the school were important to the successful implementation of this work. Recent professional learning, related to the implementation of mental routines and reflective journals in Maths, was documented in the whole-school numeracy agreements (Reception to Year 2, Years 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 10). Documentation of learning beliefs, a teaching and learning cycle, curriculum content, proficiency strands and achievement targets were provided to the Review Panel and reinforced during interviews. Some of the above literacy and numeracy strategies were evident in classroom observations undertaken during the review.

Leadership, teaching staff and students verified the use of school-based data and DECD-provided data to inform planning, programming and intervention for student learning. The panel verified the use of data walls and spreadsheets to track student performance over time. It was verified that the early years teaching team collect school-based data, such as phonological awareness, concepts about print, number-based Maths concepts and information from the Preschool to Reception transition rubric, to guide programming for younger students.

The students verified that teachers used PAT-M, PAT-R and Lexile (reading) data to discuss results with individual students and set goals with them. One student commented: "The teacher will pull you aside and talk to you about how you can improve." This explicit approach with students was confirmed through a comment by a member of the leadership team when discussing conferencing with students: "This is where you're sitting, and this is what you need to do to get an 'A'."

Student leaders verified that teachers respect students and care about their success. They commented about the guidance received through opportunities to present drafts and receive personal mentoring by teachers through after-hours study groups. Students appreciated that supervised study sessions had been introduced as a result of their feedback to staff. They also described the use of task descriptions, rubrics depicting standards and exemplars of the 'standard' required to support their success in learning, as supportive to their learning.

Intervention for learners 'at risk' is mapped through 'One Plans' for verified students with disability, and Aboriginal learners. Students are identified for numeracy intervention support through the analysis of the PAT-M data. Numeracy intervention occurs for Years 5 to 7 students through the Quicksmart Maths program, implemented with SSO support. After-school Maths support, provided by volunteer teacher time, was available to support intervention in this area of the curriculum.

There were approximately 12 students who have English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) backgrounds, and a similar number of students who learn in the Special Class (Reception to Year 12) located at the school. These students receive teaching and SSO support and have planned integration into relevant aspects of the school program. Students in the Special Class were verified as having 'One Plans' in place with specific modified targets and individual programs. SSO staff commented on the need to stay abreast of intervention and differentiation strategies through, for example, concurrent professional training on pupil free days.

Intervention folders had been developed for all staff with clear policy, protocols and programming expectations for them to apply to all levels of learners (Wave 1: *needing support* to Wave 3: *needing extension*). An intervention team met every five weeks to monitor the resource needs of students, inclusive of attendance and engagement with school programs. The teaching staff documented 'differentiation and diversity' plans for all students in their classes. These documents are updated and maintained in class programs and were evident in documented teaching programs provided to the Review Panel.

Staff commented about the need to 'stretch' students who are at the 'top end' of learning across all year levels. They referred to the importance of differentiating for all students in classes through offering multiple entry points for students to demonstrate the learning outcomes expected. Staff confirmed the importance of planning collaboratively to overcome the demands in composite classes. Staff commented on the value of making the achievement standards explicit for students so that they are clear about what is expected of them. As one staff member commented: "We are now beginning to stretch learners at the top end."

Direction 2

Challenge and engage students further by establishing learning achievement targets against the SEA, and differentiate teaching approaches for each student.

Important community links have been established to support Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) registered students in Years 7 to 12, and with BHP, to support SACE graduate student programs (Geology and Law). Local businesses (approximately 17) are engaged through 'industry' nights to establish school-based apprenticeships for Year 10 students pursuing this option as a learning pathway. Student opinion data was used to guide development of this pathway for senior secondary students.

Evidence was presented of Senior Secondary staff undertaking training to offer academic and vocational pathways for students through integrated studies and inquiry-based learning approaches. It was verified that a secondary improvement group was working flexibly to build the capacity of the teaching staff through study opportunities, working as a collaborative team and connecting with other schools to provide broad subject choice for SACE, and the achievement of successful outcomes.

Senior Secondary staff defined a culture of achievement where they maintained high expectations of rising ATAR scores and achieving more 'A' and 'B' grades through SACE as an expectation within the team. They described the importance of links to the Middle School in establishing these cultural expectations prior to transitioning into the Senior School.

Direction 3

Improve student achievement through learning task design that makes the criteria for success in learning explicit and accessible for all students as they progress through all stages of schooling.

How effectively does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?

There was verified evidence from parents, staff and in documentation, to confirm the strategic policies, structures and processes that had been implemented by the Principal and leadership team to support an improvement focus across the school.

Parents on Governing Council had noted the Principal's strategic approach to human resource management, particularly with the tandem teaching design through the early years teaching team. Council members described his leadership as open, visible and with a community-minded approach. Relevant information was presented to Governing Council to authentically engage their views on school improvement e.g. iPads introduced at the Year 3 level and introduction of DayMap, the learner management system. Council commented that there was generous lead-up time provided for open discussion about proposed changes at the school.

Council members commented on a positive cultural change across the school that had impacted positively on teachers. As a result, they had noted more proactive communication from teachers to parents about curriculum aspects, the learning program and reporting student progress. The Governing Council also commented about a positive cultural shift towards higher expectations in learning achievement at the leadership and staff level. The parent information night ('speed dating') was valued by parents for the purpose of communicating these expectations clearly to them.

Staff in Senior Secondary commented about their cohesiveness as a team, and support for them to lead curriculum initiatives. One staff member commented: "Leadership is encouraged." There was evidence that staff mentoring is in place to support new teachers to the school and the profession. Release for mentoring, coaching (literacy) and performance and development was cited as an important cultural dimension given the context of Roxby Downs in attracting early career teachers to the school. Performance and development planning, observation, personal reflections on performance and written feedback to staff, were verified as effective practices through documentation and staff comment.

Senior students described the introduction of school uniforms in 2014 as important for developing a culture of pride in their school. They also commented about the Design and Technology suite with 3D printers, use of interactive whiteboards, and use of DayMap as effective support for their learning. They spoke positively about interventions and accommodation provided to them, such as options provided for assessment, counsellors' consideration of student wellbeing, and the role of Home Group in tracking student progress in a holistic way. The significance of these initiatives was reinforced by members of the Governing Council.

Having staff work in Professional Learning Communities, cohort groups and priority groups was verified as a positive strategic initiative to influence school improvement. There was evidence that these strategic meetings were mapped out for each term. What emerged through comment from teachers, SSO staff and Governing Council members, was a need for alignment in curriculum, pedagogy, intervention, role clarity and transition (early years and middle years) in support of whole-school improvement linked to student achievement.

Staff and parents commented about a perception of sub-schools operating effectively, but independently. The staff commented on the need to consolidate agreed effective teaching practices, aligned to the Teaching for Effective Learning framework (TfEL), across the school and within the whole-school numeracy and literacy agreements. Staff also commented on the need to align curriculum and teaching practices across Reception to Year 12 to best impact on student learning over time.

Direction 4

Raise student achievement by connecting curriculum and pedagogical approaches across the school to ensure learning coherence for students.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Roxby Downs Area School is performing effectively in improving student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity. The school is developing a culture of high expectation for students as well as teaching staff. There is evidence of effective structures and processes to support school improvement. The school is well-positioned to continue to build the capacity of staff through ongoing collaborative professional learning and further encouragement of leadership at all levels.

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

1. Improve reading and numeracy achievement, and retention in upper bands across Reception to Year 12, through the consistent implementation of agreed, effective and evidence-based pedagogical approaches.
2. Challenge and engage students further by establishing learning achievement targets against the SEA, and differentiate teaching approaches for each student.
3. Improve student achievement through learning task design that makes the criteria for success in learning explicit and accessible for all students as they progress through all stages of schooling.
4. Raise student achievement by connecting curriculum and pedagogical approaches across the school to ensure learning coherence for students.

Based on the school's current performance, Roxby Downs Area 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 Bennett
PRINCIPAL
ROXBY DOWNS AREA SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson