Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

On-track evaluation report for Gawler East Primary School

One-year return conducted in May 2021

Government of South Australia
Department for Education

On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3 year cycle. After the review the Principal and the Governing Council Chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the ESR report is available on the school website.

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

In some cases when the review panel identifies limited achievement and growth together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school is advised they will be visited again in 1 rather than 3 years' time (1 year return).

Schools with a 1 year return are assisted by the Education Director and other department staff to receive additional coordinated and targeted support. This intervention is focused on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve improved student learning results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Following intervention which occurs for 12-15 months after the ESR, a review panel conducts an on-track evaluation (OTE) to determine the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is the main document used to inform the OTE.

This OTE visit was conducted by Tanya Oshinsky, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Thomas Harvey, Review Principal.

The OTE report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Gawler East Primary School in February 2020.

Directions from the External School Review report

February 2020

Direction 1	**Support teachers to be more strategic and informed in their practice by strengthening their data literacy skills and knowledge.**
Direction 2	**To improve contemporary pedagogical practice use TfEL consistently across all classes.**
Direction 3	**Support the next steps in learning by ensuring all students have individual literacy and numeracy goals.**
Direction 4	**Build coherence and provide formative feedback on teacher practice through focused observations and walkthroughs by leadership.**

Additional information about the school context

The school was recently reclassified to Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. There was no notable change to the school's student demographics; however, at the time of the previous review, the school was classified as Category 6. Changes in the culture of the school have seen a significant improvement in the staff perspective survey results. There are currently 19 classes and enrolment numbers are increasing.

Development of a school improvement plan

The On-Track Evaluation and Monitoring Tool was initially developed with the Principal Consultant and the Education Director. Regular monitoring and planning meetings were initially every 3 weeks and are now held twice a term. The ESR Directions were incorporated into the school improvement plan (SIP). All actions, tracking and review processes, were aligned to the directions in the ESR report, and clear documentation of all processes was collated by the school.

Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

The Principal worked closely with the Education Director to further build their leadership capacity to develop a more collaborative, cohesive learning-focused culture. A non-blame approach was taken to build trust and greater accountability. There was regular support from the local education team, literacy guarantee unit and a project officer. Professional learning and internal structures, such as leaders' observations and walkthroughs of classrooms, professional learning communities and data shift teams, ensured focused support in aligning and addressing the school's improvement agenda.

Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the school improvement plan

Direction 1 **Support teachers to be more strategic and informed in their practice by strengthening their data literacy skills and knowledge.**

On-track evidence

- Professional learning is targeted to achieve school priorities.
- Coherence and consistency in practice has led to improved student outcomes.
- Staff have opportunities to view, understand and triangulate data through data shift teams, professional learning communities (PLCs) and staff meetings.
- Establishing data shift teams and professional learning supported teachers in building their understanding of data that informs them about student progress and gaps in learning.
- SIP reviews are held every 5 weeks.
- Review processes led to trials of assessment tools and review of the school's data map.
- Analysis of data led to the introduction of programs, grouping students and planning.
- Microsoft Teams is used to collect data and make students' data visible to all staff.
- Teachers are now responsible for entering their own students' data and discuss individual students' progress.
- Teachers share data and assessments with students to show them how they can improve and set individual goals.
- Identified students below SEA in literacy are the focus of teachers' learning sprints. Teachers evaluate if their change in practice is effective in making a difference to student outcomes.
- Parents trust that teachers know how students are progressing and see evidence of an improved culture of high expectations.

Review panel evaluation

Staff have shifted their practice from the compliant collection and reporting of data, to collaboratively analysing, triangulating and using data in a purposeful way. Deeper analysis of datasets helped teachers adjust practice for improved student outcomes. Building knowledge and consistency in implementing agreed programs has resulted in positive gain for students. Teachers built their competence in using data to plan for class and cohort needs. Evaluating data at an individual level for intentional teaching, to stretch and challenge the learning of individual students, is a continuing area for growth. Sharing and unpacking assessments with students so they understand what they know and what they need to know will be essential to achieve direction 3.

Direction 2 To improve contemporary pedagogical practice use TfEL consistently across all classes.

On-track evidence

- Establishing structures within the school, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and learning sprints, build coherence and consistency of practice.
- Teachers report that PLCs built their capacity through a common focus and the opportunity to share ideas and practice, and are resourced to meet during the school day.
- Rigour in PLC work is supported through the introduction of PLC leaders who guide the improvement agenda. Release twice per term enables their work.
- Focus from the Teaching for Effective Learning framework has been on high-impact strategies: data for differentiation, learning intentions and success criteria, explicit teaching, formative assessment and feedback.
- High-impact strategies visible in all classrooms are learning intentions and 'bump it up walls', with more variable practice noted in the use of success criteria.
- Consistent explicit teaching practices were noted during classroom walkthroughs.
- Students could identify formative assessment practices used by their teachers, such as 'thumbs up, thumbs down' and 'checking-in' with them during their learning.
- Students gave clear examples of providing feedback to teachers about their lessons and receiving feedback about their learning.
- Stretch and challenge in daily learning was highlighted by students and parents as an area for further growth.

Review panel evaluation

Staff are clear that they would like the PLC structure to continue as they see this as one of the most significant levers in building their capacity to meet school expectations. Clear documentation of the school's reading expectations and numeracy agreement provide clarity of their work. The focus on high-impact strategies resulted in practices implemented within a short timeframe. The genuine engagement of teachers to apply these strategies is evident in every classroom. The variability in practice that still exists across the school identifies the need to deepen staff understanding of how each strategy can be qualitatively applied for best outcomes. For example, teachers are still developing their use of learning intentions and, in particular, success criteria. With a deeper understanding and proficiency in the use of this strategy, teachers can differentiate the learning and provide challenge in all tasks. Continuing to engage with the Teaching for Effective Learning framework will be ongoing work for the school to further develop consistent and best practice.

Direction 3 **Support the next steps in learning by ensuring all students have individual literacy and numeracy goals.**

On-track evidence

- Students can articulate their goals, which are visible in all classrooms either on the wall or on student desks.
- Goals determined by data, are mostly identified by teachers. Some teachers group students for a goal or provide options for students to choose from.
- Sharing assessments with students so that they can determine their own goals is developing.
- Teachers provide examples of 'A level work' or rubrics for students to understand how they can improve their work.
- Students identify strategies they use to achieve their goals and improve their work using peer support, classroom scaffolds, teacher support, trying harder and 'bump it up walls'.
- Students are expected to show evidence of achieving their goals to their teacher.
- Student learning goals are shared in the newsletter.
- Teachers support students to monitor their goals and change them when met.

Review panel evaluation

While leaders view the school's response to this direction as being the one most in its infancy, all students across the school have learning goals that are visible and known to them. All goals are being monitored by teachers, and students are involved in the process. Currently, there is wide variability in setting and monitoring goals identified by teachers and students. In order for students to be able to independently set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timed, agreed upon and reviewed (SMARTAR) goals, they need to understand their achievement (what they know) and the progression of learning (what they need to know). Understanding this will help students independently monitor and review their goals in a timely manner. This cyclic process of assessment, identifying the goal, monitoring its achievement and then setting the next goal to continuously stretch the learning, enables students to be active participants in their learning.

Direction 4 **Build coherence and provide formative feedback on teacher practice through focused observations and walkthroughs by leadership.**

On-track evidence

- A positive and productive culture of learning for both teachers and students now exists.
- Observations and walkthroughs by leadership occur regularly with written feedback.
- Students know that leadership observe teachers in classrooms, where leaders talk to them about their learning.
- Peer observations are occurring, with some teachers filming their practice and sharing it with a 'critical friend'.
- Staff recognise that coaching has been differentiated according to their needs to support them in their practice.
- Staff are more involved in improvement processes than they have been previously.
- PLC and PLC leader structures have been introduced. This supports teachers to work together to trial and reflect on the implementation of high-impact improvement strategies.
- The integrity of agreed programs and strategies are supported by frequently revisiting them through professional learning and PLCs.
- Staff report a greater understanding of what is expected of them, resulting in expectations being implemented by all staff to some degree.
- All teachers are implementing all expectations to some degree in their classrooms.
- Leaders are fully aware of what happens in every classroom and the next steps required for further improvement.
- The perspective survey between 2018 and 2020 indicates double the engagement of staff.
- Parents report stronger relationships with staff and better communication from the school.

Review panel evaluation

Staff are positive about the changes that occurred over the last 12 months at the school. Teachers appreciate the feedback they receive through the '2 stars and a wish' written format, given to them on the same day as the observation in their classrooms. Leader observations and feedback is targeted to the directions from the previous ESR. The school could further improve this structure by realigning the observation of teachers to the school improvement plan and ensuring the 'wish' is followed-up through future performance development processes. This will strengthen the cyclic process of refining strategies to embed best practice. Peer observations and filming of teacher lessons are positively viewed by staff and further build coherence in teacher practice. Professional learning is also aligned to the school's improvement agenda and teachers are implementing all agreed practices to some degree with pockets of excellent practice evident across the school.

Key action to incorporate into the school's planning

Revised direction: Further build teacher capacity to embed consistent effective pedagogical practice by strengthening performance development processes targeted to achieving SIP actions.

Outcomes of the on-track evaluation 2021

Based on the evidence provided, Gawler East Primary School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions.

The review panel found that:

The school has made good progress against the directions from the ESR. Teachers are positive about their work within the improvement agenda. A significant driver of the work has been the establishment of PLCs. PLC leaders are selected to lead the PLC work and to support the conversations and response to SIP expectations for teacher practice in the classroom. Every classroom shows evidence of those expectations being implemented. The school is now well-placed to continue consolidating and embedding all expectations consistently and deeply across the school.

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

Direction 1	**Support teachers to be more strategic and informed in their practice by strengthening their data literacy skills and knowledge.**
Direction 2	**To improve contemporary pedagogical practice use TfEL consistently across all classes.**
Direction 3	**Support the next steps in learning by ensuring all students have individual literacy and numeracy goals.**
Direction 4	**Further build teacher capacity to embed consistent effective pedagogical practice by strengthening performance development processes targeted to achieving SIP actions.**

Based on current performance, Gawler East Primary School will be externally reviewed again in **2023.**

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