

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

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR WEST BEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in May 2016



**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 framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Brenton Robins, Review Principal.*

### Policy compliance

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

The Principal of West Beach 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:

#### Part 6 Site Procedures:

- Hazardous chemicals. A hazardous chemical register is being developed with only approved chemicals.
- Plant Management. Maintenance schedules are being developed.
- DECD Records Management. Student data is managed confidentially. Record management requires reviewing.
- DECD ICT Security Policy. Addressing this policy currently to ensure compliance.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 92.5%, which is just below the DECD target of 93%.

### School context

West Beach Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated in the western suburbs of Adelaide in the Western Adelaide Shores ECD local Partnership. The enrolment has fluctuated slightly between 2010 and 2016 and is currently 240. The school has an area-based Special Class of 12 students. The school is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score in 2015 was 1069.

The school population includes 2 Aboriginal students, 28 students of Non-English Speaking Background, and 10% of students are eligible for School Card. There is a Primary Area Resource Special Class. The school is part of the International Education primary student program and accredited to host students from overseas. There is currently one International Student enrolled at the school.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of her tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal (in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year), and a Coordinator (3<sup>rd</sup> Year) with responsibility for embedding ICT into Teaching and Learning. There are 12.2FTE teachers, including teachers with many years of experience and several teachers in the early years of their career.

## School Performance Overview

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).*

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 57% of Year 1 and 67% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been downwards, from 69% in 2013 to 57% in 2015 in Year 1, and 77% in 2013 to 67% in 2015 in Year 2.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 3 students, 89% of Year 5 students and 82% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, there is a downward trend from 86% in 2013 to 77% in 2015. For Year 5, this result represents an improvement against the historic average and a 4-year upward trend from 67% in 2012 to 89% in 2015. For Year 7, this result represents little or no improvement against the historic average.

For 2015 Year 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students, whereas in Year 3 and 7 reading, the school is achieving within the range of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 48% of Year 3, 41% of Year 5 and 23% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represented an improvement from the historic baseline average and a 3-year upward trend from 32% in 2013 to 48% in 2015. There is an improvement trend in Year 7, from 0% in 2013 to 23% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 63%, or 5 of 8 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 75%, or 3 of 4 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of Year 3 students, 78% of Year 5 students and 64% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result a 3-year downward trend, from 82% in 2013 to 74% in 2015. For Year 5, this result represented a 3-year upward trend, from 58% in 2013 to 78% in 2015. For Year 7, this result represented a decline against the historic average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 36% of Year 3, 22% of Year 5 and 18% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a 3-year upward trend, from 9% in 2013 to 36% in 2015, and an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 67% or 2 of 3 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For the last 3 years, there was little or no improvement for Years 3 to 5, whereas there was a decline in upper band retention from Year 3 to 7.

## Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

<b>Effective Leadership:</b>	<b>How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?</b>
<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>School Community Partnerships:</b>	<b>How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?</b>

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

In 2014, the newly appointed Leadership Team facilitated a range of processes with staff, students and Governing Council to develop a coherent improvement direction for the school. This involved doing a SWOT analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and reflections of the school's culture, programs and practices. Stakeholders were involved in developing shared values and the vision for West Beach Primary School to achieve a *community of collaborative, lifelong, powerful learners achieving individual excellence as active global citizens*. The Review Panel found an improvement culture and shared direction were evident through discussions with the Governing Council, parents and staff. There was a strong sense of community within the school and with the local DECD Partnership. Stakeholders talked about the trust that has been built and that change has been well-managed. To support learners, the school has adopted a number of programs and pedagogical approaches to provide consistency in language and coherence for students. The school has developed Literacy and Numeracy Agreements (draft) outlining expectations of teachers in these curriculum areas.

The use of data has been critical to the school's improvement processes. Teachers confirmed that the 'handover' of information and data from teacher to teacher has been useful as a starting point for their planning at the beginning of each year. The school is working towards greater personalised learning, where teachers use the data of individual students' profiles to intentionally design learning activities. The school has a common assessment schedule and there is much greater emphasis on tracking and monitoring students' achievement and growth. A Student Review Team has been established to provide a systematic approach to identifying and tracking the progress of students with learning difficulties. Each of these students has an Individual Learning Plan, which the class teacher and parents are involved in developing. The Student Review Team meets every 3 weeks, and SSOs responsible for the delivery of support are also involved in these meetings.

Teachers were asked about the practices that are consistent within their teams. The Review Panel found there were many examples of teachers collaborating together. In some year levels there is common planning and assessment tasks. The Review Panel was provided with units of work in Year 6/7 in mathematics (design your dream house), design and technology, understanding migration in history and the genre of newspaper reports in English. In Junior Primary teachers identified Jolly Phonics and grammar as a programme that provides consistency in the teaching of synthetic phonics. All the classes in Reception and Year 1 are involved in Investigative Play, common science units, and inquiry into key mathematical concepts. Years 3 to 7 have adopted a common program for spelling. In the Middle Primary, the teaching of history, geography and mathematical investigations are planned together. Two teachers in this section of the school team-teach at various times.

Across the school, most teachers have adopted a Scaffolded Literacy pedagogy in which texts are deconstructed to support students' deeper understanding of language and grammar. Students told the Review Panel that they gained a lot from this approach as teachers examine texts paragraph by paragraph and they learn about how the author uses language (such as figurative language) to convey their message to the reader. Several teachers across the school talked about moderating students' work in order to

provide consistent grading. The Japanese teacher at the school is in a network of teachers teaching Japanese. They work together to design their program and assessment. Japanese is a new learning area recently released by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), and the network helps to ensure there is rigour in their language teaching and consistent interpretation of the Curriculum Standards.

The Review Panel inquired into the aspects of the school's curriculum that were not consistent across the school. Some teachers talked about the level of rigour and expectations as being inconsistent. The integration of ICT to enhance learning processes was given as an example of where different expectations and scaffolding by teachers were having an impact on the ability of some students to perform tasks successfully in senior years. Others talked about potential for improvement in supporting students to put in greater effort and to be clear in what that looks like.

The school has Literacy and Numeracy Agreements (draft), and a 2016 ICT Improvement Plan documenting what teachers and leaders will do. Interviews with students showed that teachers are enacting practices outlined in these agreements, albeit with various degrees of rigour. The Review Panel also heard about the collaborative and consistent aspects of teachers' work at West Beach Primary School. For future improvement, students need to be intellectually stretched within their classroom learning. There needs to be common understanding of what greater rigour means and, importantly, what teachers need to do to achieve this. A starting point may be to clearly discuss, agree and document what students will be able to know and do in using ICT within the learning process. The capacity of teachers to design or transform tasks to enable students to demonstrate high-order thinking and proficiencies is an ongoing development.

#### **Direction 1**

**Develop agreed expectations of what teachers need to do to support students at each level of schooling to demonstrate rigorous and deeper learning.**

#### **How well are students achieving over time?**

As outlined in the School Performance Overview section of this report, there has been a decline in the percentage of students in Year 1 and 2 Running Records achievement against the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Additionally, there has been a 3-year downward trend from 69% in 2013 to 57% in 2015 in Year 1, and 77% in 2013 to 67% in 2015 in Year 2.

The Year 3 achievement in NAPLAN reading indicated a 3-year downward trend, from 86% in 2013 to 77% in 2015 of students meeting the SEA. Last year, 6 out of 31 students in Year 3 did not participate in the test. These students are counted as not having met the SEA. Of note, the trend in the percentage of students in Year 3 reading achieving in the higher bands increased over this same period.

Reading is a complex skill involving the ability to decode, to memorise sight words, to read with fluency, and to comprehend the text, both literally and inferentially. Reading skills are required in all areas of learning with increasing sophistication as students progress through their schooling. This downward trend in Running Records is a concern and, consequently, the Review Panel was keen to inquire into the practices of teaching and assessing reading in the Junior Primary.

It appeared to the panel in talking to SSOs and teachers that there are inconsistent practices in taking Running Records, and it was not clear to what extent these records are used to diagnose students' skill gaps. Several teachers said it had been some years since their previous training in taking Running Records. A few parents, with whom the Review Panel spoke, also suggested they had been told different things about their children's reading levels.

The actions that teachers take as a result of the information they gain from observing and assessing how young students read is most important. Students, who are identified as having learning difficulties through the Student Review process, are provided with individual support by an SSO.

The Review Panel was of the view that the Junior Primary team, together with the leadership, need to investigate their assessment and instructional practices, to gain greater consistency of practice, and to ensure that the learning experiences for the students are congruent with their individual assessed needs using the M, S, V cueing system.

**Direction 2**

**To support students not meeting the Standard of Educational Achievement in Running Records, investigate current assessment and instructional practices.**

**Direction 3**

**Identify and enact consistent practices and ensure the learning activities are personalised in reading to meet individual students' assessed needs.**

**How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

Students were consulted in 2014 to hear their views as the school established its vision, values and improvement direction. Since that time, the school has initiated a number of opportunities for students to take on leadership roles and contribute to the daily life of the school. One student said the school had become a lot more 'leadership savvy', meaning that students had more chances to develop their leadership skills.

These opportunities include Tech Support, WOW that is focused on sustainability, and PALS in which older students offer play activities for other students. Parents and students talked about these initiatives and Friday Sports, and acknowledged the work of the staff who provide a broad range of opportunities even though the school is small in size.

Students were also aware of the recent changes in teachers' pedagogies, which emphasised the ability to explain and form logical judgements about the processes and strategies they use in their learning, rather than all the focus being on the right answer. Students noted that previously there were more worksheets and less explanation or modelling by teachers. Some students talked about greater 'push' from their teachers and saw this as a positive thing. Parents and students talked about the extension groups in mathematics, and that this had been critical to maintaining their engagement. Others talked about the book clubs in which they read a chapter of a novel, then predict what might happen next, and construct 2 wondering questions. Parents had noted the buddy system and how it helped to build a sense of community.

In some classes students have set goals and regularly review them. Examples included knowing all their times tables, learning all the Japanese characters, and getting a pen licence. These goals are specific, learning-based and achievable.

In 2015, the Year 6/7 students (49 responses) at West Beach Primary School responded to a DECD survey into their wellbeing and school experiences. The low level of perseverance (40%), is higher than the South Australian average; additionally, the low level of engagement (52%), is higher than the State average, indicating that developing greater perseverance and engagement is a challenge for this school.

The school is aware of the need to develop greater engagement of students and conducted a survey across the school. Reception to Year 2 students (90%) indicated they learn things that interest them and they try hard with their learning (92%). A proportion of the young students (75%) stated they were less likely to think about what they learn at school when they are home. In Years 3 to 7, most students (91%) indicated it was OK to disagree with other students as long as they didn't hurt their feelings. They were less confident (71%) that their teacher knows if they are bored and does something about it, and that the pace of learning is just right, not too fast or too slow (75%). These survey results have implications for the school, and some teachers were aware that involving student voice in their learning and assessment is a key to greater engagement. Ensuring that the learning has a clear purpose and enabling students to apply their learning to real-life situations is also critical to deeper thinking and motivation.

The Review Panel sought reflections from teachers on their pedagogical practices during a unit of work in Term 1. A number of teachers indicated they would like to improve the way they allow students to develop their own inquiry questions so that they can 'steer their own learning' and to 'use student feedback to improve lessons' or to 'alter the end point.' Hattie's research shows that seeking feedback from students through formative assessment practices works well when teachers act on the feedback and information they receive. This shows that teachers are striving to check and ensure students are learning by adopting their practices, rather than blaming students when they do not appear to have understood, are not engaged, or not learnt what the teacher intended.

The Review Panel concluded that it is timely for West Beach Primary School to strengthen the pedagogical practices, which incorporate authentic student influence in their learning, with the aim of increasing the levels of motivation, perseverance, risk-taking and responsibility. One student told the Review Panel that it is time for parents and some teachers to “take the bubble wrap off”. These dispositions are critical for students as they progress through their education.

**Direction 4**

**Strengthen pedagogical practices which contribute to greater authentic student influence in their learning.**



## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

West Beach Primary School has self-review processes, which are regularly and strategically used to determine the impact of the school strategies on student achievement. Effective leadership provides strategic direction and planning. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.

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

1. Develop agreed expectations of what teachers need to do to support students at each level of schooling to demonstrate rigorous and deeper learning.
2. To support students not meeting the Standard of Educational Achievement in Running Records, investigate current assessment and instructional practices.
3. Identify and enact consistent practices and ensure the learning activities are personalised in reading to meet individual students' assessed needs.
4. Strengthen pedagogical practices which contribute to greater authentic student influence in their learning.

Based on the school's current performance, West Beach Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

Katrina Sexton  
PRINCIPAL  
WEST BEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson