EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR THIELE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 2015
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 Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Patrick Moran, 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 Thiele 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:

Aspects of Governance:
- The site's student behaviour policy is currently under review including strategies to address the requirement to report bullying data twice yearly to Governing Council.

Aspects of Teaching and Learning:
- Staff will complete the professional learning program at an upcoming pupil free day that supports the implementation of the Keeping Children Safe Child Protection Curriculum program.

Aspects of Safety:
- As an ongoing process, meetings are scheduled to capture all volunteers to be trained in their obligations to respond to abuse and neglect of children in their care.
- A specific Cyber Safety Policy does not yet exist, however there is an Internet User Agreement and the DECD Social Media Policy is implemented.
- Both of these aspects of safety were reported on in the Annual Report 2014.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school practices were found to be compliant with the policy. All students are expected to attend regularly. An electronic system is used to record and monitor attendance on a daily basis. In 2014, the school reported an average attendance rate of 92.3% which is slightly lower than the previous year and slightly lower than the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Thiele Primary School is a DECD public school established in 2008 through the amalgamation of Heysen Primary School and Spence Primary School.

The school is part of the Aberfoyle Park Primary School Campus co-located with Nativity Catholic School and Pilgrim Lutheran School. The three schools collaborate to share specialist staff, policies, facilities, programs, and Campus community events.

The enrolment numbers at Thiele are stable with 322 students allocated to 12 classes. The school has an ICSEA score of 1031 and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. In 2014, 20% of families were eligible for School Card assistance.

The school population includes 6 Aboriginal students, 33 Students with Disabilities, 3 students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 9 students under the Guardianship of the Minister.

The school leadership team consists of the Principal in his second tenure and the Deputy Principal, who is in her first tenure at the school. There is also an internally-appointed Co-ordinator: Student Wellbeing and Engagement.

The school is an active member of the DECD South Valley Precinct Local Partnership.
Lines of inquiry
During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning</th>
<th>How well are students achieving over time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement Agenda</td>
<td>How well does the school make data informed judgements about student learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Leadership</td>
<td>How well does leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How well are students achieving over time?

Thiele Primary School has a vision for learning that includes the development of positive relationships, strong learner wellbeing and the achievement of 'high performance for all students'. To realise this vision, the school must aim for all students to perform at high levels and to sustain progress and growth over time.

In the early years, reading results are measured by assessing student achievement against Running Record levels. In 2014, 50% of Year 1 students and 76% of Year 2 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). An analysis of Running Record results over time (2011-2013) indicates that there is declining performance at Year 1 and improving performance at Year 2.

In 2014, on average, 70% of students demonstrated the SEA for reading as measured by NAPLAN at Years 3, 5 and 7. For numeracy, the results indicate that on average, 65% of students demonstrated the SEA across all three year levels.

Specifically, in reading in 2014, 77% of Year 7 students and 74% of Year 5 students achieved the SEA as measured by NAPLAN. These results are consistent with the school’s historic average over time. At Year 3, 59% of students achieved the SEA. This result is lower than the historic average (2011-2013) of 82%. This means that last year, 16 students out of the 39 students in the cohort, not exempted from testing, achieved results in the lower two bands in reading.

The Review Panel undertook further analysis of the proportion of students achieving and retaining in the higher proficiency bands as measured by NAPLAN. In 2014, in reading, 17% of Year 3 students achieved in the higher two bands. This result reflects a decline from the previous year’s result of 33% and the historic average of 34%.

In numeracy, in 2014, 70% of Year 7 students and 65% of Year 5 students achieved the SEA as measured by NAPLAN. These results are consistent with the school’s historic average over time. At Year 3, 59% of the students achieved the numeracy standard, which is a result 17% lower than the school’s historic average (2011-2013) of 76%.

The Review Panel identified that the 2014 results for Year 1 Running Records and for Year 3 reading and numeracy are particularly concerning. In similar category schools, the Year 3 results in reading and numeracy indicate that more than 80% of students achieve the SEA.

The school’s leadership team has also analysed results of NAPLAN writing and grammar, and these results, along with the reading and numeracy results discussed above, indicate that a high proportion of students are consistently achieving scores in the lower or middle bands of NAPLAN.

This information has been reported to the community through the Annual Report 2014.
The leadership team also presented a set of longitudinal data that tracked the progress of one cohort over time. This proved to be an effective demonstration of the urgency identified by the school to improve the way learning growth for all students is tracked regularly over time.

In addition, the process highlighted the importance that all teachers consistently utilise achievement data for the purposes of learning design and assessment.

**Direction 1**

Raise the level of achievement and growth in the early years (Reception to Year 3) by using developmental and diagnostic assessment information to regularly inform targeted teaching programs and monitor the impact of early intervention strategies.

**Direction 2**

Increase the proportion of students achieving at higher levels by designing assessment tasks that support and challenge all students to achieve the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) and the DECD Strategic Objectives.

**How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?**

The Review Panel found that while the school currently gathers specific data sets through standardised testing it is yet to embed a process for the systematic analysis of each data set into the school culture and teachers’ work. There is urgency for this to happen to gain a baseline picture of whole school needs, Reception to Year 7, so that informed judgements can be made about plans, targets, priorities and resource allocations.

The Site Improvement Plan 2015-2016 does not include reference to an analysis of student achievement data. The extensive plan aims to provide a strategic overview and a ‘point of reference for the site’s ongoing progress in achieving specific annual improvement priorities and targets’. Included are key actions and outcomes for Literacy, Numeracy, Science, and in Quality Teaching and Learner Wellbeing and Engagement. The plan also includes improvement strategies associated with the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in English, Mathematics, History, and Geography.

The Review Panel found that while the representative Site Improvement Committee (SIC) meets fortnightly to manage the SIP, the agenda has broadened beyond the scope of the current plan. The general business has expanded to include discussions and consultation on a range of improvement matters across the school. Limited time has been given to monitoring the strategies aimed at improving student achievement.

The Review Panel found that it is therefore timely for the Principal and the staff to develop a more effective way to monitor and inform and shape school improvement. A starting point may be to revisit the responsibilities of the SIC against the existing role statement (circa 2011).

The school needs to also give immediate priority to analysing and using learner achievement data in annual self-review processes and in the ongoing work of the professional learning teams from Reception to Year 7.

**Direction 3**

Build a focused culture of continuous improvement by developing processes to systematically use data and information to inform improvement planning, track student progress, determine programs, allocate resources and evaluate effectiveness of strategies.

Governing Council members reported that they had “robust discussions” about the Thiele Site Improvement Plan and the Campus Strategic Plan. They commented that they were aware the student achievement data for the school was collected and that some of the data showed that there were many students “at the top end of the bell curve”. These parents and others said they would like all the students to be doing the best they can at school.
Gathering parent feedback from the wider community is also an important part of a school’s self-review processes. The Review Panel was made aware that the collection of parent and student perceptions about teaching and learning has not been undertaken on an annual or regular basis in recent years. The last Opinion Survey was completed in 2012.

**Direction 4**

Strengthen parent partnerships and increase learning outcomes for all students by establishing processes and opportunities to systematically gather, analyse and respond to the views and perceptions of parents.

During the external school review the Review Panel heard from the leadership team that there is a sense of increasing demands on time and resources when partnering with Campus and Partnership stakeholders.

The Aberfoyle Park Primary School Campus Plan has three goals: addressing the Campus profile in the community, the shared use of staff and facilities, and cross-Campus professional learning. The DECD South Valley Precinct Local Partnership Plan has a comprehensive overarching plan for local sites to work together to improve learning outcomes for children and young people. The Precinct also has a Numeracy and Literacy Results Plus plan to support leaders to enact aspects of the overarching plan.

As the school renews its self-review and site improvement processes over time, the Principal and the Governing Council will be well placed to rationalise priorities by ensuring that the school, the Partnership sites, and the Campus use common sets of data and information to scope the agreed shared directions.

**How well does leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?**

During the external school review the staff suggested a number of ways to consolidate actions and efforts to focus on pedagogy, learning and engagement as the priorities for improvement. The consistent implementation of all agreements and a commitment from staff to demonstrate accountability were also raised as areas for school improvement. This situation requires attention because in the absence of a whole-school approach, all students will not be fully supported to progress and achieve at age appropriate standards or beyond, year after year at the school.

Of immediate concern to the Review Panel was a sense of ‘collective hesitance’ amongst staff to fully commit to using the evidence-based teaching practices that have been articulated and promoted through shared professional learning. While the desire to have consistency and collaborate towards a whole-school approach was expressed at a meeting of staff and in discussions, there was a range of examples indicative of the view that everyone was “Okay” with the “informal” agreements and wanted flexibility to “tweak” programs, use their own “hybrid”, and/or implement only the preferred aspects of any agreed or informal approach.

To implement agreements, maintain momentum and develop additional policies in the future, staff will need to revisit the purpose of the evidence-informed approach and have professional conversations to clarify expectations about practice.

In addition, all staff will need to ensure there is a commitment shared by all team members in each professional learning team to support all students from Reception to Year 7.

It would be worthwhile for the school to also enact the collection of student feedback, as described in the school’s Performance and Development Plan (2015).

**Direction 5**

The Principal, teacher leaders and other staff will implement teaching and assessment agreements and use a range of processes to enact the school’s Performance and Development Policy.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Thiele Primary School is working towards implementing a whole school approach to using the Australian Curriculum and to providing a coherent and engaging learning program for students. The development of a pedagogy that reflects the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework is included in the school’s improvement agenda and supported by the work of the local Partnership. The strategic development of a continuous culture of improvement will support the school over time to realise the achievement of higher performance for all students Reception to Year 7.

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

1. Raise the level of achievement and growth in the early years (Reception to Year 3) by using developmental and diagnostic assessment information to regularly inform targeted teaching programs and monitor the impact of early intervention strategies.

2. Increase the proportion of students achieving at higher levels by designing assessment tasks that support and challenge all students to achieve the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) and the DECD Strategic Objectives.

3. Build a focused culture of continuous improvement by developing processes to systematically use data and information to inform improvement planning, track student progress, determine programs, allocate resources and evaluate effectiveness of strategies.

4. Strengthen parent partnerships and increase learning outcomes for all students by establishing processes and opportunities to systematically gather, analyse and respond to the views and perceptions of parents.

5. The Principal, teacher leaders and other staff will implement teaching and assessment agreements and use a range of processes to enact the school’s Performance and Development Policy.

Based on the school’s current performance Thiele Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL 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.

Shaun Coghlan  
PRINCIPAL  
THIELE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson