

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Adelaide North Special School

Conducted in November 2020



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 Tanya Oshinsky, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Cam Wright, 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:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Students
 - Teachers

School context

Adelaide North Special School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 34kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 181. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 168. The local partnership is Peachey.

The school has an ICSEA score of 979, and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 9% Aboriginal students, 100% students with disabilities, 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 10% children/young people in care and 49% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 6th year of tenure, a deputy in the 3rd year of tenure and a senior Leader in the 2nd year of tenure. The focus of both deputy and senior leader is building capacity.

There are 37 teachers including 11 in the early years of their career and 12 Step 9 teachers. The school has two Highly Accomplished teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Deliver highly differentiated and intentional teaching that meets the diverse range of learners' needs through the implementation of specific strategies designed to enable students to achieve the next stage of their learning.
- Direction 2** Develop informative and valid targets for student learning and growth through a review of staff understanding of, and capacity to, design SMARTA targets that influence classroom practice.
- Direction 3** Develop strategic and effective cycles of self-evaluation through the design of highly structured and regular systems that enable collective analysis of, and response to, valid data and that monitor school-wide progress to agreed targets.
- Direction 4** Maximise teacher efficacy and collective action through strategically designed Performance and Development partnerships and collegially led Professional Learning opportunities that are aligned with school priorities.

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

Adelaide North Special School's response to the previous directions positively impacted the improvement journey over the last few years. While there is continuing work to be achieved, there was good progress made.

The school embedded the Ability Based Learning and Support (ABLES) assessment tools, adding maths to English and Personal and Social Capabilities. Comparative yearly data indicates growth, and teachers use ABLES as a 'starting point' for planning. Other literacy assessment tools, such as Developmental Writing

Scale and the Concepts of Print scope and sequence, developed by the school, have further assisted teachers to plan individualised programs for students. Ongoing support and in-class modelling of effective practice from a speech pathologist, was significant in building teachers' skills and knowledge in literacy and communication.

Clear structures and timelines for assessment and reporting were established from a review of these processes. Teachers are supported to meet system expectations through professional learning in setting SMARTAR goals and writing 'one plans'. Students' goals in their one plans are monitored and reviewed as required.

Alignment between school improvement plan (SIP) priorities, the school's 'Review to Improve' teams, professional learning and performance development processes, strengthened staff connection and commitment to the school's improvement agenda.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

Adelaide North Special School's SIP is designed to meet the needs of its students. An improved culture of shared accountability for the school's improvement agenda is supported by clear structures and processes that are well documented. SIP goals are featured in teachers' personal performance development plans and systems are in place to build staff capacity.

The 3 main priorities of the SIP - ; reading and writing, communication and social development – are underpinned by the work of Review to Improve teams. These teams are represented by at least 1 teacher from each unit and a leader. Time is allocated through staff meetings, with follow-up during unit meetings, to address SIP expectations. A traffic light system is used by each team to track progress, with the communication team identifying their impact through the improvement in data. A Pupil Free Day in term 4 involves all staff, where they review what was achieved during the year and plan next steps. There are additional professional learning communities to focus on other areas of importance for the school.

Leaders and teachers identified that analysis of data improved over time, and now drives the improvement agenda. Monitoring student growth is now embedded practice through a range of datasets collected by the school – data walls of the Developmental Writing Scale and Communication Matrix – make information about student growth accessible and visible for all staff. Blue folders track students' progress as they transition through the school. Review and resetting of One Plan goals keeps learning relevant and moving forward. Some teachers also make anecdotal notes from their observations of students. From regularly assessing students, teachers report their planning is more evidence-based and targeted to individual students' learning needs.

The school's continuing work is to develop rigorous and regular self-review processes that evaluate and measure impact of all actions and strategies on student outcomes. This cyclic process will provide evidence that the work of Review to Improve teams is influencing changes to teacher practice, resulting in desired improvement to student learning.

Direction 1 Establish ongoing self-review processes that monitor impact of SIP actions and teaching practices, at regular points throughout the year, to ensure improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, and care for all students.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

All students have complex communication needs. A strong emphasis is placed on ensuring there are effective methods for communication, so that students can be successful at school. Focused training in Augmentive Assistive Communication (AAC) and Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) systems, purchase of PODD devices for all staff and focused professional learning, ensures staff carry and use their PODDs with students continuously. This is now well-embedded and valued practice by all stakeholders.

The school worked diligently to build effective common practices across classrooms, particularly in literacy. Four blocks of literacy, in place at the time of the last review, help teachers identify students at conventional, transitional and emergent levels in aspects of literacy learning. Professional learning in comprehensive literacy instruction, assessment and moderation, and the use of agreed literacy assessment tools, allows teachers to differentiate learning and plan individualised programs that address students' One Plan goals. Continuing to build common practices in literacy and other curriculum areas is ongoing work.

Teachers report difficulty to plan learning against curriculum requirements for students who are not yet at foundation level in the Australian Curriculum. ABLES assessments, concepts of print scope and sequence, and setting SMARTAR goals, were instrumental for teachers to target learning. To meet modified SACE requirements, teachers of secondary students support their students individually, for them to be successful.

Pockets of exemplary practices are evident across the school, where effectively structured learning environments and high-yield strategies in teaching, maximise learning time around the complex needs of students. In some classes, teachers find that physical and health needs of students outweigh the opportunity for quality learning time. The positivity and passion of staff to meet the varied care needs of students is commendable. While meeting the physical, social and emotional needs of special education students is of great importance, ensuring every student has maximum opportunity for daily learning and intellectual stretch is essential.

Continuing to build the capacity of staff to ensure all students access their right to quality curriculum and growth in their learning, is continuing work for the school. Further developing consistent pedagogical practices that help students transition, socialise and learn, seamlessly, in different classes and units, will support students' success.

Direction 2 Extend staff capacity to deliver improved student outcomes, by developing quality and coherent whole school pedagogical approaches within effectively structured classrooms, which maximise learning opportunities for students.

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent are all students, from all priority groups, achieving growth in their learning?

As a SIP priority, social development is recognised as vital to the lifelong skills students require when they leave school. Teachers seek to provide ample opportunity for socialisation: unit days, fun days, community events and mixed yard times. Fostering independent learners, from developing school readiness behaviours in the early years, through to maximising opportunities for mainstream and community integration in pathways classes, is a clear focus for staff. Building persistence and resilience is nurtured through visuals to support learning, interoception activities, having choice in learning, problem-solving behavior issues, regulation activities and acknowledgement of positive behaviour and learning outcomes.

To establish optimum classroom environments, teachers partner with many professional experts, agencies and carers, in order to meet the individual needs of students. Leaders focus on building teacher capacity and encourage deprivatisation of practice. Effective structures support early career teachers and new teachers to the school, and assist more experienced staff to become effective mentors of their colleagues.

Within each unit across the school, all staff work closely and cohesively together, sharing resources and ideas to meet the differing needs of students. Teachers have their non-instructional time (NIT) in one day to minimise disruption to students, and NIT teachers work as integral part of the team. NIT teachers and SSOs have absolute clarity of daily expectations and practices within each classroom. Transition days and informal sharing of knowledge occurs as students transition through the school. However, staff demonstrate little knowledge of their colleagues' practice across teaching units. All staff identified wanting more time for collaboration and sharing across units.

The school would also like to improve partnerships with families, carers and community so that student potential is maximised. Opportunities for parents to be involved include open days each term, fun days, barbeques and events. Communication with families is facilitated in most classrooms through Bloomz or See Saw. Many parents see inconsistencies in teacher practice, and want to know more about the day-to-day care and learning for their children. Leaders are aware that fostering genuine staff and parent voice is an area for further development.

Direction 3 Build on the school's inclusive approach to working with students with disabilities and maximising their outcomes, by increasing opportunities for collaboration amongst all staff and developing deeper consultative processes with both staff and parents.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Leadership and staff have a genuine passion and commitment to meet the care and educational needs for students and their families at Adelaide North Special School. Teacher practice is positively impacted by effective systems that build capacity and professional learning is widely sourced to address the improvement agenda. Staff collaborate well within their unit teams and acknowledge a need for broader collaboration and coherency of practices across the site and annexe classes. There is a high level of care for the diverse needs of students.

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

- Direction 1** **Establish ongoing self-review processes that monitor impact of SIP actions and teaching practices, at regular points throughout the year, to ensure improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, and care for all students.**

- Direction 2** **Extend staff capacity to deliver improved student outcomes, by developing quality and coherent whole school pedagogical approaches within effectively structured classrooms, which maximise learning opportunities for students.**

- Direction 3** **Build on the school’s inclusive approach to working with students with disabilities and maximising their outcomes, by increasing opportunities for collaboration amongst all staff and developing deeper consultative processes with both staff and parents.**

Based on the school’s current performance, Adelaide North Special School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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Byron St uut
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Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

School performance overview

As a special school, Adelaide North does not undertake systemic testing or assessments.

As discussed in this report, the school uses ABLES data to evaluate students' social, emotional, receptive and academic skills and understandings. A highly individualised planning process is informed when teachers respond to each student's data. Students' progress is monitored through various assessment tools, to assess achievement. Goals are regularly adjusted in response to this.

Senior students engage with modified Stage 1 and 2 SACE, and teachers reflect on the criteria within the modified performance standards to conduct on-going evaluation.