

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for The Pines School

Conducted in September 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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Toni Burford and Jodie Kingham, Review Principals.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

The Pines School caters for children from reception to year 7. The school is situated 24kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 720 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 556.

The school is classified as Category 3 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school has an ICSEA score of 984. The local partnership is Hollywood Lakes and Gardens.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 6% students with a verified disability, 48% families eligible for School Card assistance, 58% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 2 students in care.

The school is providing some form of intervention to 42% of its students, and estimates a 14% transient rate.

The Pines School hosts an Intensive English Language Centre (IELC), with 6 IELC classes. A child-parent centre is also located onsite.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 7th year of their tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal, an assistant principal (IELC) and 5 senior leaders: wellbeing, literacy, numeracy and Aboriginal education, student engagement and learning, and preschool. There are 36 teachers including 6 in the early years of their career and 15 Step 9 teachers.

Previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Increase and sustain the proportion of students demonstrating higher levels of learning against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards by working collaboratively to develop, implement and evaluate successful moderation processes.
- Direction 2** Ensure that the gradual release of responsibility for learning, at any year level, is supported by rigorous formative assessment processes that engage students as powerful learners and guide planning and instruction.

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

Department systems and school-based data reflects a comprehensive lift in student achievement that the school has delivered since the previous directions. The school has worked collaboratively in a wide range of ways to successfully target student learning growth. Increasing enrolments reflect increasing community confidence in the educational strength of the school. The schools ethos has shifted to one that upholds and delivers on the right of every student to high academic learning.

The school has worked in explicit ways to develop students as powerful learners, and afford them authentic influence in their learning. Formative assessment practices have been implemented across the school and their use has become an enshrined expectation of all teachers. When new teachers join the school, they are routinely upskilled in the application of formative assessment to ensure each teacher is able to deliver on this expectation, and students have developed strong metacognition about the learning process and their engagement with it.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

To what extent are staff supported to improve their practice in identified challenge areas?

Work to continuously develop teacher capacity is systematised, coherent and connected. There is clarity of focus for this work on school improvement goals and targets. All aspects of staff development (training and development, performance and development, team work in Professional learning communities (PLCs), and coaching and mentoring) are fully aligned to maximise impact on the development of teacher practice in targeted areas. There are actively used, consistently implemented, and regularly reviewed literacy and numeracy agreements that both underpin teacher work in classrooms, and link elements of teacher, support teacher, and SSO work. Teachers are fully supported to implement the agreements through expert onsite literacy and numeracy leadership. Strong effective teaching of writing is also highly supported through the expertise of IELC and EALD teachers and leaders. There is an effective provision of resources to teachers, so they can deliver expected practices.

Planning and decision making is collaborative at all levels in the school. Collaboration is data-informed and sophisticated data literacy is evident across the whole-school. All decisions around improvement are evidence-based. All improvement work is cyclical. Data is used to evaluate the efficacy of actions and to inform next steps and planning. Teachers have shifted their views about student learning data and it is no longer viewed by teachers as a criticism or failure of teaching. Data is now highly valued by teachers for the information it provides to increasingly intentionalise their practice and to validate the learning improvements they are delivering.

The school is well placed to build on its quality improvement work by regularly and formally reviewing with staff how they are progressing in their uptake of challenges of practice. In this way, staff can inform the leadership team of strategies to improve developmental work and ensure each staff member is able to optimally contribute to school improvement.

Direction 1 Continue to improve student achievement through regular review of staff about the effectiveness of processes and uses of data to improve school performance.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent are students involved in collaborative planning and decision making about their learning?

The Pines School is successfully using various strategies to develop student metacognition. These include the Learning Talk PLC work, consistent formative assessment practices, regular student writing of and reflection about personal goals, and daily reflection about literacy and numeracy learning. Students are involved in some self and peer assessment of learning. Students talked about their levels in learning with some reference to learning data such as running record levels. All students use strategies to seek and access support when they get 'stuck' in learning. Students articulated the differences between a learning goal and a personal goal. High levels of student self-management in learning were observed in every classroom.

Whilst they could describe learning they were involved in, and how to move forward if they were stuck, students struggled to talk about next steps in learning. There were low level examples of student influence in learning such as a topic of choice, level of worksheet, or style of presenting learning. Parents struggled to identify ways in which students have a say in and make decisions about their own learning. IELC students need particular emphasis on developing skills in collaborative planning and decision making about learning. Staff expressed some fear about 'letting go' of control by involving students more in the design of learning. There are currently limiting staff perceptions about the value of student agency in the design of learning.

The school has worked strongly and successfully to develop student metacognition about learning, student capacity to talk about learning, and student capacity to persist in learning. The school is optimally positioned to increase student agency in their own and each other's learning by authentically collaborating with students in task and assessment design. The school is well placed to extend its skills in staff collaboration to collaboration with students.

Direction 2 Continue to improve student achievement by developing authentic partnerships between students and teachers in the design of learning and assessment.

CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

How effective are strategies to support the inclusion and improved learning outcomes for vulnerable students actioned and reviewed at whole-school, class and individual student levels?

There has been a significant culture shift in the school. The school community has developed an aspirational focus for the learning of every student. Governing Council representatives and some parents are familiar with student achievement at a whole-school level and know that the school has increased its own internal targets to be higher than the Department for Education Standard of Education Achievement (SEA). Students and parents have become comfortable with discomfort in learning. There is evidence of the embedding of social and emotional learning in the context of academic learning. It is very well-managed in ways that protect the teaching and learning environment. In all classrooms students were engaged, self-managing and on-task with no evidence of disruptive behaviours. There is a welcoming, supportive and deeply inclusive culture that is resulting in a successful multicultural learning community. Parents spoke passionately about the deep, authentic valuing of and respect for cultural diversity.

The school is responsive and proactive to student needs. Explicit teaching was consistently evident. Quality intervention arrangements ensure that there is strong coherence for each student between wave 1 and wave 2 literacy and numeracy learning. Intervention is responsive to evidence identified through quality cyclical monitoring strategies. There are strong provisions and accommodations for students with disabilities at wave 1, 2 and 3 teaching levels. However, parents identified the need for more stretch for students and students also said they would like 'harder' work. There was evidence to the panel that the school needs to move to a deeper understanding of stretch and challenge. That is, deeper learning and stretch, rather than more learning, for every student rather than just for high achieving students.

The school has been successful in delivering improved learning for all students. Actions are continuously monitored for efficacy and changed continuously as needed. The next steps for the school is to take the learning of every student into deeper levels of stretch and challenge.

Direction 3 Continue to increase student achievement by ensuring all students, are stretched and challenged with learning design that engages them in critical and creative thinking and actions.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At The Pines School, teachers analyse feedback and assessment data to design differentiated learning. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by effective systems that build their professional capacity.

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

- Direction 1** Continue to improve student achievement through regular review of staff about the effectiveness of processes and uses of data to improve school performance.
- Direction 2** Continue to improve student achievement by developing authentic partnerships between students and teachers in the design of learning and assessment.
- Direction 3** Continue to increase student achievement by ensuring all students, are stretched and challenged with learning design that engages them in critical and creative thinking and actions.

Based on the school's current performance, The Pines School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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