

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Coomandook Area School

Conducted in March 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 Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Christine Bell, 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

Coomandook Area School caters for pre-school to year 12 students. It is situated 140kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 118. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 134. The local partnership is Coorong Mallee.

The school has an ICSEA score of 964 and is classified as category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school population includes 3% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 37 % of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the first year of tenure, a Deputy Principal and SACE/Transition Coordinator.

There are 14 Teachers including 4 early career Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Design tasks and learning experiences that enable and support students to engage in deeper thinking, and develop the skills to transfer their learning into different and unknown contexts.
- Direction 2** Develop the use of data, formative assessment and feedback to more effectively personalise learning so that students know how they are progressing and how to improve.
- Direction 3** Explore, trial and share pedagogies that engage students and are responsive to student voice, to build greater ownership and motivation in the learning process.

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

The previous directions have influenced improvement planning since the last review but the changes in leadership have impacted progress with all areas still being pertinent to the school.

Some staff effectively collaborate to design tasks and learning experiences to engage students in deeper thinking but this is not consistent practice across the school. Most teachers engage students in hands-on, real life learning which engages students but is not necessarily deep learning or providing opportunity for transferring learning. All staff engage with data but it is variable in how this is being used to personalise learning. The new Principal has identified formative assessment as an area of focus and has initiated professional learning to support staff gaining a common understanding of how this will look in the school. Students have an organisational voice in the school but this needs to be expanded to student influence in learning and enabling students' ownership of their learning.

The previous ESR directions have positively impacted on elements of individual teacher pedagogy but leadership changes mean a whole-school consistent approach needs to be embedded.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) has a narrow focus which is known by all staff. SIP goals have been refined following self-review and staff access department guidebooks to review actions. Targeted professional learning and Professional Development Plans (PDP) align to the SIP and staff report that 'literacy is everyone's business.' Teachers review the SIP at least once per semester with a deeper self-review occurring in term 4. The analysis of phonics data led to a change in practice which is now being monitored to assess impact. Whilst all staff know the focus of the SIP there is opportunity to further develop whole-staff understanding of goals, targets and actions through the inclusion of school service officers. Promoting whole-staff participation in improvement will provide clarity and deeper understanding.

Although teachers participate in SIP reviews they are presented with the data by leaders. Some teachers are not confident they can analyse data and assess the impact of their practice and indicated they would like support in this area. Monitoring of student progress is largely done in like year teams but teachers expressed a desire to look at whole-school data to identify trends and patterns. Teachers in the senior years often focus on subject specific data. Looking at whole-school data would further promote collective ownership by all teachers.

Although PDPs are linked to the SIP, staff report not all receive regular observations or explicit feedback on their practice. Using focused walkthroughs to improve teacher pedagogy is a critical driver for school improvement and helps build consistency and a sense of urgency. Leaders have an opportunity to lead the learning and ensure consistency across the school by being visible in classes and providing explicit feedback to teachers to further improve their practice. Having regular and formalised leadership walkthroughs, linked to PDP and SIP focus, will provide targeted and timely feedback to further strengthen teacher pedagogy and embed consistent practice.

Direction 1 Provide a cycle of focused walkthroughs with explicit feedback to build consistency and further improve teacher practice to deliver improvement goals.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The use of high impact teaching strategies is apparent but variable across the school resulting in some students indicating their work was 'too easy' and they needed to be challenged and given harder work to push and stretch their learning. This view was further reflected by parents.

Learning intentions were referenced by students but not necessarily through a consistent name. Having a common language of learning will further support students as they progress through the school. Most teachers use pre-assessment to refine planning and post-assessment to track student growth. All staff track data to group students but there was variance in how this was being used to inform student learning as differentiated lessons were not evidenced as consistent practice. Increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes would enable differentiation with stretch and challenge for all students to become routine practice. Supporting staff through focused walkthroughs will identify effective pedagogy and enable this to become embedded practice throughout the school.

Teachers and students talked of hands-on learning which results in high levels of engagement. Although students enjoy this approach, they struggled to translate their learning into other curriculum areas. Working collectively to produce multi-disciplinary units of work will enable staff to link student learning and provide deeper understanding.

Most students felt they could have increased influence and ownership of their learning. Students talked of being presented with choices in lessons but these were always teacher-driven. Most students did not have explicit individual learning goals to provide their next steps in learning. Some teachers provide quality feedback as routine practice but this was not consistently evidenced across the school. A few students have the opportunity to provide feedback to teachers and, in the pockets where this happened, students appreciated the opportunity and reflected they would like this to happen more regularly.

Direction 2 Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity to incorporate individual student data in learning design.

Direction 3 Embed student agency in learning by consistently creating opportunities for all students to provide feedback, set individual learning goals, establish clear learning intentions and self-monitor their progress against success criteria.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Coomandook Area School has a welcoming atmosphere where staff, students and parents display a strong sense of pride in their school. Staff maintain positive relationships with students who report staff care about them as individuals. Parents and governing council are supportive of the school and feel staff are approachable. The new Principal is supported by staff and community who appreciate the stability they bring. Teachers contribute to the improvement agenda and are willing to take on new learning to deliver the SIP outcomes.

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

- Direction 1** Provide a cycle of focused walkthroughs with explicit feedback to build consistency and further improve teacher practice to deliver improvement goals.
- Direction 2** Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity to incorporate individual student data in learning design.
- Direction 3** Embed student agency in learning by consistently creating opportunities for all students to provide feedback, set individual learning goals, establish clear learning intentions and self-monitor their progress against success criteria.

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



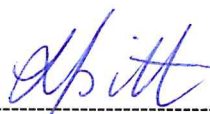
Kerry Dollman
Director
Review, Improvement and Accountability



Anne Millard
Executive Director
Partnerships, Schools and Preschools



Malcolm Jurgs
Principal
Coomandook Area School



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).

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. 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. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Coomandook Area School from 2015-2019.

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. The running records result shows that 60% of year 1 and 58% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 81% of year 3 students, 59% of year 5 students, 50% of year 7 and 61% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019 34% of year 3, 32% of year 5, 14% of year 7 and 9% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

Between 2015 and 2019 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate 76% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students, 78% of year 7 students and 67% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019 26% of year 3, 16% of year 5, 8% of year 7 and 6% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020 72% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2018 and 2020 the trend has been upwards from 87.5% in 2018 to 100% in 2020.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020 93% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 personal learning plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 100% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 research project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020 97% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 10% of grades were at an 'A' level and 31% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for the 'C-' level or higher grade, an improvement for the 'A' level grade and a decline for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages.

75% of students completed SACE using VET and no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.