

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Mundulla Primary School**

Conducted in June 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 Alison Lynch, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Carolyn Clinton, Review Principal.

## School context

Mundulla Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 278kms south-east of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Tatiara/Wrattonbully Partnership. Enrolment in 2018 is 66 students, and has been steady over the last 5 years. The school is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage, and the school's ICSEA score is 966.

The school population includes 4 Aboriginal students, 4 students with a disability, 23% of families eligible for School Card assistance, no students of EALD background, and 2 children in care.

There are 3 composite classes:

- foundation/years 1/2
- years 3/4/5, and
- years 5/6/7.

The students are divided daily into 4 groups of 2 year levels for maths.

The school leadership team consists of an acting principal (0.7FTE) for the year. There are 3.4FTE teachers, including 2 Step 9 teachers.

## 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:

**Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

**Effective Teaching:** How effectively are teachers using the department's pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?

**Improvement Agenda:** To what extent does the school monitor student achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?

### To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Students expressed strong connection and pride in the school, were motivated to learn and generally enjoyed coming to school. In response to questions from the External School Review (ESR) panel, students shared their views and understanding about teaching and learning, confidently and openly.

The school's data shows a decline in students achieving the Standard of Education Achievement (SEA) and the higher bands as they progress through the school from year 3 to 7 in reading and numeracy.

Intervention programs for verified students, and those identified through site data, are provided through intensive and ongoing SSO support. PreLit is accessed by foundation students; Toe By Toe and QuickSmart for primary year levels; and some comprehension support programs for years 3 to 7 students. The next

step for the school is to ensure all students are challenged and supported to improve their learning outcomes. The school is advised to consider targeting intervention programs towards those in the early years to address the declining reading results and reduce the need for later interventions.

In a survey completed during the review, teachers reflected on what they would like to have done better in their planning, teaching and assessing of a recent unit of work. They identified stretch and challenge, providing individual assessment tasks, different entry points and ensuring the students know the 'what' and 'why' of their learning as areas for further development.

Teachers were able to explain what intellectual stretch and challenge is, and looks like, in the classroom, with responses including:

- achieving an outcome in an unfamiliar task
- students making connections and using prior knowledge in new situations, and
- open-ended questioning.

In a survey conducted during the review, all teachers rated their ability at a medium level to create opportunities to stretch students' thinking to enable them to think deeply about the topic. Most students interviewed across the school, rated the learning they were exposed to as either 'just right' or 'too easy'. Some students provided effort-based/behavioural strategies to move their learning forward ("go ahead and come back" and "try a different way"), but most would ask the teacher for help. When asked what they do when the work was too easy, all students said that they would "just do it". Students commented that they all did the same work in their class, except in spelling, where groups received different word lists from their teacher. There were limited opportunities provided to extend students' thinking and learning, including using an additional worksheet, or helping others when finishing early.

Opportunities for students to engage in challenging learning, relevant to each child's ability, were limited due to the prevalence of whole-class activities and worksheets. When asked if they had a say in what and how they learned, all students interviewed responded that there was no opportunity to be involved in decisions about their learning. One student indicated that he told his teacher he would like to have a graphic novel as the class novel, but did not know if this would happen.

Student engagement is supported through a broad range of leadership opportunities available, including school and house captains and class representatives on the student action team (SAT). Students have previously been involved in the Youth Environment Leadership Program, fundraising for the school, community and charities, and organising events within the school. Parents are appreciative of the opportunities for leadership available in the small school setting. The school is well-placed to expand on this through engaging all students in influencing the learning. It is important that students are able to have some choice in the direction of the curriculum, and that teachers design tasks to engage students and build on their interests, prior knowledge and skills. Developing and embedding authentic student influence for learning across all learning areas and all year levels will enable students to become more independent and powerful learners. Leadership acknowledged that student participation and opportunities to influence their learning are limited, and an area the school needs to focus on.

Students showed a heavy reliance on seeking help from a teacher when faced with difficulties in their learning or social conflicts. Students stated that they only spoke with their teacher about their learning if they needed help during a lesson, usually by raising their hand and waiting until the teacher was available. A school-wide focus on powerful learner and growth mindset language would provide students with the understanding and strategies to 'have a go' at solving problems themselves. This language was not evident in conversations with students or staff.

When asked to provide examples of formative and summative assessments used to inform and refine their planning, teachers responded only with a range of summative and diagnostic assessments. Formative assessments inform both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. Using formative assessments during the lesson provides information to teachers on adjusting the teaching and learning as it happens, thus supporting all students to be challenged. A planned staff meeting and partnership pupil free day later this year will assist teachers in building their understanding and use of formative assessments and moderation. It should be the catalyst for further professional learning.

Several teachers identified the use of Australian Curriculum (AC) literacy and numeracy progressions within their planning. These progressions could be used to support the development of targeted teaching and learning programs and to collaboratively set clear learning goals for individual students. Involving students in identifying, setting and working towards achieving aspirational goals, will provide shared ownership and responsibility for students' own learning. Students will need support to plan, monitor and assess their progress towards their targets. The use of SMARTAR goal-setting practices will assist both teachers and students in identifying areas for development and the strategies needed.

While student numbers in each year level are low and 3 year levels are accommodated in each class, it is not dissimilar to other mainstream classes where teachers are required to differentiate the learning to meet the varying needs, abilities and year level curriculum across all learning areas. The panel saw limited examples of differentiation in classrooms. Staff have engaged in professional learning on task design using the Backwards by Design process with the Senior Leader, Learning Improvement Planning (SLLIP) officer.

Further work on transforming tasks through the department's Learning Design and Moderation strategy will support teachers to move away from a reliance on worksheets or textbooks, particularly in maths. Support for staff to work together and with teachers from nearby schools, to design challenging tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points across all areas of learning, will enable students to achieve at a higher level and also provide opportunities for teachers to engage in moderation processes. This will support and accommodate the diverse learning needs within each class and provide opportunities for students to display their learning at a higher level.

#### **Direction 1**

**Build teacher capacity to design and implement learning experiences with multiple entry and exit points to stretch and challenge all students, supported through further professional learning and the implementation of the Learning Design and Moderation strategy.**

### **How effectively are teachers using the department's pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?**

The SA Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework identifies the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and aims to develop deeper engagement in learning for improved student achievement. Australian Curriculum (AC) provides teachers with the 'what', and the TfEL with the 'how' of teaching and learning, through learning design for improved learner engagement and achievement.

The TfEL compass has been used by 2 teachers involved in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) 500 project to provide information to teachers of foundation to year 2 students about the work being undertaken. This could be expanded to include the use of the TfEL Review Tools with all students to provide feedback about the teaching and its impact on student learning. Feedback from

students should provide teachers with opportunities to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students.

Students at Mundulla Primary School are open to feedback, and reported receiving marks in tests and through conversations with teachers, with a focus on positive comments. In a survey conducted during the review, 1 teacher indicated that the feedback provided to students to help them improve was at a medium level, while the other 3 teachers identified that feedback they provided to students to 'help them know how to improve' was at a high level. Student workbooks show some marking of student work with ticks, spelling and punctuation corrections, and comments such as 'well done', 'great recount' and 'neat writing'. One teacher is using pre and post-testing to measure new learning. Rubrics for self and peer assessment are another means of providing feedback. Effective feedback that identifies what students are doing well and the areas for improvement allows students to take greater ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

Three of the 4 teachers indicated in the survey that lesson intentions and success criteria provided were clear and understood by students. However, students responded that these were not discussed in lessons, and the panel did not see any evidence of this in classrooms. While learning intentions may be clear to the teacher, it is vital that this is communicated both verbally and in writing to students and referenced throughout the lesson. When teachers discuss and collaboratively develop the success criteria with their students, the impact on the learning is heightened.

The school's collaboratively developed SIP and literacy agreement will be further strengthened by the review of current targets to reflect expected growth for all students. The literacy agreement outlines a comprehensive assessment data schedule and year levels identified for explicit genre teaching. It continues to be modified as new programs, practices and targets are explored. The school has begun work on developing common agreements and assessment practices in numeracy. Resourcing an additional class for daily maths lessons has enabled smaller class sizes and a reduction in the range of year levels.

With the acting principal having undertaken training in assessing the accreditation of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers, it is imperative that this knowledge and understanding of quality teaching is used to further improve the pedagogy and practices of teachers and SSOs. Teachers would benefit from regular, planned time to reflect on their teaching and the impact on student learning, share good practice and resources and co-plan units of work as part of staff meeting structures. The TfEL framework and the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers resources could be used to support this ongoing improvement focus.

#### **Direction 2**

**Increase student influence in their learning through individual goal-setting, effective two-way feedback, and the collaborative development and sharing of lesson intentions and success criteria, as described through the TfEL framework.**

### **To what extent does the school monitor student achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?**

All schools are responsible for the continual self-review of the systems and structures they have in place. These include the site improvement plan (SIP), intervention and student support, performance management and professional learning. It is important that this is a collective, data-driven, consultative process, in order to monitor progress throughout the year and to inform future directions.

The current review practice involves a pupil free day to analyse individual student data during term 4. Teachers and curriculum school services officers (SSOs) share the data and evidence gathered throughout the year to identify students who need learning support for the following year. The effectiveness of current intervention programs and strategies is discussed and improvements determined. The SIP is also reviewed at this time against the targets and modifications made to the plan.

The school collects multiple datasets, including NAPLAN, PAT and Running Records. The data management system (MARKIT) supports this, with teachers having ownership and access to individual student data. It is important to analyse the data and evidence available for each student to determine next steps in learning. Teachers can then identify the areas to focus on and set improvement goals. Ongoing collaborative monitoring of progress towards these learning goals is necessary to ensure each child's needs are being met and the teaching and learning is adapted for success and challenge.

The report format used to inform and involve parents in their child's learning is comprehensive with comments specific to each student, providing some next steps for learning.

All staff with a responsibility for student learning are involved in the design, development and implementation of the SIP. The school can develop datasets that show student achievement and growth over time, to inform next steps and match targeted actions to individual students. Targets set within the SIP need to be measurable and aligned to individual student growth. By relating the data to individual students, teachers are able to reflect on how they can adapt their teaching to meet the needs of each student. It is important that the data collected has a distinct purpose and is used as a teaching resource, not simply for identifying students requiring intervention support or grouping purposes.

A focus on comprehension strategies, including inference and fluency, was identified in the 2017 review day, with resources allocated for SSO support in the primary years. The Fountis and Pinnell testing resource was purchased and collection of reading data standardised throughout the school. The school is commended for identifying the need and providing training for all staff, in the week before school started in 2018, and on taking and using Running Records to ensure consistency of practice across all year levels. Jolly Phonics has been introduced in the early years to replace Letterland, which had been used for a number of years. An information session on Jolly Phonics is planned for parents. Regular ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of these programs is essential to ensure improved outcomes for all students.

The school is well-placed to develop a whole-school approach to regularly reviewing and monitoring data and evidence to inform the next steps for learning for every child. The ongoing review of whole-school initiatives should be linked to the SIP, with accountability reinforced through performance management practices and staff meetings. It is important to ensure self-review processes result in clarity of responsibilities and expectations, providing time and support so that new initiatives become embedded into the learning culture. Programs to accelerate the learning for all students should be designed in all learning areas. Through regular and strategic self-review processes the school will be able to determine and respond to the impact that programs and strategies have on teacher practice and student learning.

### **Direction 3**

**Collaboratively develop, implement and embed an agreed, regular and rigorous self-review cycle to determine the impact of programs and strategies on individual student learning.**

## **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 Mundulla Primary School.

Students and parents appreciate the relationships that staff develop with students over time and the school's involvement and links with the community. Parents also identified the inclusive and respectful interactions between students of all ages as a positive attribute. Learning spaces are calm and settled, and recognised by students as supporting their learning.

The school has strong links with the Mundulla community, including involvement in fundraising and event planning. Students provided a defibrillator for the town through fundraising and grant applications with St John Ambulance Australia, providing first aid sessions for the school and community. Donations have also been made to the Country Fire Service and various charities. Involvement in environmental projects has seen the introduction of a recycling and composting program, a bush tucker garden and participation in the grey box weed program.

The school has implemented the MYTERN and Rock and Water programs in response to recent behaviour concerns, to build student resilience and emotional responsibility.



## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Mundulla Primary School uses student achievement data and other evidence to inform decisions and actions and identify students requiring additional targeted interventions.

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

1. Build teacher capacity to design and implement learning experiences with multiple entry and exit points to stretch and challenge all students, supported through further professional learning and the implementation of the Learning Design and Moderation strategy.
2. Increase student influence in their learning through individual goal-setting, effective two-way feedback and the collaborative development and sharing of lesson intentions and success criteria, as described through the TfEL framework.
3. Collaboratively develop, implement and embed an agreed, regular and rigorous self-review cycle to determine the impact of programs and strategies on individual student learning.

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



---

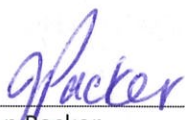
Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



---

Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS

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



---

Joann Packer  
PRINCIPAL  
MUNDULLA PRIMARY SCHOOL



---

Governing Council Chairperson

## Appendix 1

### Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department 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 90.5%.

## Appendix 2

### School performance overview

The external school review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the department's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Mundulla Primary School over the years 2014 to 2017. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

#### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2014 and 2017, 61% of year 1 and 59% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 72% of year 3 students, 70% of year 5 students, and 77% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 38% of year 3, 30% of year 5, and 14% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading.

Between 2014 and 2017, 80% (4 of 5) of students were retained in the higher bands in NAPLAN reading from year 3 to 5.

#### Numeracy

Between 2014 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students, 73% of year 5 students, and 81% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 27% of year 3, 23% of year 5 and 23% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy.

Between 2014 and 2017, 67% (2 of 3) of students were retained in the higher bands in NAPLAN numeracy from year 3 to 5.