

# **Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Loxton North School**

Conducted in July 2020



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## 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 Toni Burford, 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)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Loxton North School caters for students from preschool to year 7. It is situated 257kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 79 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 68 students. The local partnership is Renmark Loxton.

The school has an ICSEA score of 915, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 15% Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect background, 1% children/young people in care and 42% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of tenure and a reading coach in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the position.

There are 5 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 teacher.

## The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Further inform individual student and classroom interventions through the strengthened use of achievement data and formative assessment.
- Direction 2** Stretch students and support deeper thinking in learning by both increasing the scope of, and consolidating, existing teaching pedagogies.
- Direction 3** Enhance student influence and ownership of their learning through involvement in assessment, goal-setting and review, with an emphasis on how to improve.

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

Significant professional learning has been a feature at the school in the last 3 years, with all staff accessing professional learning linked to the directions. The school has made significant gains in staff analysis and use of data to identify students for intervention. Through analysing and triangulating a range of datasets, staff are able to identify areas of concern for individual students. The appointment of a reading coach has enabled staff to work together to tailor intervention to individual student needs. Staff routinely look deeper into data and use this to adapt their programming and group students.

Staff have used writing as an area to look at goal-setting, learning intentions and success criteria. While all staff are working in this space, there is opportunity to build upon consistency and coherence across all classes. Although staff show a greater understanding of the impact of goal-setting and formative feedback on student outcomes, this is still an area of focus for the school.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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

The improvement plan at Loxton North School was created by all staff using in-depth data analysis to identify focus areas and the guidebooks to support actions. The principal and reading coach have strategically aligned professional learning and performance development plans (PDPs) with the site improvement plan (SIP). Staff collaboratively reviewed and updated the SIP, however, there is opportunity to explicitly include teacher actions within the plan. Staff meeting time is regularly given to professional learning, which will enable staff to deliver aspects of the SIP outcomes.

Although staff meeting time is allocated to learning, a high proportion of time is being spent on administration. Creation of a staff meeting schedule, which includes a review of the SIP and allows staff to strategically reflect and evaluate the impact of recent training, will help maintain the focus on improvement.

Teachers have recently observed each other's practice to improve and share their pedagogy. Some staff indicated they would like feedback on their performance and welcomed ways of improving current practice. Using focused observations to improve teacher pedagogy is a critical driver for the school improvement plan. Although performance development plans are linked to the SIP, staff have not had an observation or feedback from observations. These would provide further opportunity to link teacher practice directly to the improvement plan.

There is opportunity for the principal to lead the learning at Loxton North School and ensure learning is embedded consistently across the school. The principal needs to be an instructional leader and be 'highly visible' in classes, providing explicit feedback to teachers to further improve their practice. Having regular and formalised leadership observations and walkthroughs, linked to the PDP and SIP focus, will provide targeted and timely feedback to further strengthen teacher practice. Clear structures and processes to monitor and observe teacher practice will provide rigour and support the focus firmly on learning and improvement.

**Direction 1**    **Enact PDP processes to provide a cycle of focused observations and feedback, building consistency and further improving teacher practice to deliver improvement goals.**

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

### *How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?*

Since the previous external review, staff are increasingly interrogating data and providing evidence-based interventions for identified students. Data is used to create groupings and inform future learning. Staff display a good understanding of where students 'sit' academically through a deep understanding of moderation processes.

Students could confidently articulate their learning and enjoyed the mix of traditional and hands-on activities offered. The recent focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) has engaged students in their learning. This could be further enhanced by teachers planning together and aligning their in-class curriculum with the STEM focus areas to provide deeper understandings.

Most students with whom the panel spoke indicated that their work was 'too easy' or 'just right' and felt they needed to be challenged and given harder work to push and stretch their learning. Tasks viewed in bookwork, through discussions and observations, provided limited opportunity to achieve higher grades. Increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes as a whole school, utilising internal expertise, would help set it up as routine practice. Having focused observations with explicit feedback will provide rigour and grit to student learning.

There was some evidence of learning intentions and success criteria containing self-assessment guides to motivate and stretch learners. Some activities provided clear A-E alignment enabling staff to easily moderate and grade work. Where good practice was apparent, students had full understanding of their next steps to improve.

While there were some demonstrated high-impact teaching strategies, these were not displayed consistently across all classes. Variance in teacher practice is amplified by limited whole-school published expectations. Having clear documentation, which includes a common language for learning and pedagogical practice, will provide cohesion and support student learning. Documents outlining the 'Loxton North way of doing things' will further support staff and encourage accountability. Explicit and published guidelines will promote a common understanding of best practice to support the improvement agenda.

**Direction 2** Provide consistency and accountability in effective pedagogical practice through the development, implementation and monitoring of whole-school expectations.

**Direction 3** Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.

## CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

### *To what extent does the school provide conditions for effective student learning?*

All students the panel spoke to felt happy, safe and supported by staff who genuinely care about them. Teachers and school services officers (SSOs) work as a collaborative team who want the best outcomes for students. It is clear that staff attempt to create positive and enriched learning environments to support students with scaffolds and prompts visible in all classrooms. Consistency of these, language and displays of exemplar and aspirational work would further support students in their improvement.

The review panel was provided evidence of goal-setting for students. All students had goals in writing, and while they provided consistency in goal-setting expectation, they varied in aspect. One class reviewed goals regularly and provided feedback on the next steps in learning, while another had set goals but they were outdated and had not been reviewed. The strategic intent to develop targets with students represents staff members' understanding that giving students the ownership of, and engagement with, their learning is key to maximising potential success. Students can articulate their learning and expressed a desire to own the what, why and how they learn.

Students have opportunity for leadership, but it is predominantly of organisational nature and is external to classroom learning. Students are able to articulate their learning and expressed desire to be able to co-construct the curriculum and provide feedback to their teachers. A few teachers are moving in this direction by introducing opportunities for students to co-construct learning tasks, but this is still in its infancy.

The school is well-placed to support students to become owners of their learning through the development and implementation of common, agreed practices supported by a common language for learning. When staff engage and include authentic student influence as an integral aspect of learning for all students, learning is maximised.

**Direction 4     Strengthen and embed student agency within learning by 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 2020

The improvement agenda at Loxton North School has a clear focus and is supported by the alignment of professional learning and performance development plans. Data is used to group students and drive intervention matched to individual student needs. Students feel strongly connected to the school. Their obvious pride is further reflected and amplified through community discussions with parents, and Governing Council displaying a high level of trust in the school. Students are confident in discussing their learning and display positive learner dispositions. Strong collaboration with the on-site preschool ensures a seamless transition to school and supports student learning.

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

- Direction 1** Enact PDP processes to provide a cycle of focused observations and feedback, building consistency and further improving teacher practice to deliver improvement goals.
- Direction 2** Provide consistency and accountability in effective pedagogical practice through the development, implementation and monitoring of whole-school expectations.
- Direction 3** Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.
- Direction 4** Strengthen and embed student agency within learning by 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, Loxton North School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



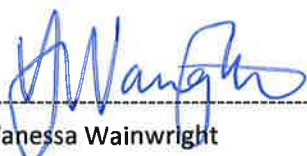
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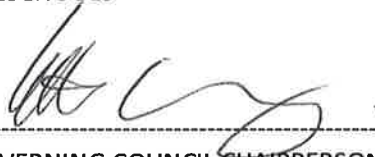
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Vanessa Wainwright  
PRINCIPAL  
LOXTON NORTH SCHOOL



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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 Loxton North School from 2016- 2019.*

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. The Running Records result is 47% of year 1 and 58% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

The reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 85% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 student and 72% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Forty-four percent of year 3, 32% of year 5 and 16% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 75% of year 5 students and 88% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Thirty percent of year 3, 21% of year 5 and 20% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.