

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Kilkenny Primary School

Conducted in June 2019



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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Cheryl Glenie, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Kilkenny Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 6kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 470 students. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 343. The school's ICSEA score is 1007 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The local partnership is Inner West.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, 21% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 8 children in care and 30% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 6th year of their tenure and 3 senior leaders.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Ensure all teachers can support more students to be successful by adopting a coordinated and systematic approach to the analysis and use of student data.
- Direction 2** Improve student achievement by enabling parents to be involved as partners in their child's learning through a coordinated communication strategy and approach.
- Direction 3** Build a collaborative staff culture and implement change management strategies that foster professional commitment to, and ownership of schools strategic directions priorities and plans, for improving student learning.
- Direction 4** Support continuous improvement by ensuring professional learning is embedded into classroom practice through the planning and regular monitoring of opportunities for scaffolding, sharing and consolidating staff learning and the on-going evaluation of the school wide professional learning approach.

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

A coordinated and systematic approach to the analysis and use of data has been developed with an agreed schedule of collection and storage in Scorelink. The panel observed evidence of staff effectively using data in Learning Sprint improvement practices, intervention planning and monitoring. To better communicate and enable parents to be involved in their child's learning, class overviews of learning are distributed by teachers to parents and ongoing updates about learning are accessible through online platforms, Class *DOJO* and Facebook. Governing council spoke positively of being kept informed of the school's progress and had initiated discussions with the principal to develop communication strategies which were more consistent and centralised. Many staff commented that there was a developing collaborative culture. Examples included teams co-constructing the 2019 site priorities for improvement and the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in which teams were using learning sprints to action school priorities into practice. Classroom observations and interviews with students confirmed that students were engaged in learning, with many commenting that they were continually challenged in learning. Leaders described the agreed process followed to monitor and determine priorities for staff training and development. Representatives from PLCs have input into these decisions to ensure alignment to the development of the site priorities.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How well does the school use evidence from student achievement and growth data to inform relevant and high-impact goals and targets for improvement?

In panel conversations it was evident that at the end of 2018, time was provided to staff to reflect on evidence from NAPLAN, PAT and site specific data in the development of the school's priorities. Most staff commented positively about the process describing clearly the agreed goals, actions and challenges of practice. This has enabled staff to have strong ownership of these priorities and through established PLCs and using learning sprints of improvement, opportunities exist for teachers to put these priorities into practice. Opportunities are provided for teachers to share their PLC evidence and experiences at staff meetings. At present, PLCs trial strategies with identified students with whom they wish to raise achievement in evidence-based learning sprints. Specialist, preschool, NIT and IELC teachers commented that they felt more included in the improvement agenda having taken part in developing the priorities and being members of PLCs. This is enhancing improvement and keeping the improvement agenda manageable for teachers.

A preschool teacher described the advantages of being involved with the construction of the SIP allowed her and her colleagues to align their priorities in learning, and look for opportunities to develop continuity of practice into the early years. An example described was the successful pedagogical practices used in the Read Write Inc. literacy program being incorporated into the centre's practice to support smoother learning transition.

Governing council spoke positively of being kept informed by the principal and other leaders of the school's learning progress. They believed an injection of innovation from teachers had taken place, referring to STEM initiatives and evidence-based improvement work carried out within PLCs.

The school is to be commended for its consolidation of work in addressing the identified priority of improvement in reading. Investment in training for all staff, and resources in a whole-school phonics approach to teaching reading is providing a common language and agreements for staff, while integrating comprehension, writing, spelling and grammar.

While it is clear that evidence of student achievement and growth was used to develop the goals and targets of the 2019 SIP, it is not clear how the ongoing teacher work in PLCs will enable the challenges of practice to be connected more closely to teacher practice. An opportunity exists to clarify and make more explicit the role of teachers work in PLCs, and the link between challenges of practice and changing pedagogy, to achieve the agreed goals.

Direction 1 Ensure school improvement priorities are embedded by clarifying the purpose and alignment of teachers' work in improvement practices within PLCs and performance development processes.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

While well-structured and supported literacy intervention programs using established Multi-lit and Mini-Lit are well established, evidence-based reviews identified that there were limited gains in achievement and a need for more consistent, broader pedagogical approaches to literacy development that involved all staff. Investment in the Read Write Inc. phonetic approach has allowed a common language of improvement and a greater focus on consistency of pedagogical practice to develop.

The panel observed teachers using effective evidence-based pedagogical practice during the literacy program. Middle and upper year's teachers displayed pedagogy from training in Read Write Inc., Powerful Learners, 7 Steps to Writing and Big Ideas in Number in a range of lessons. Leaders described how innovative learning in STEM, nature play and cooking in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen, provided engaging and challenging learning for all students. Students in each of these lessons described how open ended tasks provided challenges and that they enjoyed the learning because it made them think.

Teachers and leaders described how the literacy capacity of staff has been developed through training and acquisition of resources. They are now shifting their focus on developing whole of school agreements from reception to year 7.

During interviews students stated that they wanted to be challenged and that many teachers provided challenging tasks. They believe that they have an active say in their learning but when this was explored further, it was clear that this was more about choices of how they presented their work or how they work in class. Many students when asked how they were progressing in their learning found it difficult to explain, with low levels of metacognitive language used and little evidence of student efficacy with their own learning.

During staff meeting activities, teachers and SSOs described what they believe differentiation of learning is and how they plan differentiated learning to meet student needs. Many described the use of student ability groups in literacy, the use of One Plans to support their planning, and providing multiple entry points in tasks for students. In classroom observations the panel observed pockets of very effective practice.

There has been considerable investment in professional learning to build the capacity of staff pedagogical practice. Well established PLCs and Performance Development Plan (PDP) processes further support staff to develop their craft. Staff commented that agreements, like the mathematics agreement, make the expectations for teachers clear and allow them to focus on what is important to improve. The school is well positioned for teachers to reflect on and reach agreements on what is high impact pedagogical practice.

Direction 2 Strengthen the development of powerful learners that are engaged and challenged by teachers reaching agreements on effective pedagogical practices.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

How effective are schools professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capacity?

From conversations and observations it is clear that a culture of improvement is developing, and that staff see it as an important part of their role. Parents' comments supported this, believing the teachers are looking for ways for ongoing improvement. Leaders and teachers stated that they value their role in developing the priorities of improvement for the school. They see the established PLCs and the focus on learning sprints and planning as important support mechanisms for improvement. This, combined with targeted professional learning in 7 Steps in Writing, Reading strategies, developing Powerful Learners and Literacy support has provided teachers opportunities to reflect, analyse and trial new or successful

evidence-based strategies. Effective practice was evidenced in the R-2 PLC. Teachers described PDP processes where they meet with line managers, engage in classroom observations and receive feedback from leaders and other teachers. The level of explicitness of the development and improvement of pedagogical practice is valued by this group.

Opportunities exist to continue to strengthen effective feedback for teachers from leadership and colleagues to reflect on, and further develop their practice, through the evaluation and review of performance development processes.

Direction 3 Strengthen the clarity, rigour and alignment of performance development processes, professional learning and teachers work in PLC's to continue to build the capacity of staff to best meet the needs of students

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Kilkenny Primary School the influence of previous ESR directions is evident in the school's improvement. The school's planning processes are evidence based and targeted. The school is effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement. Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by effective systems that build capacity

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

- Direction 1** Ensure school improvement priorities are embedded by clarifying the purpose and alignment of teachers' work in improvement practices within PLCs and performance development processes.
- Direction 2** Strengthen the development of powerful learners that are engaged and challenged by teachers reaching agreements on effective pedagogical practices.
- Direction 3** Strengthen the clarity, rigour and alignment of performance development processes, professional learning and teachers work in PLC's to continue to build the capacity of staff to best meet the needs of students.

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



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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, 67% of year 1 and 62% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 64% of year 5 students and 66% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 82% to 66%.

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

In 2018, 27% of year 3, 33% of year 5 and 21% 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, 68% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and 60% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline, for year 5 an improvement, and for year 7 little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2018, 27% of year 3, 24% of year 5 and 18% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 53% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, and 50% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.