Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Barmera Primary School

Conducted in June 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 Julie Bishop , Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Susan Copeland, 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

Barmera Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 220kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 181. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 225. The local partnership is Berri and Barmera.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 934 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 20% Aboriginal students, 10.5% students with disabilities, 14% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 40% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 1st year of tenure commencing in term 2 2021, a Deputy Principal in their 1st year of tenure commencing in term 2 2021, and a student wellbeing leader in their 1st year of tenure.

There are 14 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career, 1 in first term at Barmera and 5 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **All staff members engage in, and commit to, culture building and a growth mind set 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.**

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

Direction 1: Collaborative and learning-focused improvement culture: professional learning teams (PLTs) implemented in weeks 3, 6 and 9 in 2019/20 and weeks 5 and 10 2020 to analyse data and set interventions. Impact includes high levels of collegiality, collective efficacy, using Essential Assessment in determining next steps.

Direction 2: Building classroom management with restorative practices and student engagement: all staff currently training in the Berry Street trauma-informed education model. Most staff trained in Restorative Justice approach.

Direction 3: Developed and improved pedagogical practices to provide targeted support, particularly in reading. Evidence-based practices of InitiaLit, guided reading and reciprocal teaching implemented school-wide at least 4 times a week. Professional learning teams focus in weeks 3, 6 and 9 is on the challenge of teaching practice in reading and numeracy.

Direction 4: Agreed datasets identified and embedded within the assessment and reporting schedule. Staff meeting (weeks 4 to 8) and PLT time (weeks 5 to 10) organised for data analysis and focus on teacher and school services officer interventions, including differentiation and small groups with multiple entry and exit points.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

All staff acknowledge collective responsibility for the implementation of the identified school improvement goals. Teachers report that the leadership team oversees processes used to develop, track, and review school improvement planning. Teachers are given regular, planned opportunities to collaboratively monitor the progress and impact of the school improvement plan (SIP). Staff report that the SIP is adjusted as required.

The SIP has a narrow focus to retain and improve the number of students in the higher bands in reading, and numeracy at years 5 and 7. The challenges of practice include: developing a common, evidence-based approach to extend vocabulary through open-ended questioning in reciprocal reading, and the teaching of multiplicative thinking to increase numeracy outcomes.

Teachers identified that the following strategies had a significant impact on improving reading:

- development of an agreed whole-school approach to guided and reciprocal reading occurring 4 days each week
- non-negotiable implementation of reading goals for every student
- collaborative analysis of 'big' and 'little' data eg, NAPLAN and InitiaLit.

Strategies to improve student achievement in numeracy included:

- implementation of math vocabulary-focused word walls in every classroom
- numeracy flash cards
- differentiated maths groups based on analysis of student learning data.

Teachers identified a range of high-yield strategies that had significant impact across the school, including, but not limited to the following:

- implementation of a common language and approach to learning
- working together in professional learning teams
- Individual Learning Plans.

The school has a comprehensive and strategic approach to ongoing school improvement planning. The school is well placed to provide regular, organised time to share effective practices in reading and numeracy. This can be enhanced through the implementation of whole site walkthroughs. Teachers sharing their practice will further support effective differentiation, to ensure the diverse range of learning levels within each class are accommodated.

Direction 1   **To implement and sustain regular, planned opportunities to share effective practices in numeracy and reading via implementation of whole-school walkthroughs.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

During the external school review, staff reflected on pedagogical practices in a recent unit of work. Analysis of their responses included the following:

- 75% of staff identified that learning intentions were achieved to a high extent
- 46% of staff said students understood the learning intentions to some degree
- 54% of students said they understood success criteria to a high extent
- 6% of students said they   understood success criteria to some extent.

Developing common understandings and practices in the implementation and review of learning intentions and success criteria will strengthen teaching and learning across the school. Revisiting learning intentions and success criteria at the end of the lesson will reinforce and sustain learning. Scaffolding the co-construction of learning intentions and success criteria with students is an area for further consideration.

Learning goals are embedded across the school. Every student has maths, English, and wellbeing goals. Staff reported that students work with teachers to set their personal goals and review their progress as a continual process. Reading goals are self-driven and aligned to the following parameters: clarify, question, predict and summarise. Maths learning goals are reviewed on a weekly basis. All students demonstrated a commitment and understanding of the purpose of learning goals to strengthen their learning.

A pedagogical survey undertaken during the review showed that only 6% of staff provided opportunities for students to be stretched in their learning to a high extent. Staff acknowledged that designing and differentiating learning for all students was an area for further development.

The school is well-positioned to provide regular, planned opportunities to share effective practices in numeracy and reading. Several teachers identified the need to ensure that higher-band students are offered challenging learning options to help them display learning at higher levels. Strengthening differentiation to ensure that all students have continuing opportunities to consistently demonstrate learning at higher levels is significant work for the school to undertake.

Direction 2   **Strengthen and embed effective differentiation to ensure that all students have ongoing opportunities to consistently demonstrate learning at higher levels.**

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

The panel was provided with comprehensive evidence of processes used to analyse assessment and feedback data to inform curriculum planning and teaching. Staff reported that formative assessment processes were consistently used to refine and strengthen teaching at individual, group and class levels, with specific reference to maths and reading.

The school explored a range of assessments to strengthen the analysis of maths data, including an online assessment tool, aligned to the Australian Curriculum. The maths assessment delivers pre- and post-tests and sets tasks to review miscues. Students are subsequently presented with instant feedback. Staff also mentioned the following:

- pre- and post-testing is now consistently used across the school
- data from assessments is used to determine group structures
- data supports students to accurately identify next steps in learning at a deeper level.

Teachers, when reflecting on reading assessments, reported the following datasets in use:

- reading levels and Lexiles
- Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R)
- working in guided and reciprocal reading groups
- a targeted reading goal for each reading group.

Staff presented evidence of various assessment processes used to determine learning needs, ie students above, at and below the standard of educational achievement (SEA). Staff acknowledged the need to strengthen and sustain higher-band achievement in reading, writing and numeracy.

A strong collective commitment from staff to embed differentiated curriculum planning and instruction was visible. The school is well-placed to implement whole-school understandings in developing and applying effective pedagogies that support the triangulation of data to inform learning.

Moderation is an essential part of ensuring integrity in assessment tasks where teachers share, develop and embed consistent understandings of expected curriculum levels of student achievement and progress. It supports teachers to compare their own judgements, confirm or adjust them. Moderation processes strengthen opportunities for students to consistently display learning at higher levels.

Direction 3   **Collaboratively develop and embed common understandings and practices in effective moderation across year levels and learning areas.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The school is to be commended for the comprehensive approach to ongoing improvement. Staff and leaders worked collaboratively to ensure that students' learning, and social and emotional needs are accommodated. The panel noted a strong commitment to ensuring that every student is given multiple avenues to succeed and extend themselves in their learning.

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

Direction 1   **To implement and sustain regular, planned opportunities to share effective practices in numeracy and reading via implementation of whole-school walkthroughs.**

Direction 2   **Strengthen and embed effective differentiation to ensure that all students have ongoing opportunities to consistently demonstrate learning at higher levels.**

Direction 3   **Collaboratively develop and embed common understandings and practices in effective moderation across year levels and learning areas.**

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

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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, 73% of year 1 and 81% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. These results represent little or no improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 74% of year 5 students and 84% of year 7 students, demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 75% to 87%.

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

In 2019, 48% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 20% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, 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, 36%, or 5 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 60%, or 3 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of year 3 students, 62% of year 5 students and 76% of year 7 students, demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 5 this result represents little or no change and for year 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 7 has been upwards from 60% to 76%.

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

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved lower in year 3 NAPLAN numeracy, relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 13% of year 3, 6% of year 5 and 16% 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 in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 40%, or 2 out of 5 of students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.