

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Marryatville Primary School

Conducted in April 2018



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.

The overarching review question is "how well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Cheryl Ross and Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Principals.

School context

Marryatville Primary School is located approximately 5km east of the Adelaide CBD, and caters for children from reception to year 7. The current enrolment is approximately 585 students, and enrolment has grown steadily over time, to a point where the school is now experiencing enrolment pressure with 4 additional classes added from 2016 to 2018. The school has an ICSEA score of 1143, and is classified as Category 7 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population comprises 2% students with disabilities, 1% of Aboriginal students, 25% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, 1% of children in care, and 3.5% families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in her final term at the school, having recently been appointed to another leadership position, a deputy principal (who will become the acting principal for term 2), an assistant principal, a curriculum coordinator in ICT, and a business manager.

Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

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| Effective Leadership: | To what extent is staff collective responsibility and collective action evident in improving maths outcomes for students? |
| School Community Partnerships: | To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning through authentic influence of their own learning? |
| Improvement Agenda: | How well does the school make data-informed judgements and actions about student learning particularly in literacy and numeracy? |

To what extent is staff collective responsibility and collective action evident in improving maths outcomes for students?

The leadership team has focused on improving the social and professional capital across the staff team to build and maintain a culture of high performance at Marryatville Primary School.

A wide range of strategies were implemented to bring about a more collaborative and cohesive school culture and team approach to improvement, including a team charter, positive psychology sessions, a whole-school focus on wellbeing, and raising the profile of collective professional practice, particularly through maths as an identified curriculum priority.

The review panel inquired into the extent that the whole-school numeracy agreement impacted student outcomes, and evaluated the clarity of teaching approaches through staff and student interviews, class observations, and evidence of planning and assessment. The maths agreement required teachers to plan from the Australian Curriculum, and deliver lessons incorporating a structure of mental routines, main body of the lesson and student reflection. Eight effective teaching practices are expected to be

incorporated into the design of maths learning. The teaching staff provided varied but relevant evidence of all the expected design elements for maths improvement at the site.

Staff professional practice in teaching maths is enhanced through a variety of strategic approaches within the school and external to the school, including staff commitment to the site improvement plan (SIP) strategies for maths, working with maths consultants, focused staff meetings on maths pedagogies, performance and development linked to maths teaching, working with partnership teachers in moderating maths outcomes, and some staff engaging in action research.

In the 2016 school annual report the principal reported: "In numeracy, our challenge is to increase the numbers achieving in the higher bands in year 3 and then maintain these across the years of schooling". Staff understanding about the best ways to engage students in maths learning was developed internally through professional conversations using the department's 'best advice' research papers, and engaging in professional learning using external consultants as guides to this work. This was confirmed throughout interviews with the leadership team, staff and governing council members.

Professional learning opportunities have allowed staff to modify their approach to teaching maths and introduced 'high-gain' teaching strategies to raise percentages in the upper bands of achievement. A whole-school numeracy agreement was written in 2016 to encompass the delivery of 3-part maths lessons during set blocks of time each week. Its intention is to create a balanced and integrated numeracy program delivered in a 'community of mathematical learners', with differentiation and problematised real-life situations to cause 'stretch' in student mathematical thinking. This document is clear and explicit, intent on achieving the above expectations through teacher action.

Problematised maths situations and linking real-life scenarios to maths concepts were helping students' understanding and maths vocabulary. Teachers verified that asking, rather than telling, and emphasising that a maths problem can be solved in more than one way, encouraging students to work together, and reflecting on their learning, was working to engage and challenge students further. Documented evidence of this approach was apparent in many classes, but not all, even after the panel specifically requested this information. The planning and documentation that was provided was of a high professional standard, and the teachers are commended for their approach to this improvement initiative in maths.

All staff confirmed they work in various year level teams across the school to consider data, plan, question, review and learn together for maths improvement. The 'Regent R/1' team stated that some observations and modelling between teachers is undertaken, and provided documented evidence and photos of using the achievement standards to create problematised learning with multiple entry points and intellectual 'stretch' for students.

The year 1 and 2 team provided some evidence of common assessment tasks to identify aspects for maths improvement (for example, money), inform collaborative planning and share problematised maths samples. The primary team confirmed in interview the use of visible student goal-setting in their classes, along with the use of learning intentions and success criteria; however, staff commented that not all were implementing this approach.

The structure of the upper primary team (years 5 to 7) maths group is based on students' capacity across year level cohorts. When asked about how the structure builds students' maths capacities, the group reported: "There is 1 upper band (stretch) group formed from these classes". The evidence for implementing this structure was determined by the upper primary team of teachers through a comparison of 2016-2017 numeracy mean score data.

The review panel questioned the authenticity of this approach, particularly in relation to the school's explicit numeracy agreement, where it clearly seeks in-class differentiation for all learners. The

comparison of 2 years of 'mean score' data has limited reliability and validity in this context. The panel believes the following documented and implemented strategies positively impact cohort performance:

- multi-step problems
- higher-order thinking, and
- providing students with 'thinking time' to engage in maths learning.

Building and implementing the above as a team will work to sustain improvement over time.

It was evident that all staff engage in performance and development with line managers, and attend staff meetings and pupil free days to enhance their professional knowledge about maths teaching. Some staff voluntarily engage in 'Thirsty Thursdays' after school hours to share professional learning on designed topics, inclusive of maths. Many staff confirmed that sharing successful approaches in maths occurs at year level team and whole-staff meetings on a scheduled basis.

The principal believes that teams operate with degrees of variation in delivering a structured and coherent sequence of learning across the school. The panel endorses the requirement to connect the agreements (maths and literacy) seamlessly across the school, so that approaches are connected for the students as they move from year level to the next and team to team. Tolerances of variation should be evaluated by leadership to ensure 'rigour' in implementation.

Staff and parent groups interviewed acknowledged that the school had improved considerably over the past few years. Trusting and respectful relationships had been reconstructed through a relentless emphasis on wellbeing for teaching and learning, and the principal's drive in this area. It is through the clarity of purpose, clear expectations and commitment to improve learning for students that staff will continue to build a unified and highly collaborative approach to school improvement. The foundations are there and, together, staff must implement agreed commitments so that coherency of maths learning across the school maintains safe conditions for learning – for students and adults alike. Knowing what is expected and supporting each other to share and build highly effective practice together is critical.

Direction 1

Expand and deepen the quality of critically collaborative staff teams across the school to deliver agreed highly effective maths teaching practices in a coherent manner.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning through authentic influence of their own learning?

The principal generally described the students as requiring resilience when confronted with challenges in their behaviour and learning. The panel cited a recent Resilient Youth Australia school survey indicating a level of anxiousness amongst the students. The Australian Early Development Census (2015) and the Middle Years Development Instrument (2015) also indicate some social/emotional vulnerability in the younger students and a need for perseverance in the upper primary years.

During maths class observations the panel noted a challenge to support students without rescuing them, and helping them persevere through the thinking process. Growth mindsets and character strengths are applied across the school to support students to become resilient and work through 'tough' challenges in learning. Students interviewed by the panel verified the importance of these characteristics to success in learning and life.

Students' influence in what happens at the school level occurs in a number of ways and was verified by many teachers, students, and some parents. Students influence the school through:

- student representative council (SRC)

- 'ICT guru crew' (coding and technical skills)
- lunchtime clubs
- 'Friendology' (grievance procedures for students)
- 'Tree of Life' mural
- nature gardens
- school captains, and
- the student service model (for older students).

Student voice in 'school life' has been a focus in upper years for some time, and varies from high school students working with year 5 to 7 students on maths units of work to enabling student discussions to evolve during the reflection section of maths lessons. The panel collected some documented evidence of students undertaking self-reflection and self-evaluation against A-E grade rubrics, and rubrics that described the 'work required' from students (not negotiated with students). One student interviewed said that "teachers in our school are really encouraging and want us to do our best".

Students interviewed appreciated and were keen to explore opportunities to further influence school improvement and personal learning. Suggestions such as reintroducing school and class suggestion boxes, and enabling more independent learning through negotiation, were conveyed to the panel. A few older students stated that they sometimes had opportunities to choose between tasks, or were allowed to co-construct the assessment rubric used in science. Students demonstrated their capacity to articulate their ideas, and indicated contributing to their learning through statements such as "I don't want worksheets set on the Chrome books and we just sit and do it – I want to explore learning that connects to other subjects".

Students in reception and year 1 classes engage in an 'Investigations' (play-based) program during the week, with an emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills through discovery and play. The concrete nature of this learning has seen the students develop observation skills, for example, using bird charts and a data wall mapping 'What goes past our school?' Observations and evidence gathered in this program are correlated with other data the team collects and considers in planning, assessing and reporting on learning.

Involving students in genuine ways in learning is important for their appreciation and understanding of the learning process. Research shows that benefits don't accrue from just hearing their voices. How students and teachers work with the curriculum to make learning 'come to life' is critical. Importantly, the opportunities for students to participate in shaping their experiences at school must be real rather than a simulated influence.

Direction 2

Extend opportunities for students to authentically engage and influence learning in ways that improves their thinking, capacity and performance across the Australian Curriculum.

How well does the school make data and evidence-informed judgements and actions about student learning particularly in literacy and numeracy?

Staff confirmed the SIP clearly defines the focus of the improvement effort to be undertaken at Marryatville Primary School, and school resources are openly aligned to achieve the outcomes described in the SIP. The school has deployed a learner data management system (Sentral) to facilitate the storage, use and influence of key learning datasets to support school-based judgements about learning, that is, patterns in results, girls' engagement in maths, miscue analysis in system datasets, and a focus of learning

intervention in reading. A documented school assessment timetable maps data collection points across the school year.

The leadership team confirmed that the school can improve further in reading as referenced in the school datasets. A comprehensive Literacy Belief Statement (2016) is evidence of this starting point. Some staff feedback (dated March 2016) is still relevant today, that is, strengthening reading outcomes and other aspects of literacy. The review panel verified in the data, and through staff conversation, that a strong start in reading through the early years will contribute to an overall improvement in student and school performance. Early development of oral language, letter/sound knowledge phonic, and phonemic awareness (aspects of the Big 6) will further establish a stronger base for student success early in schooling.

The school introduced a wave 1-3 model of support for students using school and system data to identify students requiring intervention in reading and maths. The school's wave 1 support in reading is delivered through a non-negotiable approach called Guided Reading. Variations of this, called 'Daily 5' and 'Reading Cafe' approaches, are preferred classroom models used by teachers, but they are not implemented coherently across the whole school. Staff teams use various datasets to make decisions about students who will benefit from intervention – either in-class, across the teaching team or with extra teacher/SSO support.

For students in other year levels, NAPLAN and PAT data is used by teachers and year level teams to design learning support for Wave 3 and some Wave 2 learners, who would benefit from short-term support to consolidate reading skills. Strategies also include across-team groupings to better target the needs of students. Intervention is a regular feature on year level team meeting agenda. A member of the leadership team acknowledged that staff reached an "Ah Ha!" moment in considering 2017 system-based data, and realised that the students can do better by staff understanding where and how to focus their efforts collectively.

Whilst the panel confirmed the use of data to inform particular emphases in literacy and numeracy, such as vocabulary development, identification for intervention, and the concept of space in maths, many staff indicated that their purposeful use of data has only grown over the past 2 years. Some staff indicated that they are now sharing data with parents as an aspect of the reporting process. Parents confirmed that there is variable use of learning data across the school (apart from NAPLAN and A-E grades), and believe this to be teacher-related.

Although staff are in the early phases of interrogating data and other evidence at school, class and individual levels, they are successfully using available information to inform their improvement work. The staff have come a long way in a short period of time. A documented example provided to the panel shows staff having completed a question-analysis process to identify areas within literacy and numeracy requiring further teaching. The analysis revealed that the learning program must provide opportunities for students to interpret, analyse and infer. This is certainly being delivered through the problematised learning component in maths lessons that the panel noted through documentation, interviews and class observations.

Whilst staff consider the most recent data to inform their planning and programming, data must also be used to monitor and track performance over time. In doing so, patterns and trends can be more strategically considered to determine what teaching practices are impacting and how they might be best consolidated across the school. For example, the change to the upper primary maths structure was based on limited longitudinal data (a minimum of 2 years) and minimal evidence-based research. Effective teaching will make the biggest impact in student learning rather than any structural change. The emphasis should be on determining (via evidentiary means) which agreed teaching practices are impacting on student learning and embedding these across the school.

The panel confirmed that there is more capacity for the analysis and use of data and evidence across the school in support of student learning improvement. Stronger links could be made from data and evidence to goal-setting, tracking student growth, correlation of datasets inclusive of A-E grades, SMARTAR target-setting, and building the explicitness with students about what the school is trying to improve and why.

There was ample evidence of data and evidence being collected and used by staff across all sections of the school. The leadership team and staff could be more strategic about which data, at what time, for whom and for what purpose, as they engage more deeply with the range of data and information available. The school is operating effectively in this aspect of school improvement; however, some refinement may better serve the school's improvement efforts.

Data and evidence should be used explicitly to plan, track and report individual student growth. Setting individual growth targets with students and parents, and using available data and evidence, will help define the improvement being sought. Implementing the evidence-based actions described in the literacy and numeracy agreements to a high level of coherency across the school will formulate how these targets will be achieved. The explicitness of both 'what' and 'how' to improve with students and parents will serve to raise achievement expectations and growth at all levels.

Direction 3

Use available data and evidence at the class and individual levels to support defensible judgements and evaluations such as 'how well' or 'to what extent' outcomes are achieved, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Direction 4

Implement agreed and documented teaching and curriculum practices to create connected and coherent learning opportunities for all students as they progress through the levels of schooling.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Marryatville Primary School. These practices must remain a feature of the school's continued improvement journey.

Effective Leadership: leadership has been focused and steadfast in ensuring that the improvement agenda of the school is clear and unambiguous. The agenda of 'what' to improve across the school has been validated through the analysis of data and evidence considered over time. The 'how' of improvement has been extensively documented to create clarity and expectation for staff at the school. The 'what' and 'how' are regularly monitored by the leadership team.

Positive Culture: a great deal of the principal's commitment and energy over the last 3 years has been directed to ensure a positive and supportive culture, and ethos across the school through a 'wellbeing' focus. The principal has been resolute and decisive in ensuring documented agreements and expectations about 'how' staff are expected to contribute to student learning and school improvement.

Sustain High Achievement: the school is producing high-performing outcomes, particularly in the upper bands of learning. The school staff display an 'air of expectation' that more can be achieved in creating further improvement in student learning. Staff professionalism and commitment to improving their expertise and skills was evident throughout the review. Their continued work is to consolidate identified key strategies across the school and implement these practices with precision and coherence in all learning spaces. Supporting each other with this work will be critical to continued success.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Marryatville Primary School has developed a strong cultural identity – one that is student- and improvement-focused, and supported through an emphasis on wellbeing for learning. Improvement is planned strategically using multiple measures of data and evidence. Leadership and governing council work well together, and are cognisant of the changing diversity within the school community and what this means for inclusivity.

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

1. Expand and deepen the quality of critically collaborative staff teams across the school to deliver agreed highly effective maths teaching practices in a coherent manner.
2. Extend opportunities for students to authentically engage and influence learning in ways that improves their thinking, capacity and performance across the Australian Curriculum.
3. Use available data and evidence at the class and individual levels to support defensible judgements and evaluations such as 'to what extent' outcomes are achieved, and what's next, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
4. Implement agreed and documented teaching and curriculum practices to create connected and coherent learning opportunities for all students as they progress through the levels of schooling.

Based on the school's current performance, Marryatville Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.

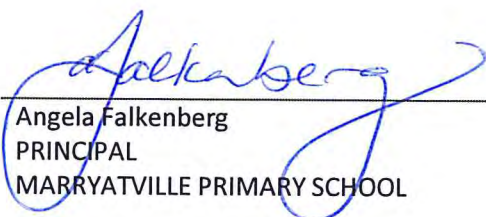


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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
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The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



Angela Falkenberg
PRINCIPAL
MARRYATVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the department's student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 94%.

Appendix 2

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 2017, 75% of year 1 and 64% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 2 has been downwards, from 90% in 2015 to 64% in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 88% of year 5 students and 92% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 85% in 2015 to 92% in 2017.

For 2017, year 3 and 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within, and for year 7, the school is achieving higher than similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 49% of year 3, 49% of year 5, and 43% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 74%, or 23 of 31 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, 67%, and 22 of 33 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy


In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3, 93% of year 5, and 95% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, the result represents a decline, for year 5, little or no change, and for year 7, result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 89% in 2015 to 95% in 2017.

For 2017, year 3 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within, and for years 5 and 7, the school is achieving above the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

Between 2011 and 2017, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy results than similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 20% of year 3, 41% of year 5, and 51% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.



For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 66% or 19 of 29 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 76% or 19 of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.