

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Penong Primary School

Conducted in March 2021



# 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 here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Katherine Holman, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Michele Smith, Review Principal.

## Review Process

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

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers.

## School context

Penong Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 850kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 29. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 27. The local partnership is Far West.

The school has a 2019 ICSEA score of 922 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 21% Aboriginal students, less than 6 students with disabilities, 10% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 26% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal only, in the 28<sup>th</sup> year of tenure, who also has a teaching role.

There are 3 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

**Direction 1** Further enrich practices which utilise student voice to enable students to become more involved as co-constructors in learning and assessment.

**Direction 2** Extend the levels of collective inquiry with students with the aim to reach and sustain higher levels of achievement.

**Direction 3** Enrich teacher capacity through the involvement of evidence-based research into innovative practices to extend student engagement and growth at and beyond the Standard of Education Achievement.

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

The Principal reported there has been an intentional focus on connecting teachers to highly effective pedagogies through professional development. The school has worked with the Local Education Team (LET) and other experts based on a coaching model to build their capacity to improve pedagogy.

There was insufficient evidence to conclude that students' voice had been enhanced.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

There has been a commitment to working through the improvement cycle in a more intentional way. There is documented evidence in each of the 5 steps of the planning cycle. Staff know the focus of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) and there was evidence of implementation through the focused and explicit teaching of phonics. The work undertaken in each area of the improvement planning cycle has continued to provide clarity and direction for improvement. Review is occurring more regularly, and staff meetings have been restructured to support this work. Some teachers were able to identify changes they had made to their planning and explicit teaching, informed by their analysis of the student achievement data. An understanding of growth data is evident; however, staff believe that the increasing student transience impacts on the data.

The Governing Council were able to talk about the SIP goals, including the drive to improve reading by explicitly teaching to the gaps in student knowledge identified through testing in reading and phonics. They reported they were kept informed and the SIP is an agenda item at meetings. They felt they were consulted and had influence over what happened in the school.

There has been improved documentation of the processes undertaken in the improvement cycle. Staff have identified the need to regularly document the knowledge they gather about student learning and progress. While some staff have an extensive knowledge of student achievement data, there is a need to continue to build greater knowledge and understanding of the data for all staff.

The school is well-placed to further develop the connection between teaching practices and student achievement. Rigorous review processes and deep analysis of student achievement data will support staff to identify effective and ineffective teaching practice. There is also an opportunity to gather evidence of the impact of student transience on the data and adapt the teaching and learning program accordingly.

**Direction 1     Continue to regularly engage in rigorous processes that evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the SIP on student learning to inform next steps.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

One of the primary teachers has taken the lead in data management and created extensive data spreadsheets to track and monitor student growth. The school would benefit from greater engagement of all staff with the data. Further work is required to build staff knowledge and understanding of the connections between the impact of their teaching practice and student growth data. The leadership of the school is willing and prepared to support teachers to reflect on what they need to do differently for those students not demonstrating sufficient growth in their learning.

In the primary class, each student had an individualised program based on needs. The panel acknowledges the enormous amount of planning and programming this takes; however, it may be possible to achieve similar outcomes by providing opportunities for students to engage collaboratively with quality learning.

While there was evidence of a high degree of differentiation in classrooms and work based on the students' learning needs, the students did not have a clear idea of how to improve their learning. The panel did not see evidence of the students having developed the language of learning. The primary students did not have clarity of how to be successful so there are opportunities to make success criteria specific and known to all.

All students had goals and were able to tell the panel what they were. Many of the goals were quite broad such as 'improve reading or handwriting'. The students were not able to talk about specific strategies they had to use to improve. They could only report they had to practise at home and then they would 'do better' but were not able to identify what they had to practise. Having greater precision and clarity of goals will help students know what they are learning, how they will know when they achieve their goals, and where they need to go next.

**Direction 2    Strengthen student learning goals by making it explicit to students what they are learning, and how they will learn, and provide specific success criteria for measuring student achievement.**

## Effective leadership

How effectively are teachers using evidence – based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

There was clear guidance and support from the local education team, and experts such as the Literacy Coach helped build staff capacity. There was consistency across the school in the implementation of the SIP Challenge of Practices based on best advice in the teaching of phonics. All teachers had a phonics program based on their student's learning needs. Teachers were able to articulate changes to practice as a result of working with external experts. Staff used the literacy progressions as a sequential way of identifying the next steps for learning and monitoring student growth, as well as other programs being used across the school.

One of the strengths of the school is the highly differentiated learning program evident in all classes to cater for students from a wide range of year levels and learning needs. While collaborative activities were evident in the junior primary class, the primary program is highly individualised to support the multi-level class. Students worked independently and were on task; however, the extent to which they were engaged or challenged was not evident. The students talked about working in groups at times in classrooms, and for science, they enjoyed working with others. The teachers are using a variety of evidenced-based programs for example comprehension cards to address the student's gaps in learning, and these were done independently.

There are further opportunities to provide stretch and challenge for all learners through high-quality tasks with multiple entry points that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Professional development around designing quality tasks would be beneficial and would support teaching multi-level groups. This approach allows for collaboration, targeted guided and explicit teaching. Group reflections also provide opportunities to see how others solve problems, discuss most efficient strategies and provide challenge for all learners.

**Direction 3     Build staff capacity to design quality learning tasks that provide collaborative opportunities to stretch and challenge all students.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

There is an extremely supportive culture, with high expectations around valuing and respecting everyone. All staff have a deep knowledge of each student's learning and the family circumstances. Families also felt that their children's learning needs were being met and were extremely happy with the school. Staff and community thought it was the school of choice and were very proud of it. Anecdotal evidence from the high school was that the students from Penong Primary School came well-prepared. Parents really appreciated the community involvement and the way everyone worked together and supported one another. The Governing Council are highly supportive of the school, know the improvement focus, and feel empowered through the consultative processes the Principal uses in making decisions.

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

- Direction 1** Continue to regularly engage in rigorous processes that evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the SIP on student learning to inform next steps.
- Direction 2** Strengthen student learning goals by making it explicit to students what they are learning, and how they will learn, and provide specific success criteria for measuring student achievement.
- Direction 3** Build staff capacity to design quality learning tasks that provide collaborative opportunities to stretch and challenge all students.

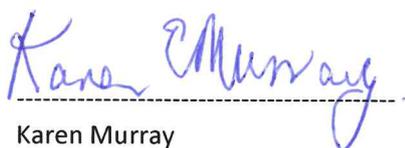
Based on the school's current performance, Penong Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Penong Primary School



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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).

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. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Penong Primary School from 2015 - 2019.

### READING

Between 2015 and 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of year 3 students, 61% of year 5 students and 77% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019, 31% of year 3 students, 38% of year 5 students and 44% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

### NUMERACY

Between 2015 and 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 33% of year 3 students, 75% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019, 25% of year 3 students, 8% of year 5 students and 46% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.