Review details

A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is to improve the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.

The purpose of the External School Review is to support schools to raise achievement, sustain high performance and to provide quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in DECD schools.

The overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?".

This External School Review has evaluated:
- the school’s self review processes and findings,
- the school’s achievement data and progress over time,
- the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and
- parent and student views about the school.

The External School Review included an analysis of the school’s key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Julie Hardy, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Pamela Kent, Review Principal.
Policy compliance
The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Gilles Street Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014 the school's attendance rate was above the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Gilles Street Primary School is city school with approximately 380 students located in the Adelaide CDB. The school provides the community with mainstream education and an intensive English Language Centre (IELC). The school has an ACARA ICSEA score of 1111, and is classified as a Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

Approximately 47% of students have English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) and approximately 3% of students are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The leadership team consists of a Principal, Deputy Principal, Senior Leader - Intensive English Language program and a Coordinator 3 - Innovation and Learning.
Lines of inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: How well are students achieving over time?

Effective Teaching: To what extent is the curriculum coherent from the perspective of the learner as they progress through the school?

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school’s self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

How well are students achieving over time?

Literacy has been an improvement focus at Gilles Street in recent years. The percentage of students achieving the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in reading is generally between 80% and 90% at Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 from 2008 to 2013. Results were lower in 2014. There has been an increase in the percentage of students demonstrating higher level skills by achieving in the Higher Proficiency Bands of NAPLAN in reading, for example, 62% at Year 3 in 2014, up from 56% in 2012. The impact of intervention programs in reading is reflected in the increase in the percentage of students making greater than expected growth between NAPLAN tests. For example in 2012, 30% of students made greater than expected growth between Year 3 and Year 5 and this increased to 40% in 2014. This trend, however, is not evident in progress between Year 5 to Year 7 Reading. The percentage of students achieving the DECD SEA in reading is higher than in numeracy, particularly at Year 7 and the school is currently moving to a closer focus on improving teaching and learning in numeracy as well as literacy.

To what extent is the curriculum coherent from the perspective of the learner as they progress through the school?

When inquiring into how students are supported in their learning, the Review Panel was interested in the extent to which the curriculum is coherent, from the perspective of the learner, as they progress through the school. Students reported that the best things about learning at Gilles Street were the teachers, the interesting classroom environments and the range of subjects, in particular the Arts. Students talked to the Review Panel about their experiences in moving from class to class and identified different approaches by teachers as having both positive and negative aspects. These included differences in class rules, the level of challenge in learning as well as the degree of self-direction and opportunities to work together.

Parents commented on the role of leadership in nurturing a culture that is welcoming and values diversity. They appreciate the ‘personal touch’ from school leaders and staff and describe it as being a parent-friendly school. Proactive communication processes to ensure parents are well informed about their children’s learning are appreciated by parents. However they reported variation in approaches between classes.

The Australian Curriculum guides curriculum across the school and is reported upon. The Review Panel heard that the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) is used to frame the development of students’ deep understandings of concepts and big ideas within learning areas, as well as the development of critical thinking and problem solving and as a scaffold for learning design and classroom practice. Teachers talked about using the Australian Curriculum as a starting point for their planning and the Review Panel saw evidence of this in program documents. Performance development processes explicitly support teachers to reflect on their implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the degree to which they meet the varying needs of the learners in their care.
Data regarding achievement against the Australian Curriculum has been collected and collated school wide but as yet does not form part of the whole of school data analysis that informs teaching and learning. Whole school agreements in reading and writing are used to create a consistent approach to literacy across the curriculum. Agreements have been developed collaboratively and teachers reported that they guide the work in classrooms. A documented scope and sequence in writing also supports consistent practice across the school. This level of alignment is not yet evident in the teaching of maths.

In relation to mathematics improvement, staff members have undertaken a range of professional learning opportunities including the Mathematician in Residence program. The Review Panel heard that teachers use a range of approaches to teaching mathematics. In 2014 the school used a consistent assessment of mathematics from Year 1 to Year 7 to give a whole school picture of student achievement.

**Direction 1**

**Improve student learning outcomes by collaboratively developing, documenting and implementing a consistent whole school approach to numeracy and mathematics teaching**

The school has been focusing on pedagogical reform and taking the lead within the DECD Local Partnership in using the TEL to develop expert learners as part of the TEL Pilot Project. A partnership pilot coordinator is based at the school. The focus in 2014 was on student voice and engagement, with baseline data collected to measure student engagement in Mathematics using the TEL Compass Survey Tool. The Review Panel heard how the results from the TEL Compass Tool were discussed through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and used to inform teaching. Teachers talked to the Review Panel about the ways in which feedback from students has influenced how they teach, for example, providing students with more choice in their learning, greater opportunities for self direction and collaborative learning.

The use of ICT to enhance learning has been another change identified by staff as having had a significant impact on learning. The school is a Microsoft Innovations school. Through this program a group of teachers have explored 21st Century learning dispositions. Teachers identified, using the TEL to support them, to improve pedagogy as a major change at Gilles Street that has impacted on learning in recent years. In 2014, a focus on developing growth mindsets was trialled with a limited number of children. Teachers also reported that this had a positive impact on children’s ability to persist with challenging tasks. Teachers reported that the uptake of using student feedback and the development of growth mindsets varied across the school. The Review Panel noted the potential of these approaches to impact positively on all students’ learning if implemented consistently and widely.

**Direction 2**

**Evaluate current pedagogical work to determine the most effective strategies to improve student learning and implement these consistently in all classrooms**

**How effective are the school’s self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?**

The school’s Strategic Plan 2015–2017 outlines the broad directions in relation to the school priorities: Improve Literacy and Numeracy outcomes, Develop Strong Learner Wellbeing and Develop Empowered Learners. The strategic plan is supported by a detailed annual improvement plan that includes explicit strategies and realistic targets for student outcomes aimed at high achievement. The ongoing school self review processes evaluate progress towards targets in the Site Improvement Plan and determine the direction for ongoing improvement. The leadership team works collaboratively with staff to develop and implement the school improvement agenda. Performance and development practices, professional learning and resourcing are aligned to the improvement priorities.

The leadership team provided the Review Panel with a documented overview of the school’s cycle of review processes including details of what is reviewed, when and by whom. Learning progress is monitored for all students including students in priority groups. The Review Panel saw documented Individual Learning Plans for Aboriginal children and Negotiated Learning Plans for Students with Disabilities that were negotiated with parents and describe teaching and learning outcomes for supported children.
The school has developed and is implementing a plan for the systematic collection of a range of student achievement data as well as feedback from students in relation to teaching and learning. Teachers reported that staff analyse these data sources and use the results to inform their teaching programs.

The school leadership team spoke frankly and openly about the school’s challenges and successes and demonstrated a commitment to finding ways to further improve student outcomes, particularly in numeracy.

In 2014 the ACER Progressive Achievement Test in Mathematics (PAT-M) was introduced to measure growth and identify children at significant risk from Year 1 to Year 7. The test was administered twice within the year to gain baseline data. The initial results were discussed with individual teachers during performance development meetings as well as across year level teams. The Review Panel noted that this initiative will provide the school with valuable information about student learning over time that can evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to teaching numeracy.

**Direction 3**

Support student achievement in the Australian Curriculum, initially in mathematics, and ensure high levels of growth are evident throughout the school by collaboratively analysing achievement data to drive curriculum planning and intervention.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Gilles Street Primary School is tracking well. Good performance was evident through a culture of improvement, the use of pedagogy aligned with the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework to engage students in their learning and the use of student achievement data and other evidence to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels.

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

1. Improve student learning outcomes by collaboratively developing, documenting and implementing a consistent whole of school approach to numeracy and mathematics teaching
2. Evaluate current pedagogical work to determine the most effective strategies to improve student learning and implement these consistently in all classrooms
3. Support student achievement in the Australian Curriculum, initially in mathematics, and ensure high levels of growth are evident throughout the school by collaboratively analysing achievement data to drive curriculum planning and intervention

Based on the school’s current performance, Gilles Street will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Susan Cameron
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school’s Annual Report.

Deborah O’Neill
PRINCIPAL
GILLES STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson