

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for The Grove Education Centre

Conducted in October 2017



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) 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 DECD schools.

The framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Bryon Stuu, Review Principal.

School context

The Grove Education Centre is a Reception to Year 12 school located 10km north-west of Adelaide in the suburb of Woodville. It has a current enrolment of 68 students, and caters for students with a verified disability and associated complex needs. The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 100% students with disabilities, 38% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 9% Aboriginal students, and 66% of families eligible for School Card assistance. Approximately 64% of students present with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her first year of tenure and two other senior leaders – a Deputy Principal and a Coordinator with the responsibility for modified SACE.

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 two key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching: To what degree are the school's agreements about learning illustrated in each classroom?

Improvement Agenda: To what extent do teachers use data and information to inform their planning and instruction?

To what degree are the school's agreements about learning illustrated in each classroom?

Building a school-wide approach to behaviour was affirmed as an important direction for improvement during the school self-review process in 2016. It is also reflected in the school's Site Improvement Plan and a staff 'Partners in Learning' statement developed as an outcome of this review process. Agreements for pro-social behaviour are expressed in the school's Behaviour Code. They include: *I am Safe, I am Respectful* and *I am Responsible*. Documented evidence, classroom displays and parent and staff interviews, all verified the school's focus in these areas of personal development.

The school has developed a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to differentiate for the behavioural and academic needs of students. At the foundation level (Tier 1) all students are provided explicit teaching of the behaviour code, goals in behaviour and social skills, systems of structured teaching and a strong focus on language and communication skills. The Review Panel verified this through Negotiated Education Plan (NEP) goals, teacher programming documentation, classroom displays and observations, and staff interviews.

The Review Panel visited all classes, including the Pathways Class at Woodville Primary School, to verify the implementation of the agreed policy and practice with respect to behaviour. The panel confirmed the following: clear expectations in visual and oral communications, positive behaviour intervention strategies used, promotion of self-regulation, personalised interventions using SSO staff, explicit teaching for behaviour, use of verbal and visual strategies using Proloquo2go (P2G), and positive reinforcement through the 'gotcha' system.

The panel observed the use of personalised visual systems with students to support the school's identified focus for the week. 'I am safe' was the theme being explored during the review. Digitised and hard copy visual systems were used both in the class and the yard to support transference of skills in different environments. Students observed and spoken to could communicate to the panel about 'safe hands and feet' and 'The Grove Three' to verify the school's approach with the behaviour code.

Consultants were used to influence teaching practice across the school, using a coaching model, as were discrete teaching trials using 'early adopters' amongst staff to lead the changes in teaching practices. All staff interviewed and observed during the review were highly supportive of the processes and support provided to realise the coherent implementation of these strategies. The helping factors mentioned by staff included: staff professional learning teams, use of consultants, the trialling approach, co-teaching with SSOs, peer observations and feedback, and joint release time for staff teams to engage with the improvement work.

In discussions with school leaders, staff and parents throughout the ESR process it was evident that the central nature of communication, both expressive and receptive, was a key factor in student success, both internal and external to the school setting. Many confirmed the importance of social competencies and effective communication skills in positively impacting student pro-social behaviour. The Review Panel verified the forward planning undertaken by the school and acknowledges the endeavour of staff to action key Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) strategies both in class and yard environments to a high degree of coherency.

The Review Panel commends the strategic thinking and planning that the leaders and staff have deliberated upon, and confirms the two key priorities established in the school's long-term plan 2017-2020: Effective communicators; and Engaged, confident and safe learners.

Direction 1

Raise levels of student engagement through the ongoing implementation and monitoring of agreed whole-school communication strategies.

To what extent do teachers use data and information to inform their planning and instruction?

An expanded data journey began in 2016/17, and involved the use of a DECD consultant to support staff understanding of data and its value in planning, monitoring and tracking student improvement and growth over time. The Principal indicated that: "I wanted staff ownership and decisions to come back to the data". The panel was able to verify the links between the improvement priorities, staff professional learning, resource allocation and data collection to support this work. The Principal reinforced that the change they want to see in using data, to 'sharpen their focus and deliver planned outcomes', will take three years to fully realise.

The staff team operates in four learning teams to connect key aspects of curriculum, pedagogy and student needs. The initial data collection was against the goals established in student Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs), which were collated across the school. Goal establishment was improved by staff over time to ensure quality goals were developed for individual students. Goals are now established using a SMARTAR framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound, Agreed and Reviewed). These were evident in samples of Student Support Plans viewed by the panel. Over the past three years, the attainment of NEP goals has risen from 57% to 89% across the school.

Data collection has now expanded to include the following datasets: communication matrix, writing scale, ABLES and Mathscon. These datasets represent a baseline only – a starting point for the school and class teachers to measure the impact of their teaching strategies on student learning, engagement and challenge. Collection points are specified in a documented assessment schedule. Governing Council members interviewed confirmed that they have begun to see more school data as a group through their governance role.

The Principal and staff acknowledge that they need to transform their work from data collection *per se*, to the deeper evaluative work of analysing the data to determine patterns and trends that may further inform curriculum and pedagogical emphases. The panel acknowledges that the data and perceptions gained through observations, feedback to teachers and co-teaching plans are also extremely valuable and add further dimensions to the learning data. The school may be well-placed to re-engage the DECD data advisor in the near future to elicit the best strategies for the staff to successfully analyse its growing database. As one teacher aptly stated: "We need to consolidate the use of data in our school".

Direction 2

Consolidate the collection, use and analysis of data to inform and evaluate the implementation of evidence-based teaching strategies.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at The Grove Education Centre.

Effective leadership thinking, structures and processes at the school have been instrumental in leading school improvement, and building a positive culture and staff capacity to deliver improved outcomes for students. From the strategic use of outside consultants to the establishment of staff teams that are responsible for 'driving' the impact at class level, the process has engaged all staff to a high level of ownership and commitment to the work being undertaken.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

The Grove Education Centre has the strategic leadership and staff capacity to deliver improved learning outcomes through school-wide implementation of the directions below. The school community presented a united and collaborative culture for improvement.

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

1. Raise levels of student engagement through the ongoing implementation and monitoring of agreed whole-school communication strategies.
2. Consolidate the collection, use and analysis of data to inform and evaluate the implementation of evidence-based teaching strategies.

Based on the school's current performance, The Grove Education Centre will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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 three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.



Nikola Haskell
A/PRINCIPAL
THE GROVE EDUCATION CENTRE



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.

The Principal of The Grove Education Centre has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Part 2: Learning Improvement, Item 5: All teachers access the professional learning program that supports the implementation of the materials, before delivering the *Keeping Safe* Child Protection Curriculum.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 84.5%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

Attendance

2014: 87.0% **2015:** 86.2% **2016:** 84.5%

Negotiated Education Plan (NEP) Goals

All students who attend The Grove Education Centre are verified under the DECD Students with Disability Policy. Based on the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) every student has entitlement to the provision of the Australian Curriculum and appropriate adjustments to support each student. These adjustments can include: Educational (curriculum, assessment and reporting); Instructional (individual teaching programs and strategies); and Environmental (space, equipment and support). Each student at the school has goals that they are working towards over the academic year.

The Review Panel was able to verify that students have appropriate and agreed learning goals based on their 2016 NEP. The goals established are specific and targeted. The panel verified that goal achievement has risen from 57% in 2014 to 89% in 2016.

The school uses a range of assessment tools that enable students to be assessed on the basis of their abilities. These include: NEP goals, Mathscon, Communication Matrix, Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES), Developmental Writing Scale, Literacy Assessments and Modified SACE.

SACE

Six Stage 2 students, who were potential completers, successfully completed the requirements of the Modified SACE in 2016.

