

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Roxby Downs Area School

Conducted in September 2019



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

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

This review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lia Tedesco, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Roxby Downs Area School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 572kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 614 students.

The school is classified as Category 5 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 960. The local partnership is Far North.

The school population includes 8% of Aboriginal students, 7% of students with a verified disability, 6% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 2% of students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 5 students in care. 56% of students are in reception to year 6 and 44% of students in years 7 to 12.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the first year of their tenure at the school, a deputy principal, two senior leaders responsible for primary and senior years, and six coordinators. There are 54 teachers, including 15 in the early years of their career and 8 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.
- Direction 2** Challenge and engage students further by establishing learning achievement targets against the SEA, and differentiate teaching approaches for each student.
- 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.
- Direction 4** Raise student achievement by connecting curriculum and pedagogical approaches across the school to ensure learning coherence for students.

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

Whilst a focused response to the previous directions was not fully implemented, the panel sourced evidence that some classroom practices are reflective of the intent of the previous directions.

Students in the early years have recently participated in a targeted literacy program that sees regular evaluation of their growth. The results show that student achievement in reading has increased. This outcome aligns closely with the school's improvement goals.

Pedagogical implementation across the school is varied, yet includes some high yield approaches that require students to think and reflect. Resource and Research Based Learning operate quite commonly across the primary years and evidence of teachers providing students with provocations to prompt inquiry was sourced in some secondary classes. The panel acknowledges these pedagogical approaches which challenge and stimulate students' thinking, and agrees with the principal, that moving towards consistent implementation across the school is a valid direction.

The provision of rubrics to students in the primary and secondary years is common practice. Many students discuss their use of these scaffolds to 'check in' and monitor their progress towards grades.

In most instances, rubrics identify students' *output* as determining the grade. For example, the number of sentences or paragraphs, or neatness of presentation. Success criteria provided are similarly framed. The panel commends the implementation of a strategy that brings about greater student agency in learning. There is now an opportunity to bring a more intentional approach to rubric development, through the inclusion of criteria that aligns with learning outcomes from within the Australian Curriculum (AC).

Targets for student achievement are apparent within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP). Students also discuss setting learning goals that they work towards, such as an increase in a reading level. As with criteria for success, a more sophisticated approach to the design of learning goals will see students aiming to improve their learning against AC standards.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) prioritises both literacy and numeracy achievement as well as SACE completion as goals. These are responsive to data analysis. All staff and Governing Council members could confidently articulate the goals within the plan. Most staff refer to an early years' literacy program as being the current implementation of the Challenges of Practice. The introduction of this program has been strategic and has progressed through a regular focus at the foundation to year 2 staff cohort meetings. The panel observed consistent implementation operating in the early years classes.

The SIP includes targets for literacy achievement for students in years 3 to 9. The Challenge of Practice indicates a focus on consistently teaching comprehension strategies to enable this. The school is yet to implement this and is aware that this remains the next area for development. The successful model employed in the early years provides a framework from which to progress actions for students in the primary and middle years.

School designed *Impact Plans* have been documented to allow leaders to plan, monitor and evaluate progress towards Challenges of Practice at three monthly intervals. A 'traffic light' approach is employed. Consequently, regular evaluation of actions is possible and adjustment to actions can be implemented as necessary.

The panel reviewed the Impact Plan aligned with SACE improvement and agrees the Challenge of Practice is representative of a number of high yield approaches including learner dispositions, pedagogical renewal, feedback and formative assessment. However, actions identified to implement the Challenge of Practice are more organisational and preparatory structures, and will need to be reviewed to effectively develop the identified teaching strategies. Of note, the SIP includes actions more aligned with the Challenge of Practice than those in the Impact Plan. The panel encourages leaders to review the SIP actions and consider their impact on improved practice.

Direction 1 Strengthen the efficacy of literacy learning and pedagogical delivery for students in years 3 to 12 through a review of the improvement plan actions for goals 2 and 3, and their existing impact on classroom practice.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

How effectively does the school leadership ensure a clear focus on improving teaching and student learning?

In 2019, it has been reported that a greater clarity regarding leaders' roles and responsibilities is evident. Teachers know who to approach with ideas or issues. Leaders' roles are aligned with school improvement imperatives and this ensures greater potential to achieve identified goals.

The principal is clear in their intent to raise a coherent and targeted approach to leadership, and has worked with the leadership team to progress this resolve. Pupil free days and leadership team agendas have been focused on senior leaders and coordinators' capacity to lead performance and development processes effectively.

Some teachers report that in 2019, performance and development processes are regular and influential. These teachers describe meetings focused on implementation of school priorities, followed by classroom observations and post observation feedback. Other teachers describe different experiences, citing having had no meetings due to line managers covering staff absences or regular changes in personnel. Some leaders express a belief that at this point, they need to further strengthen their expertise to effectively lead others.

Early closure once a week sees time made available for whole staff and cohort meetings. Cohorts are structured as year level groups and led by senior leaders and coordinators. The time allocated is currently utilised in varying ways and with diverse intentionality, such as analysis of PAT-R data to planning special events and administration. The foundation to year 2 group has focused almost exclusively on building teachers' capacity to implement the agreed literacy program leading to an embedded approach. The panel encourages the employment of a similar focus when introducing other concepts that require teachers to develop new strategies or capabilities.

When considering the concept of effective leadership and the systems that build teachers' capacity, consistent dialogue and systematic planning is key. The school is well placed to conduct professional forums that see leaders develop a unified, deliberate and strategic approach to planning and leading cohort meetings. Focusing these forums firmly on the SIP actions and dedicating ongoing, methodical approaches to embed them, will raise teachers' capacity to implement agreed practice.

Direction 2 Build the capabilities of all staff to implement expected practice by continuing to strengthen each leader's capacity to co-plan and conduct effective, highly consistent professional learning forums.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent is student data and evidence used to inform and refine teaching at an individual, group and class level?

During a recent whole staff meeting, teachers were informed how to access PAT-R data and were provided advice regarding appropriate tools that support analysis. Some staff reported that they then used the allotted time to work in pairs to review the data. A few teachers discussed identifying student and cohort needs, namely the drawing of inference and directly stated information, and then designing teaching to respond to this. Others spent time printing and collating the data. Some staff reported that their cohort group went on to discuss more pressing organisational matters unrelated to data analysis. This varied use of professional learning time indicates a need for teachers and cohort leaders to better utilise opportunities to develop their ability to analyse and respond to data, and improve student learning.

Formative assessment strategies designed to identify students' prior knowledge or the effectiveness of teaching are used by some teachers. This allows a more responsive and intentional approach to planning. The concept of formative assessment is evident within the SACE Challenge of Practice in the SIP. Opportunities to promote existing good practice in this area will support implementation at the senior secondary level.

The recently initiated early years literacy program includes a mechanism for evaluating student progress every 5 weeks and reassigning students to groups accordingly. Students at risk of not achieving the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in years 3 to 10 are included in the intervention program aligned with the early years literacy initiative. Many of these students report the positive difference this has made to their learning.

The propensity for most primary teachers to establish ability groups in response to data or teacher judgement is evident. Most class visits and conversations with staff and students confirmed that grouping encourages teachers to provide 'easier' or 'less' work to some, and 'harder' or 'more plentiful' work to others. In middle and senior years, teaching pitched at the whole class and then is often made more accessible through one-on-one conversations with students.

Evidence of teaching responsive to data analysis and differentiated to meet the varying needs of learners is limited. Some teachers present the perception that the capacity of teachers and leaders to use data diagnostically and intentionally remains an area for further development.

Direction 3 Better meet the learning needs of each student by leading teachers to understand and analyse what the data is indicating and how to design differentiated teaching that then responds to this.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

It is highly evident that the principal has clarity regarding direction and contemporary pedagogical practice. An intent to build teachers' capacity through coherent leadership and to develop systematic approaches to performance initiatives is apparent. Evidence of the dedicated development of the early years literacy program confirms a strategic and focused approach to improvement. This model will serve the school well as it works to implement its Challenges of Practice.

The concepts of accountability and consistency are regularly reported by staff and is increasingly evident through recent initiatives. The panel commends the principals' intent to ask 'what is the impact, and how do you know?' It is confirming to hear this manta expressed by other staff across the school.

The panel agrees that the informed and strategic learning culture the principal has introduced to the school sees Roxby Downs Area School well placed to achieve its vision to 'empower all to reach their potential'.

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

- Direction 1 Strengthen the efficacy of literacy learning and pedagogical delivery for students in years 3 to 12 through a review of the improvement plan actions for goals 2 and 3, and their existing impact on classroom practice.
- Direction 2 Build the capabilities of all staff to implement expected practice by continuing to strengthen each leader's capacity to co-plan and conduct effective, highly consistent professional learning forums.
- Direction 3 Better meet the learning needs of each student by leading teachers to understand and analyse what the data is indicating and how to design differentiated teaching that then responds to this.

Based on the school's current performance, Roxby Downs Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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ROXBY DOWNS AREA SCHOOL



GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

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 2018, 65% of year 1 and 67% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from historic baseline average for year 1 and an improvement for year 2.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 2 has been upwards from 53% in 2016 to 67% in 2018.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 71% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students, 73% of year 7 students and 45% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 5 and 7 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average and a decline for years 3 and 9.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 9 has been downwards, from 60% to 45%.

For 2018, year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools and below for year 9.

In 2018, 38% of year 3, 24% of year 5, 10% of year 7, and 0% of year 9 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 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 64%, or 7 out of 11 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 7%, or 1 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 0%, or 0 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 0%, or 0 out of 3 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of year 3 students, 56% of year 5 students, 64% of year 7 students and 66% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 9, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, for year 7 little or no improvement and a decline year 5.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 5 has been downwards from 73% to 56%.

For 2018, years 3 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools and below for years 5 and 7.

In 2018, 22% of year 3, 7% of year 5, 8% of year 7 and 3% of year 9 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 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 38%, or 3 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 33%, or 2 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 0%, or 0 out of 0 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 50%, or 1 out of 2 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 55% of students enrolled in February and 89% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2018, 78% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 73% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 71% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 91% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 0% grades were at an 'A' level and 34% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for the 'C-' or higher, a decline for 'A' grade and improvement for 'B' grade achievement.

Fifty-nine percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2018.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 65% or 25 out of 38 students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also no students who were successful at achieving a merit.