

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR KOONIBBA ABORIGINAL SCHOOL

Conducted in October 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 June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Deborah Hemming, 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 Koonibba Aboriginal School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 79.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Koonibba Aboriginal School is located 816kms north-west of the Adelaide CBD and is part of the Far West Partnership. The school is classified as Category 1 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. There is a preschool located on-site which caters for Aboriginal children from the age of 3.

The average school enrolment between 2011 and 2015 is 35, and currently is 32 students. The school population includes 32 (100%) Aboriginal students, 14 (32.6%) students with a disability, 1 child in care, and 100% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

Connection with community is purposeful. The school is supported by the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS), which is designed to lift student attendance. A support worker funded through the RSAS works collaboratively with the school, families and students to improve attendance, lateness and community engagement.

The Principal is in the 1st year of his 2nd tenure. There are currently 3 teaching staff, not including the Principal who has a 0.4FTE teaching component. Five support staff work at the school, including administration, finance, library and class support. An Aboriginal Community Education Officer (ACEO) works 30hrs per week and supports students and their families.

School Performance Overview

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

Considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making any judgement due to the lower numbers represented in some of the student cohorts at the school.

Attendance

In 2015, the average attendance was 78.7%, which was marginally lower than the average of 78.9% between the period 2010 and 2014.

Achievement

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, no Year 1 or Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Since 2012, no student in Years 3, 5 and 7 has achieved at the standard in the NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy test.

As a consequence of these results, school-based data must be purposeful and rigorously monitored. Staff work together to ensure consistency in implementation and moderation of assessment. The data is graphed and tracked over time to ensure the rigorous monitoring and tracking of student achievement and growth. Analysis of data is triangulated with academic, attendance, behaviour and attitude to learning data. Emphasis is also being placed on process, perception and demographic data.

A team approach ensures intensive support is being provided in a timely manner to address any gaps. The Principal shared that whilst progress is slow, the level of intensity in learning support and monitoring is high.

Due to students starting school with limited English, it is difficult for them to achieve at expected year level standards (SEA). There is evidence through site-based assessments, including PAT-R, PAT-M and Running Records, as well as formative assessments, that students are progressing each year, especially when individual students have low absence.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: How well are students achieving over time?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

School Community Partnerships: How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?

How are students achieving over time?

In his presentation, the Principal explained the significant change in the culture and focus on learning at Koonibba Aboriginal School. A high level of intent to improve student learning was evidenced throughout the review in conversations with staff and parents and through informal chats with students.

Through the collaborative support of the Principal, Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) support worker, Aboriginal Community Education Officer (ACEO) and members of the community, a strategic plan to improve perception, purpose and valuing for education has been actioned.

The Principal and staff explained when students commence at Koonibba Aboriginal School, they have limited exposure to Standard Australian English and, therefore, students are not prepared for school, resulting in the wide gap between what they are achieving and the DECD SEA. Staff shared the importance placed on intensive support and immersion to speak and think in Standard Australian English, whilst having mutual respect for students' native language. The Principal shared how cultural traditions are handed down orally, with limited adult-to-child reading at home. The school is working with the community to raise the value of reading and is providing books enabling students to have a collection at home. The Principal explained and shared the comprehensive data that showed the significant growth that students are making when regularly attending school. Whilst the progress is not recognised within the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement, it is observable through PAT-R, PAT-M and formative assessments.

The Principal shared the purpose of targeted professional learning following the analysis of student achievement data. Emphasis on Jolly Phonics in the Junior Primary years was pertinent, considering the majority of students coming to school with English as a 2nd or 3rd language. Staff have been purposeful in focusing on sight word recognition with growth being achieved across the site. In the early years class, six of the eleven students in Term 3 achieved word recognition of between 30 and 90 words, based on the 2015 results. All teachers are documenting individual achievement and attitude to learning in all areas of English. This ensures rigorous monitoring of students, which identifies both growth and lack of growth. Programs, tasks and activities are modified or extended depending on the needs of the student.

Running Records data provided evidence to enable staff to assign students to targeted groups aligned to the results. Professional development in Guided Reading supported the development of a consistent approach in implementation and moderation. The Principal led the drive to develop consistency with clear expectations of implementation and documentation.

Guided Reading sessions scheduled at the commencement of the day have been strategic in improving the number of students arriving at school on-time. Rigorous monitoring of implementation and moderation resulted in both growth in reading and levels of engagement. The school has high expectations and a belief that students can achieve reading levels to DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) over time. The passion and pride in student learning growth was evident in discussions with the Principal and staff. From the 2016 school-based data in Running Records, 7 students in Years 4 to 7 are achieving levels 29 and above. PAT-R data provides evidence of 9 students across Years 3 to 7 who are less than 10 points from achieving the DECD SEA.

Through an informal chat with one student, the Review Panel heard the difference learning to read has had on her self-esteem and learning achievement: "I used to be embarrassed reading because I didn't like it, but now I'm reading higher levels" and "I'm learning more because I can read the instructions".

The Principal provided documentation of the assessment protocols that are in place. He shared how individual and collective accountability ensures professional conversations regarding student growth are celebrated, whilst alternative actions are considered for students not achieving growth. Attendance and behaviour data is triangulated to address any underlying concerns. The ACEO and RSAS support worker work with students and families to remove social and emotional factors that may be hampering learning.

The Principal shared how data reviews happen regularly with staff to ensure student learning continues to be the priority. Staff commented on the importance and value they place on these opportunities to share student and class learning, growth, and concerns of students that resulted in referrals to the Partnership Support Services. The strong belief amongst staff that they can and are making a difference to every student was evident through the positive relationships they have with students and their families.

To sustain momentum and accountability, classroom observations are followed-up with constructive and purposeful feedback from the Principal. Organisational structures are in place to support teachers to learn and reflect on pedagogical approaches and assessment tasks that align with the needs of all students, whilst building their capacity. All staff shared the value of networking with staff from schools within the Partnership.

The Review Panel heard from parents of the positive communication they receive from staff: "you see teachers coming towards you and you think, what has he done now, but most times it's sharing something good" and "teachers come and visit to tell us good news".

The Review Panel heard the informal conversations that occur regularly around student learning. Collegial support was evidenced throughout the review, with staff sharing good practice, seeking advice or considerations, and celebrating with each other when students make growth.

The Principal shared concerns that he and staff had regarding the lack of student growth in maths over time. Despite their efforts, including trialling various strategies, the majority of students were not consolidating new learning. As a result, the Principal investigated a new program that has now been implemented across the school. Professional learning consultants shared and worked with staff to screen all students. After analysis, staff reflected on the significant number of students who didn't have the foundation skills in number. Changes to programming resulted in developing a range of activities targeted to students' level of understanding. Staff shared the positive impact this new program has had on attitude and growth. Following recent data analysis in PAT-M, 4 students between Years 3 and 7 have achieved the SEA, whilst 9 students are less than 10 points behind standard.

The Principal described the complexities of the remoteness of the school and gave the example of limited TRTs when he or a member of staff are absent. This requires staff to combine classes and responsibilities. Staff indicated the high levels of energy required each and every day to keep the momentum of positive growth happening. All commented on the support provided by the Principal. They all shared the high levels of accountability: "we work together and sometimes it's hard, especially when we get a new enrolment or when a student returns after a lengthy absence, but it's all worth it, when we see evidence of growth".

During walkthroughs students shared their work with the Review Panel. The passion and pride in their learning was evident, particularly when they shared their learning from the start of their workbooks to what they can currently do. One student was so proud of her learning that she approached the Review Officer at the lunch break and commented: "I used to be naughty but now I'm good, my teacher is so lovely and I now know lots more numbers" and "I don't like it when I can't come to school".

To embrace opportunities to deepen levels of understanding, students are creating their class resources, posters, number charts and scaffolding. Classes are well-organised with a balance of teacher resources and student work being displayed. Documentation, conversations and walkthroughs provide evidence that teachers are personalising learning to meet and extend student learning.

Direction 1

Persist in developing student ownership and pride in their learning through sharing personalised learning data and aligning improvement with the development of student-established goals.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The consistency of whole-school approaches between the three classes was evident, which has resulted in improvements across the curriculum. Whilst early in their careers, all teachers showed a great sense of collegiality and respect for each other. Staff commented: "together we can make a difference and it is important that we do work as a team". The Review Panel noted the persistence, passion and drive of the Principal and his leading of the curriculum.

The Principal leads the learning, with a strong emphasis being on improving literacy and numeracy levels across the school. Staff shared the increased interest in students being responsible for their learning: "students used to come in and wait to be told what to do, now they come in and get themselves organised" and "students know the expectations, and we don't have too many negative attitudes from the students who attend regularly".

Students are being immersed in Standard Australian English through wide and varied approaches every day, including shared reading, sight words, and reading scaffolds through picture stories, where students make up the story, and through reciting sentences. Engaging students in stories, especially those linked to their cultural heritage, is proving successful, as evident by the growth in Running Records and sight word recognition.

The collaboration between the RSAS support worker, ACEO and staff was witnessed regularly throughout the review. The ACEO supports teachers with advice in cultural activities and tasks. Her engagement with students is valued and recognised by parents and staff.

During the review, the Review Panel was invited to observe a maths lesson; clearly evident was the teacher's understanding of differentiation and observation to ensure student engagement. The level of questioning was dependent on each student's level of understanding. Student responses provided baseline evidence for the teacher to plan and program. The use of tonal expression and positive body language by staff provided the basis for effective communication. Short and concise instructions were provided to students to enable them to participate in learning, with support to take risks and confidence to actively participate.

The Principal and staff acknowledged the cultural respect and diversity of students and their families. Recognising the prior and cultural knowledge of students has enhanced the feelings of respect, belonging and pride at Koonibba Primary School. The intensive support for students in improving literacy and numeracy skills was evident in conversations with staff and through walkthroughs. Staff are providing a range of learning tasks and activities that make learning fun and engaging. The support for students' social and emotional wellbeing is as much of a priority as attendance and achievement, with all staff knowing where each child is at. Building relationships with students is imperative and evidenced in class learning time, recess and lunch breaks.

Throughout snap visits, the Review Panel witnessed the effective class management by teachers who were actively moving around to support student learning in a timely manner. Students were witnessed engaged in a range of tasks.

Staff are increasing students' curiosity through open-ended tasks to develop the skills of critical thinking, team-work and problem-solving. The Principal shared the early stages of engaging students in inquiry methodology. Initially, when he first introduced this new approach, students didn't know what to do and naturally expected him to tell them what to do. Whilst it took time, students started to explore the resources provided and worked to design a product. He shared the excitement being witnessed when they

started, but also the levels of frustration throughout, and how students recognised the need to work together. The level of engagement was high, as was the noise level, but the outcomes provided the catalyst to continue exploring the development of inquiry-based learning.

The Review Panel concluded that the narrow and deep focus on literacy and numeracy is making a difference. Teachers clearly have the focus on their own personal teaching goals to develop their skills, whilst at the same time, a genuine belief that the work being done at Koonibba Aboriginal School is making a difference.

With processes moving from functional to embedded, the next opportunity for growth would be to promote "a shared leadership" approach ensuring teachers are enriching their skills. Each teacher could lead a school priority, which would provide more flexibility for the Principal to engage in monitoring and reviewing at a whole-school level.

Staff acknowledge the wide gap between student learning at Koonibba Aboriginal School and the DECD SEA, and that it will take time to close the gap. The Principal acknowledged staff for their persistence, high expectations, commitment to a strategic and structured learning environment, and the difference they are making in student learning to get students to the SEA.

Whilst currently there is consistency in staffing, it is now pivotal to ensure systems are in place and well-documented so that the focus on learning continues despite any staff turnover.

Direction 2

Increase student voice in learning through developing staff understanding and confidence in inquiry-based learning.

How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?

Strategic approaches to improve the perception of education within the community were explained during the Principal's presentation. The result of this purposeful intent has been witnessed in improved learning growth, attitude of students and a reduction in inappropriate behaviours. Reference was made to the high and consistent expectations of students attending the school. The focus on positive engagement to increase the learning for all students is being supported by the community. The mutual respect between all stakeholders was witnessed throughout the review.

Attendance at Koonibba Aboriginal School is a high priority. The Principal shared the quantitative data analysis, which clearly shows that students attending school regularly are making significant growth in achievement. Staff also shared the higher levels of engagement in learning and reduction in inappropriate behaviours of students attending school. Daily monitoring ensures students who are not at school are proactively followed-up with home visits by the RSAS support worker, and/or ACEO, or Principal.

Proactive initiatives to improve attendance are being supported by the community through vouchers for students, and a food voucher to acknowledge parents for their support in ensuring their children are attending school. The Principal shared how he is gradually raising expectations before vouchers are presented. Currently, to receive a voucher, students must show regular attendance, improved academic growth and positive attitude to learning.

The RSAS support worker, ACEO and the Principal have developed a strong collegial respect for their individual and collective roles to improve attendance and student engagement. Over the past few years, the Principal and staff have worked tirelessly to change the initial parent resistance relating to coming into the school, to one where more parents are coming into the front office and filling in forms to explain their child's non-attendance, and being present at school events.

With more parents becoming involved with the school, there is an opportunity to raise the profile of the school as one focused on quality learning. High expectations start with the first impressions of the school, therefore, improvements to the front office to a welcoming and well-organised area with student work samples, photographs of student and teacher learning, and school priorities, would bring the pride and passion staff have in their students into the common area for parents and visitors to Koonibba Aboriginal

School.

The Principal and RSAS support worker explained that the main reason for low attendance in 2016 has been the significant number of deaths in the community or nearby communities, and the cultural obligations to attend funerals. The proactive tracking of non-attending students is done by the Principal contacting schools in the areas where the family is expected to be, speaking with ACEOs within the Partnership and listening to students. The clear message to parents is 'attendance matters no matter where you are residing and for how long'.

Throughout the review, evidence was sighted of the strong student-teacher relationships. The Principal shared the purpose 'to raise expectations to ensure the focus on building relationships is proactive with students, families and members of the community: "when we all work for the good of everyone, the community can see the positive changes we are making".

The pride in the positive changes that are happening is evident in many aspects. Self-review processes are rigorous and allow time to celebrate, whilst also identifying the next steps for the improvement agenda.

Direction 3

Strengthen the developing culture of the school by increasing parent and community voice to extend pride in the school in all aspects.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

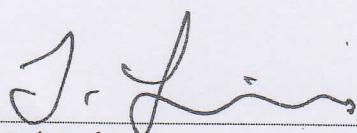
Koonibba Aboriginal School has built a collaborative culture with parents and the community. The learning is purposeful and connects students to real life experiences. "Ngura Yadu Nyindi-mararn": A Good Place for Learning.

We acknowledge the Far West Languages Centre who have kindly organised and provided us with the translation. We acknowledge their commitment to keeping Wirangu, Kokatha/Gugada and Mirning languages alive for the cultural significance.

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

1. Persist in developing student ownership and pride in their learning through sharing personalised learning data and aligning improvement with the development of student-established goals.
2. Increase student voice in learning through developing staff understanding and confidence in inquiry-based learning.
3. Strengthen the developing culture of the school by increasing parent and community voice to extend pride in the school in all aspects.

Based on the school's current performance, Koonibba Aboriginal School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

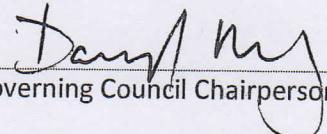


Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.



Wade Branford
PRINCIPAL
KOONIBBA ABORIGINAL SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson