

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mount Compass Area School

Conducted in November 2019



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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Annette Williams, 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO)
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Mount Compass Area School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 59kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 413. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 413. The local partnership is Fleurieu.

The school has an ICSEA score of 977, and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 15% students with disabilities, 3% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 1% children/young people in care and 29% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 6th year of tenure, a deputy principal – learning innovation and wellbeing, student support coordinators for each of the senior school, middle school, junior school student cohorts and special education coordinators, a student wellbeing leader and a Senior Leader, Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP).

There are 34 teachers including 9 in the early years of their career and 12 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Ensure that school plans and actions are data-informed to enable the Priority Groups to evaluate the school's effectiveness in improving student achievement and progress, and to make ongoing strategic decisions.**
- Direction 2** **Provide opportunities for teachers to work in their sub-schools to develop and critique their learning intentions, task design, assessment criteria and moderation to enable multiple entry points and intellectual stretch for all students.**
- Direction 3** **Strengthen the support for teachers to be able to confidently implement and embed the Building Learning Power framework of learning habits to support students as learning tasks become more complex and unfamiliar.**
- Direction 4** **Implement a range of school-wide approaches that utilise student voice and influence in the design and assessment of learning.**

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

It is clear that the previous directions have had a positive impact on the school's development. Data has become more prominent in decision making, intervention and planning at a whole-school, cohort and individual level. Teaching teams are addressing identified priorities for improvement as evident in the development and implementation of explicit phonics based methodology, guided reading in the middle years, closed reading in middle and senior years and the whole-school adoption of the LeadLearn initiative. Cross school collaboration in Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) has emphasised the importance of developing learning intentions and success criteria to make learning expectations more explicit.

The Building Learner Framework and Program Achieve have provided guidance and a common language for teachers in the development of student dispositions and wellbeing for learning. Student voice is evident in the school's Student Representative Council (SRC) with a focus on organising student run events, fundraising or representation on school committees. Some initiatives to develop student agency in learning, through seeking student feedback on the effectiveness of teaching, have been undertaken. Leadership acknowledge that this is an area for further development.

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?

Evidence supplied to the panel at the leadership presentation and conversations with staff confirmed that the goals, actions and targets for improvement within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) were developed initially with leadership, and then were presented to staff for further refinement to include challenges of practice. In interviews with teachers it was clear that they have knowledge and ownership of the priorities for improvement in achievement in writing using the writing based approach to reading (WRAP) methodology, numeracy high band retention and attainment, and the development of a culture of empowered learning for students. They spoke positively about their role in supporting the ongoing development of these within the classroom.

Teachers and leaders described some forums, such as staff, faculty and end of year leadership team meetings, in which they formally reviewed the progress of some aspects of the SIP using student achievement data. It was not clear from these descriptions how the planned actions, targets and indicators for success were being monitored. Learning action teams which are faculty based were created to investigate and formally provide feedback to staff meetings on identified 'problems of practice'. These problems could be quite broad and evidence-based, but were not necessarily aligned to the agreed goals for improvement. Staff commented that these sessions and other professional learning sessions provided opportunities to reflect on their own practice but were not necessarily focussed on the agreed challenges of practice.

Leaders and teachers have access to a range of student achievement data to monitor student progress at an individual, class or cohort level and to support planning for learning. It was evident that staff understood and were connected to the improvement of the goals. However, there was a lack of clarity among staff of the structures and evidence-based processes which enable teachers and leaders to identify strengths and weaknesses of current practice, review their impact, reflect on best practice and implement changes.

To further support the established foundations for improvement and achieve the challenges of practice, there is an opportunity to further develop and document effective structures and processes linked to professional learning and performance and development planning (PDP) processes. This will support teachers to effectively monitor the impact in the improvement of practice.

Direction 1 **Support teachers' and leaders' reflective practices by further developing and aligning professional learning and evidence-based performance development structures and processes that enable the successful achievement of the challenges of practice.**

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

How effective are the school's professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capacity?

Teachers commented positively on the professional learning opportunities made available to them at an individual, group and whole-school level. A number of teachers believed the effectiveness of this professional learning, and its sustained influence on teacher practice, was dependent on the ongoing support and development by leadership. Teachers provided examples of effective professional learning supported by leadership that has enabled sustained improvement in practice. This includes the ongoing staff training and implementation of a reception to year 6 WRAP, guided reading in reception to year 9, partnership and site work in LDAM and the LeadLearn two year program developing teachers' capacity based on student feedback. Each of these initiatives mentioned are aligned to the goals for improvement.

PDP processes supporting staff in their development of practice were clearly documented and the examples provided show alignment to departmental requirements, and the Australian Professional Standards. All teachers spoke positively of their PDP meetings with line managers and associated classroom observations providing feedback as a way to improve their practice. A small number of teachers commented that they valued peer observations which was evident in the early years' team. Leaders suggested that the LeadLearn program was building teacher and leader capacity to develop this and other performance and development processes.

It was clear from conversations that an evidence-based PDP processes, that provide support for teachers to reflect on, know their impact and develop their practice, varied in their approach and focus. Students commented that their influence on shaping teacher practice was limited and teacher dependent. They described teachers using end of term surveys to gauge the effectiveness of the delivered learning but it was unclear how these influenced improvement on practice. The panel commends the PDP processes that are in place to support Student Services Officers (SSOs). In conversations with SSOs, they spoke positively of the process and felt valued as partners in the co-construction of learning with teachers.

A collaborative team approach to improvement is developing in each of the sub-school teams but comments from staff suggested there is inconsistency between teams due to the clarity and strength of their leadership support. Leaders' acknowledged this was an area to develop further with greater alignment to the priorities for improvement.

Evidence provided by staff confirms that the foundations for ongoing improvement have been achieved through a collectively developed SIP. An opportunity exists for leadership to further develop teacher capacity through the alignment of professional learning and supporting PDP structures that enable improvement in the agreed priorities through evidence-based reflective practice.

Direction 2 Ensure the development of teacher capacity in delivering the agreed priorities for improvement by making clear the expectations of teachers and leaders in PDP processes that engage teachers in rigorous conversations about their practice.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

Observations in class and conversations with teachers and students confirmed that teachers approach learning in a planned and positive way. Classes observed showed that students were focussed on learning and teachers were utilising a range of pedagogical practices to engage students. Teachers described that these practices have been developed from past professional learning programs, formal and informal sharing of practice and supportive performance development programs. A number of staff commented that they felt supported by the professional learning programs and opportunities provided to develop their pedagogy but that there was little agreement or documentation of best practice to guide teachers' work.

Recent engagement of all staff in the partnership LDAM initiatives and a professional learning focus in building learning power of students has provided focus and the foundations for the development of a common language of learning development. Teachers commented that this had supported their learning design to better meet all students' needs, effective explicit teaching and the use of formative assessment strategies to gauge student understanding and provide feedback for learning.

The school has identified increasing numbers of students with a broad range of learning needs, and with a high number of social and emotional issues as challenges for teachers. To address this, resources were allocated to targeted professional learning to build teacher capacity, realignment of class structures and student groupings. Programs and processes to support student wellbeing for learning were implemented.

Teachers commented that they spend disproportionate time supporting students with learning needs compared to the time spent challenging students especially those in higher bands. Students interviewed believed that they were challenged in classes but this was teacher dependent. Some teachers were seen to provide feedback to students in a variety of effective ways, both verbally and in written form. While there was some evidence of effective differentiation of teaching and learning, there was limited evidence of this being consistent across the school.

The panel did cite some agreements reached by teachers of what they consider elements of best classroom practice that would guide teachers in their approach to teaching and learning. This was evident in some classrooms but not prominent in teacher conversations and may need to be revisited. There is an opportunity to further develop and document agreements on what highly effective evidence-based pedagogical practices that support all learners, including those students in higher bands.

Direction 3 Ensure pedagogical coherence and seamless transition points for learners by establishing agreed high yield practices that will be implemented consistently across the school.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Mount Compass Area School is well positioned for the next stages of improvement. Staff have shown they have a common understanding of the agreed goals of the current improvement agenda. Through the further refinement and alignment of the SIP to professional learning and performance development programs, greater assurance can be provided that the actions for each goal are achieved.

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

- Direction 1** Support teachers' and leaders' reflective practices by further developing and aligning professional learning and evidence-based performance development structures and processes that enable the successful achievement of the challenges of practice.
- Direction 2** Ensure the development of teacher capacity in delivering the agreed priorities for improvement by making clear the expectations of teachers and leaders in PDP processes that engage teachers in rigorous conversations about their practice.
- Direction 3** Ensure pedagogical coherence and seamless transition points for learners by establishing agreed high yield practices that will be implemented consistently across the school.

Based on the school's current performance, Mount Compass Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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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 2018, 56% of year 1 and 82% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and an improvement for year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 80% of year 3 students, 82% of year 5 students, 82% of year 7 students and 41% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement, and year for 9, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for years 3, 5 and 7 has been upwards, from 56% to 80%, 67% to 82%, and 68% to 82%, respectively.

For 2019, year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 43% of year 3, 22% of year 5 and 22% of year 7, and 6% of year 9 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, 43%, or 3 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 25%, or 2 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, and 14%, or 1 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of year 3 students, 70% of year 5 students, 67% of year 7 students and 38% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, 5 and 7 this result represents little or no change, and for year 9, this represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within, and for year 9, is achieving below the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 17% of year 3, 4% of year 5, 11% of year 7 and 6% of year 9 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, 0%, or 0 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 0%, or 0 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, and 0%, or 0 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 59% of students enrolled in February and 93% 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 little or no change from the historic baseline average. Between 2016 and 2018, the trend has been upwards, from 88% to 93%.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2018, 96% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 97% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 76% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 90% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 93% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 4% of grades were at an 'A' level and 38% of grades were at an 'B' level. This result represents little or no change for the 'C-' level or higher grade, and a decline for the 'A' and 'B' level grades from the historic baseline averages.

Thirty eight students completed SACE using VET and there were no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2018.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 80%, or 8 out of 10 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.