

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mount Burr Primary School

Conducted in May 2021



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 Rebecca Pears, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Karen Knox, 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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Mount Burr Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 390kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 44. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 55. The local partnership is South East Coast and Vines.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 947 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 9% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 4% children/young people in care and 41% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the second year of her 3rd tenure.

There are 5 teachers, including 3 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Embed the existing high-leverage strategies across the school that facilitate authentic student engagement, ownership and empowerment in learning.**
- Direction 2** **Implement an evidence-based and regular school self-evaluation cycle that monitors, tracks and refines the implementation of agreed teaching strategies leading to improved student learning growth and achievement over time**
- Direction 3** **Continue to work collaboratively to develop learning task design and moderation in assessment, to enable students to demonstrate successful outcomes in learning.**

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

Every class has developed a class improvement plan with their students, aligned to the school improvement plan (SIP), to ensure the school's priorities are enacted in classrooms. In addition, students have individual learning goals connected to the SIP.

Learning Sprints, based on the main priorities of the SIP, were implemented, and multiple measures of data were collected to monitor the impact of these changes to classroom practice. Successful changes of practice from the sprints were sustained.

A new writing assessment tool has been implemented to ensure consistent assessment practices and to provide the opportunity for teachers to effectively moderate student writing. Learning design and moderation workshops in both mathematics and English have been facilitated with other sites.

Introducing a new literacy intervention program and using a literacy coach across the school helped implement evidence-based teaching practices and programs. Students identified learning goals in literacy and numeracy.

Students presented at workshops as part of STEM at a national conference in Adelaide, and teachers were involved in a year 7/8 collaborative project that involved working closely with a high 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 next steps?

The school is to be commended for their collaborative culture and collective ownership and responsibility for school improvement planning. There is a cyclic process for reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the SIP. Staff have been actively involved in the development of the SIP and can articulate changes they have made in their practice through implementing the school improvement priorities. Examples of these changes include the use of 'bump it up walls', activities based on the Big Ideas in Number and introducing a new phonics program.

Teachers recognised the SIP's impact on student achievement, including improvements in writing scores, Running Records levels and phonics achievement. Multiple measures of data are being regularly analysed and used to monitor the impact of school improvement processes. Every class has developed a class improvement plan with their students, aligned to the SIP, to ensure the school's priorities are enacted in classrooms.

Staff identified the next steps required to strengthen and embed the school's improvement journey, including professional development required. Implementing effective research-based programs resulted in improvements in student achievement as evidenced by data. In addition, teachers are effectively using a literacy coach and departmental resources, such as the guidebooks and learning progressions, to inform their practice.

Learning sprints were implemented in the priority areas and various datasets were used to monitor their impact. Successful changes to classroom practice, developed in these sprints, were sustained over time. Literacy and numeracy agreements were also reviewed and consistently adhered to by teachers.

Whilst multiple measures of data are used to determine the impact of the school improvement processes, the school would also benefit from the deep analysis of achievement data to determine trends across the school and within cohorts. Continuing professional development, to further develop teaching pedagogy which responds to identified trends in the data, will support student achievement.

Direction 1 Further embed collaborative whole-school improvement processes, including the use of data to identify trends in learning, and sharpen the focus of professional development.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve in their learning?

Teachers are very reflective and have a culture of continuous improvement. The school has strategically utilised a literacy coach to observe, model and coach. This has helped to develop coherent practices across year levels. For example, 'bump it up walls' in a range of subject areas, are consistently used in classrooms. Exemplars to model high achievement and how to improve work were incorporated into 'bump it up walls'. Teachers are also providing both written and verbal feedback to students.

To ensure differentiation occurs, the school has small class sizes, and ability groupings are used within classes. School services officers effectively cater for individual student needs. Teachers participated in professional development in mathematics and are using their learnings to analyse students' misconceptions and to implement strategies to improve understanding. Teachers are still trying to find a balance between providing fluency and problem-solving activities in mathematics.

Rubrics are successfully used to inform students about their achievement. Teachers worked with another local school to collaboratively moderate student writing and determine next steps in learning. Some teachers identified that further opportunities to moderate work with other schools would be beneficial.

Students have literacy and numeracy goals based on areas identified through data analysis. They monitor their own progress and are required to collect evidence to verify they have achieved their goal. All classes have assigned time for students to work on progressing their goals. In addition, parents meet with teachers to discuss their child's goals.

Whilst some students were able to articulate their learning goals and strategies for achieving them, this was not consistent across the school. Some students were not able to use the language of learning. They struggled to articulate the strategies they would use to achieve goals. Providing more opportunities for the use of oral language and for students to understand and apply the language of learning will support students to discuss their learning and strengthen their metacognition.

Direction 2 Provide opportunities for students to articulate their thinking and develop and apply the language of learning to deepen their understanding of learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Teachers had a very student-centred approach. They believe that ‘every child is everyone’s business’. In discussions with the panel, teachers referred to the achievement of a range of students, regardless of whether they were in their class. The school is to be commended for their communication with parents. Through the use of an online platform, parents regularly receive photographs of their children working. Parents also reported that they appreciate the small size of the school, as they believe it assists in staff knowing their children well. According to a parent interviewed, the school community is like a “big family”.

The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following directions:

Direction 1 Further embed collaborative whole-school improvement processes, including the use of data to identify trends in learning, and sharpen the focus of professional development.

Direction 2 Provide opportunities for students to articulate their thinking and develop and apply the language of learning to deepen their understanding of learning.

Based on the school’s current performance, Mount Burr Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Anne-Marie Fitzgerald
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Mount Burr Primary School

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 Mount

Burr Primary School from 2016 to 2019.

Further information concerning school performance is available in the school's annual report.

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2016 to 2019, 65% of year 1 and 68% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 41% of year 5 students, and 58% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 29% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 23% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2016 to 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of year 3 students, 45% of year 5 students, and 65% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 19% of year 3, 9% of year 5, and 19% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.