

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Happy Valley Primary School

Conducted in May 2021



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 Katherine Holman, Review Officer of the Department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Rebecca Read, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Happy Valley Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 20kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 268 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 289. The local partnership is South Valley.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1030 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 22% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 1st year of tenure and a Deputy Principal.

There are 18 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 6 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Provide planned and regular opportunities for staff to engage in rigorous, cyclic self-review processes at a range of levels, including the SIP and PLTs, to track, monitor analyse, review and plan learning for all students.
- Direction 2** Develop and embed a whole-site approach to intellectual stretch and challenge for all students through planned learning across the curriculum in every classroom and strengthened by students setting their own learning goals and targets.
- Direction 3** Embed authentic student influence for learning across all learning areas and year levels, strengthened by the use of TfEL perception data in relation to how students learn, at the beginning and end of units of work.

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

Direction 1

Leadership developed the SIP in consultation with staff. Staff know the SIP and are implementing the actions and monitoring progress, as well as participating in regular reviews. Data is analysed as a whole school and at class and cohort levels, and goals were developed from this data.

Direction 2

Students and staff are using success criteria and rubrics to track and monitor their practice. Students have learning goals in learning dispositions, reading and maths. While this work commenced, and there is a good foundation, the school will need to continue to build their skills and knowledge in this area.

Direction 3

There were 4 Principals and 4 Deputy Principals in 4 years, and it was reported this direction was not addressed. The Deputy reported this had not been a focus for a while. The TfEL perception data was not followed through.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

Quality school improvement planning improves teaching practice and strengthens the impact on student learning. It requires schools to continuously monitor the impact of what and how they are teaching on student learning outcomes.

Since the last external review staff became more connected to the development of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) and involved in regular review and evaluation. Teachers, school service officers, students, parents, and the Governing Council reported they knew that improving reading is the focus of the SIP.

The school needs to be commended for the way they have maintained a focus on improving teaching and learning, despite frequent changes in leadership and directions over the last 4 years.

There are many strengths in each stage of the site improvement planning cycle. Staff are reflective and are using data to improve their practice. They collaborate to analyse the NAPLAN and PAT data and reported this process helped them understand the big picture and how gaps in learning achievement determine the focus of the SIP.

During the first term in 2021, staff analysed their class PAT data to identify learning needs of each individual student. Teachers conduct regular assessments at a classroom level and analyse the results to understand the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. In staff meeting, teachers were involved in building an understanding of what the challenge of practice looks like in their classroom. Actions are aligned to support achieving the goals of the SIP. Through ongoing review and evaluation, staff identified that evidence-based programs need to be implemented systematically to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. All performance development plans are aligned with the SIP.

A challenge for the school will be reviewing the current whole-school practices and identifying what is embedded and where to next. The school will need to continue to use rigorous processes to analyse and prioritise their work in the next cycle of site improvement planning, while maintaining the momentum of their current work.

Direction 1 Collaboratively analyse the data through review and evaluation to assess the impact on student achievement and prioritise the next goals for the SIP.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Staff are engaging in targeted professional learning and implementing evidence-based programs and pedagogies. They are reflective and highly collaborative.

There are consistent practices across the school to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary at all levels of schooling. Staff teams induct new staff members to ensure consistency is maintained.

Teachers told the panel they were developing student skills to improve phonics knowledge, reading comprehension and develop their vocabulary. Improvement in phonics knowledge is demonstrated in the data over time and students using these skills when reading unfamiliar texts. Students had a deep knowledge and understanding of the different types of comprehension questions. They were able to explain how they can locate the answers for literal and inferential comprehension questions in a range of texts. Students articulated their understanding of tier 1, 2 and 3 vocabulary levels and how improved vocabulary helped them understand what they were reading and how it could strengthen their writing. The panel saw evidence of scaffolding in the classroom to support students (eg “word walls” that identified the different tiers of vocabulary). There was some evidence of students applying their understanding of vocabulary in different contexts, eg oral language, writing, reading, and spelling. Strategies to improve understanding of comprehension and vocabulary are embedded consistently across the school.

Staff collaborate regularly in their own time to co-design learning tasks and improve teaching and learning. There are established processes in place to support students below the expected achievement levels, with some teachers using fluid groups to tailor their teaching to specific learning needs. Other teachers created classroom routines that allow small group explicit instruction. While there is evidence of some differentiation in learning, there is an opportunity to further develop task design that strengthens it and provides stretch and challenge for all learners.

Direction 2 Strengthen task design that allows multiple-entry points and provides stretch and challenge for all students.

Effective leadership

How effective are the school's professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capacity?

The focus on building staff capacity to deepen knowledge and understanding of teaching reading was seen in improved results, and staff and students clearly discussing their knowledge and understanding.

There is significant depth of knowledge in literacy across the school and an opportunity to build staff leadership from within. It is also essential to use the knowledge and skills acquired from participation in the recent Orbis course to provide instructional leadership and share practice with staff.

Practices currently being implemented across the school provide a foundation for greater student influence, improvement of the ownership and motivation of students in their learning.

Staff use a variety of strategies, including goal-setting, formative assessment, feedback, and success criteria communicated in rubrics for assessment, to build student ownership of their learning. All these strategies were seen in classrooms to varying degrees. While some students had learning goals, many were very broad, lacked clarity of how to achieve them or the processes to review and renew. Feedback is used by many teachers; however, effectiveness of how students use this to improve their learning could be strengthened.

This is difficult work and requires deep knowledge, ongoing commitment to trial, critique and modify to develop mastery for teachers and students. There are opportunities to develop staff understanding of the 'line of sight' between the use of assessment, measuring progress against success criteria and providing feedback to students to set goals for improvement. The process is continuous, just-in-time, and involves review and renewal as students demonstrate mastery of a skill or concept. It would support staff to make connections between the elements to increase student ownership and engagement in their learning.

Direction 3 Further develop staff understanding of using assessment for goal-setting review and renewal in an ongoing process to increase student ownership for their learning improvement.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Staff, students and parents of Happy Valley Primary School have a strong sense of community. Through the external review process, parents shared their support towards the school's stability and appointment of a Principal for more than 1 year. They appreciate increased visibility and access to the leadership team, more regular communication, additional support and opportunities for their children, as well as staff commitment. Staff are extremely collaborative and supportive of each other and students. They reflect on their practice and how it impacts achievement, while being committed to improving student learning outcomes.

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

- Direction 1 Collaboratively analyse the data through review and evaluation to assess the impact on student achievement and prioritise the next goals for the SIP.**
- Direction 2 Strengthen task design that allows multiple-entry points and provides stretch and challenge for all students.**
- Direction 3 Further develop staff understanding of using assessment for goal-setting review and renewal in an ongoing process to increase student ownership for their learning improvement.**

Based on the school's current performance, Happy Valley Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Paul Taylor
Principal
Happy Valley Primary School



Michael Field
Governing Council Chairperson

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 2019, 72% of year 1 and 74% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 79% of year 3 students, 81% of year 5 students and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, and for years 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 55% of year 3, 32% of year 5, and 35% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 64%, or 9 out of 14 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 50%, or 5 out of 10 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of year 3 students, 78% of year 5 students and 91% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents little or no change, and for year 7 an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 13% of year 3, 14% of year 5 and 35% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For years 3 and 5, this result represents little or no change, and for year 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 37%, or 3 out of 8 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 87%, or 7 out of 8 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.