

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

On-track evaluation report for Barmera Primary School

One-year return conducted in February 2019



On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3-year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the ESR report is available on the school website.

The external school review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

In some cases, when the review panel identifies limited achievement and growth, together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school is advised that they will be visited again in 1 rather than 3 years' time (1-year return).

Schools with a 1-year return are assisted by the education director and other department staff to receive additional coordinated and targeted support. This intervention is focussed on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve improved student learning results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement.

Following intervention, which occurs for 12-15 months after the ESR, a review panel conducts an on-track evaluation (and produces an on-track evaluation report) to determine the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school improvement plan (SIP) is the main document used to inform the on-track evaluation (OTE).

This OTE visit was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate, and David Pitt, Review Principal.

The OTE report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Barmera Primary School in November 2017.

Directions from the External School Review report November, 2017.

- Direction 1** All staff members engage in, and commit to, culture building and a growth mindset to develop a collaborative and learning focused improvement culture.
- Direction 2** Review the student behaviour management policy and procedures, with a focus on building classroom management and restorative practices and student engagement, underpinned by greater communication and consultation with all stakeholders.
- Direction 3** Develop and improve pedagogical practices to provide greater differentiation and targeted support for students, especially in the learning and teaching of reading.
- Direction 4** Refine the data collection procedures and build teachers' capacity to use the achievement and engagement data for more targeted planning and tracking of progress for improvement.

Additional information about the school context

The principal advised that the leadership team has undergone considerable change since the ESR in 2017. In 2019 the former wellbeing leader was appointed as the deputy principal and an experienced former principal has been appointed as the wellbeing leader. A member of staff is released 0.2FTE and works with staff as the Visible Learning Growth impact coach with a focus on working with teachers to embed effective reading strategies.

There have also been a range of teacher staffing changes including the appointment of two early career teachers, and a new year 6/7 teacher. Changes have also occurred in the following roles: the yr2/3 class, Health and PE, and the Aboriginal Education teacher. The junior primary team has different R/1 teachers. There have been minimal changes in the SSO staff.

Development of a priority improvement plan/school improvement plan

The principal has advised that the development of the PIP was undertaken in consultation with both the education director (ED) and the principal consultant (PC). Once developed, the PIP was discussed with staff and refined through meetings with the ED and the PC and a face-to-face meeting with the director of the Review, Improvement and Accountability (RIA) directorate.

The PIP was sent to the executive director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools in term 1, 2018.

The PIP was monitored via monthly face-to-face meetings with the PC where commitments to action were developed in priority order and reported on by the principal monthly. Steps completed for the PIP were discussed, reflected on and recorded with staff each term. New commitments to action were recorded with staff at the end of each term.

The principal acknowledged the continued support from the ED and the PC in relation to the regular 'check-in' and commitment to action meetings. The principal reported that she felt highly supported at all stages of the OTE process.

Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

The principal advised that strategic support was provided on a range of levels, including support from a project officer in the Learning Improvement division (LID). The project officer worked with staff in professional learning communities three times each term in the following areas: guided reading, reciprocal teaching and the analysis of PAT-M and PAT-R data and resources. The principal stated that the project officer had been a wonderful resource in upskilling the teaching staff.

The PC worked closely with the principal and staff in the initial stages to develop a positive, learning focused school culture. The principal and the PC led meetings with staff on what determines a positive school environment and on the development of a strong school culture. The PC subsequently worked with the principal on monitoring the development of the school culture via surveys with the staff.

The principal noted that the ED worked closely to support the principal in clarifying the directions for staff during the initial stages of the PIP implementation and this support was highly valued.

Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the priority improvement plan

Direction 1 All staff members engage in, and commit to, culture building and a growth mindset to develop a culture of collaborative and learning focused improvement culture.

On-track evidence

- Professional learning and allocated staff meetings were focused on cultural competencies and the development of a collaborative learning culture at Barmera Primary School. Staff reported to the panel that staff meetings focused on rebuilding the culture of the school had been very supportive and effective and had resulted in the development and implementation of agreed proactive structures and processes that are now in place;
- It was reported that reviewing the school values at the beginning of the school year with all staff including SSOs on what makes a strong culture resulted in staff identifying that they were 'on the same page' and that this was not a perception that had been held previously;
- Professional learning communities were implemented with a focus on expectations and agreed ways of working when collaborating with others. All staff reported that the implementation of professional learning communities, the changed structure of staff meetings and closer collaboration with colleagues were significant factors in building strong culture for all staff;
- Expectations were documented and reviewed within professional learning communities with an additional focus on a commitment to action at the end of each meeting;
- Professional learning communities were framed by the inclusion of attitudes and beliefs which were collaboratively established and now operate three times each term in weeks 3, 6 and 9;
- It was noted by the panel that the cohesive leadership team established at the beginning of 2019 had been a pivotal factor in creating a positive and collaborative culture across the school;
- Staff reported that peers returning from professional learning are now sharing and supporting each other, thus building their personal capacity and that of their peers;
- The principal reported that a culture survey undertaken in 2018 indicated that visibility and communication from leadership required significant improvement. Surveys with four or five items related to improved culture have been conducted at strategic intervals. These surveys have

indicated consistent improvement in the development of a collaborative and learning-focused culture, which was strongly affirmed by staff during the OTE;

- Staff reported that the professional learning communities created time for staff collaboration and became the lever for developing an inclusive school culture and that lunchtimes were altered to allow an extended learning focus.

Review panel evaluation

The principal reported that the first direction relating to improved culture impacted on every other direction. Staff including SSOs acknowledged that progress in a collaborative learning-focused culture was evident across the site. The next challenge is to build on and embed the current work. Structures and processes are now in place for ongoing professional collaboration and, as such, the school is well placed to successfully embed and extend the progress thus far.

Direction 2 Review the student behaviour management policy and procedures with a focus on building classroom management restorative practices and student engagement that is underpinned by greater communication and consultation with all stake holders.

On-track evidence

- Leadership reviewed the school behaviour policy and procedures with reference to staff perceptions of inconsistent responses and a lack of communication from leadership in managing student behaviour and subsequent consequences for inappropriate behaviours;
- The majority of staff have engaged in professional learning in restorative justice practices and principles. Three staff were trained in the 'Berry Street' educational model. These staff have the responsibility to lead professional learning in the development of self-regulation strategies. Staff reported that work in this area has changed the way the school deals with behaviour. There is now a common language and consistent processes that operate across the site;
- Staff reported that behaviour is now managed as it happens, with lines of students no longer observed in the front office. It was noted that the common language and team approach to effective student behaviour is also becoming more consistent in the yard;
- Leadership noted that students are now developing their ability to self-regulate and are involved in developing their own safety focus plans;
- Staff reported that expectations relating to positive student behaviour have increased. It was also noted that leadership are now more visible in classrooms, with a focus on sharing learning rather than addressing inappropriate behaviours;
- Students interviewed during the OTE overwhelmingly reported that student behaviour has improved across the school. Students also reported that there are now less disruptions to their learning;
- Parents and governing council members are kept informed of the school progress at regular intervals through a variety of modes including phone calls, class 'Dojo' and social media platforms. It was also noted that parent contact is focused on positive interactions and celebrating success. It was reported that classroom clips have been deeply appreciated by the community;
- Staff reported that students have also been consulted in developing the 'non-negotiable' behaviours. Individual behaviour agreements are in the process of being developed with the wellbeing leader as required.

Review panel evaluation

The school has shown clear evidence of strategic, negotiated processes and practices to improve student behaviour management across the site. The cohesive, consultative approach of the leadership team has ensured that staff have been supported in strengthening their personal capacity and the capacity of students to develop proactive behaviour management processes and procedures across the site. Staff identified that while there was further work to be undertaken, they were confident that the work completed thus far has provided foundations for embedding next steps. Sharing this progress with the governing council and parents has strengthened communication and consultation with all stakeholders. The school is now well placed to further develop, sustain and embed achieved progress.

Direction 3

Develop and improve pedagogical practices to provide greater differentiation and targeted support for students, especially in the learning and teaching of reading.

On-track evidence

- The school has an impact coach aligned to the school's commitment as an integral component of the school 'visible learning' commitments. The school focus is on reading, staff are supported by the impact coach through one-to-one observations, coaching, modelling and demonstrations and working with staff learning groups;
- With the support of the impact coach the school has established reading groups based in bands which incorporate up to three levels. Guided reading is the focus for the differentiated reading groups. The formation of each group is informed by reading and lexile levels and PAT-R;
- The school has collaboratively developed and documented core beliefs, principles and practices that underpin the teaching of reading across the site, this work has subsequently informed the site reading agreement;
- Draft reading documents that are aligned to bands of schooling and based on the whole school agreement are currently in draft form;
- It was reported that reading is highly valued across the site. The impact coach has supported staff to develop consistent understandings and processes in the following aspects: what good readers do, ensuring that students have personal reading goals, explicit teaching of reading strategies, supporting students to articulate and share the strategies they are using and how they can support their peers;
- The SIP indicates that the integration of guided and reciprocal teaching will occur four times each week for years 3 to 5 teachers;
- Peer observations and feedback in guided and reciprocal readings for teachers of years 3 to 5 are planned for terms 2 and 3; this work will be further consolidated through the professional learning community meetings;
- The SIP identified that the staff meeting in week 9 of each term is to be dedicated to discussing learning progress and plan for further interventions in reading;
- The SIP indicates that PLCs in weeks 3, 6 and 9 of terms one and two will be facilitated by the growth impact coach to implement a mini cycle with a focus on the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies with years 5 to 7 teachers;
- Targeted support and differentiation is also provided through the following intervention programs: Initialit, MiniLit, MultiLit and quicksmart.

Review panel evaluation

The panel was provided with evidence of detailed, negotiated planning to improve pedagogical practices across the school. The whole school focus on reading combined with the discreet indicators for

improvement have provided transparency and consistency across the site to improve pedagogical practices. A reading agreement has been developed. The strategic alignment with the SIP, PLCs and staff meetings will ensure that this work is everyone's business. Next steps for the school will be to sustain and embed effective pedagogical practices that provide ongoing differentiation across a range of learning areas.

Direction 4

Refine the data collection procedures and build teachers' capacity to use achievement and engagement data for more targeted planning and tracking progress for improvement.

On-track evidence

- The staff have refined the number of assessments and developed common understandings of using assessments to inform instruction, and planning;
- Development of a whole school assessment and reporting schedule aligned against the following parameters: purpose, process and responsibilities;
- Responsibilities for all staff are clearly outlined and are inclusive of: leadership, teachers, data administrator, admin support staff and SSOs;
- Assessment and reporting schedules for each term have been established against the following criteria: literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, reporting and other (includes census collection, PLC and student learning data to inform planning);
- Timelines are clearly identified with explicit markers for distribution, collection and entering of data onto the data platform;
- The reporting and assessment schedule has been revised and updated. It was also noted that the reporting and assessment schedule was evolving and that 'InitialLit' now needed to be included in the schedule;
- Working with the LID project officer relating to the analysis and use of the PAT-R data had resulted in staff now being confident to locate and use the data;
- Teachers reported that at the previous PLC reading data was shared and it was noted that teachers were now confident to have conversations relating to the growth data for the students in their care;
- Staff provided examples of targeted planning and tracking progress for improvement; a recent phonics check highlighted the need for a consistent approach to decoding. Staff determined that this will be supported via initial lit screening to collaboratively determine next steps;
- The LID project officer will continue to support the reading PLCs with the challenge of practice focused on growth data;
- The school has developed a data platform and discussions with staff indicated that they would appreciate opportunities to refine the platform to support student achievement and teacher planning from the perspective of the teacher.

Review panel evaluation

The school has worked assiduously to develop consensus within and across classes in the area of valued assessments. Work in this area has resulted in all staff displaying common understandings, processes and practices in using data to inform practice across the site. The refinement of the current data platform will further strengthen the school's work in this area. Staff, during interviews, indicated their commitment to embed processes where all staff are confident in using a range of data sets to inform planning at individual and cohort levels. The school is well placed to embed targeted planning and tracking progress for improvement.

Outcomes of the on-track evaluation

Based on the evidence provided, Barmera Primary School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions.

The school's planning processes are evidence-based and targeted, teachers are analysing feedback and assessment data to differentiate instruction. Effective leadership has provided strategic direction and planning. The school has worked strategically and collaboratively to provide effective conditions for student learning.

The principal will continue to work with the education director to implement the OTE key actions.

Based on current performance Barmera Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

Natasha Hefford
PRINCIPAL
BARMERA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson