

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR PORT LINCOLN JUNIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Conducted in June 2015



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education  
and Child Development

**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 Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Marlene Henschke, 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 Port Lincoln Junior Primary School advised the following actions are being taken to ensure compliance:

- Developing a process to monitor site bullying data with the Governing Council at least twice a year.
- Developing a Camps and Excursion Policy by the end of 2015.
- Providing workshops for volunteers in Terms 2 and 3 2015 in conjunction with the Primary School. This has subsequently been addressed.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was specifically checked against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, however, was found to be non-compliant with this policy as there was no Attendance Improvement Plan to support the policy. The Principal has given a written undertaking that this will be developed by the end of Term 3, 2015.

In 2014, the school reported attendance of 90.6%, which is below the DECD target of 93%. It was noted the attendance of the students in the Special Class was lower than the average of all other year levels.

### **School context**

Port Lincoln Junior Primary School is located in the regional centre of Port Lincoln. The school caters for approximately 320 students from Reception to Year 2 and has an area special class. The school is located across the road from Port Lincoln Primary School. There is one Governing Council between the schools. The school has an ICSEA score of 966, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 17% Aboriginal students, 10% students with Disabilities and 16.6% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background.

The leadership team consists of a Principal in her first tenure at the school, a newly appointed Deputy Principal from within the staff and a newly appointed Counsellor. An experienced teacher from the staff has been appointed to the position of Coordinator – Australian Curriculum and is released from classroom teaching one day a week. The experience and length of service of the teaching staff varies and consists of approximately 8 early career teachers, including 3 graduate teachers, and 13 teachers with more than ten years' experience and with continuous service at Port Lincoln Junior Primary.

A new stand-alone preschool is being built on the Junior Primary School grounds.

## Lines of inquiry

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

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?</b>
<b>Effective Leadership?</b>	<b>How effectively are professional learning and performance development processes building teacher capacity?</b>
<b>Improvement agenda:</b>	<b>How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?</b>

### How well are students achieving over time?

Port Lincoln Junior Primary School had 97 children start Reception in 2015. Children are continually assessed during Terms 1 and 2 to determine their alphabet recognition, their phonological awareness and sight-word recognition. As they settle into school, many students make rapid progress in these foundational skills. Teachers begin taking Running Records in Term 2 with selected students to check whether they are able to read 100 words in texts up to level 6.

In 2014, 38.5% of Year 1 students met the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) as measured by Running Records. The Running Records are taken regularly and used by teachers as a formative and diagnostic assessment. The levels are entered into the DECD data system and growth is determined between the end of Term 1 and Term 3, twice a year. In the school, the ratio of growth is 17% at low growth, 50% at medium growth and 17% of students in upper growth. An additional 16% of students were deemed as being independent readers and growth rate is not applicable (i.e. above level 26). This growth pattern is similar to the expected ratios. By September 2014, 67.6% or 71 out of 105 Year 2 students met the SEA. The average percentage is between 62% and 68%, except for the 2013 cohort, which was higher than the average.

Port Lincoln Junior Primary School also considers results of the Year 3 NAPLAN tests held in May of each year. In 2014, 75% of Year 3 students met or exceeded the SEA in reading and numeracy. Furthermore, 40% of the Year 3 students achieved in the higher proficiency bands. The proportion was less in the higher bands in numeracy.

### To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

Achievement and growth data is widely used across the school. The Review Panel spoke to groups of teachers about their use of data. They explained that over the past two years teachers have used the data to determine if children are achieving at or above the expected standards, are slightly below standard (Wave 2), or well below (Wave 3). Students identified as being in Wave 3 tend to be verified with a disability or have disrupted attendance at school. This process is used by the teachers with whom the Review Panel spoke to enable them to pinpoint the instructional strategies to support both academic learning and social/emotional development. As teachers are continually assessing students' progress, the groups are reviewed and fluid. Intervention and support is targeted and informed. Teachers told the Review Panel that they work with students requiring step-by-step instruction and repetitive practice (Wave 3), and at other times, they work with Wave 1 and/or Wave 2 students. The Year 2 Professional Learning Community (PLC) decided to use their literacy support resource to provide explicit instruction in the higher order comprehension strategies for the group of independent readers. The Review Panel observed one group of students being extended in their comprehension of a text.

The attendance and achievement of Aboriginal students, is closely tracked by the Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO) and Aboriginal Education Teacher. They also use the 'Wave' approach to target

their actions and interventions. The Review Panel saw photo stories showing how the ACEO had worked with classes to support students to learn about Aboriginal perspectives across curriculum areas. This was verified and powerful as students gave examples of the work, which deepened their understanding of Aboriginal history and culture.

The school has developed and documented a Literacy Assessment agreement which outlines what assessment will be conducted, at what year level and when. This agreement was developed by each year level PLC. The Review Panel observed that an unsupported recount writing sample is collected in Reception and twice in Year 2. The Review Panel recommends the agreement is considered from a whole-school perspective and that a different and more challenging written genre type may be more challenging for Year 2 students. Additionally, the school needs to determine what formative assessment will help teachers to track progress for students who are independent readers.

Some teachers told the Review Panel they are experimenting with different kinds of formative assessment in mathematics and discussing these at their year level PLC meetings. They are using 'target strategies' which outline the skills and concepts students need to learn by the end of each term. These have been modified from professional development training and by using the Australian Curriculum descriptors. The Review Panel understood this is a work in progress and heard how teachers are working collaboratively to develop and trial different approaches.

Similarly, the school has compiled the distribution of A–E grading or equivalent in 2014. At this stage it is too early to identify clear patterns of growth and achievement, however, the data set provides teachers with an opportunity to explore the implications for their assessment practices and consistency across year levels.

The Review Panel heard from many students who knew their level of reading and, more importantly, the strategies to use to decode texts. They could also describe strategies they use in maths and writing tasks. The strategies were visibly displayed in classrooms and used by both teachers and students. Students explained they did not need to ask the teacher all the time as there were sentence starters displayed on their table.

It was clear to the Review Panel that some teachers use metacognition to support students to know what strategies to use to perform a learning task. Students in some classes were also able to talk about how they begin to understand a topic or text by identifying their prior knowledge as a starting point. These pedagogical practices are reflective of the DECD *Teaching for Effective Learning framework* (TfEL). In one class, students described the success criteria used to vote on the best design of a vegetable garden. This is an example of assessment criteria being used across the curriculum and being made transparent and explicit for students. In another class, the teacher provided an exemplar for students showing them a piece of writing that would be graded with an 'A' and why. The use of success or assessment criteria allows students to become 'insiders' of the assessment processes. It makes learning visible and keeps students wanting to improve no matter at what level they are achieving.

#### **Direction 1**

**Support students to continually improve by developing and refining pedagogical practices across the school and by making the success criteria for tasks explicit.**

#### **How effectively are professional learning and performance development processes building teacher capacity?**

The formation of the year level PLCs was highly valued by teachers. While guidelines were developed to describe the way in which PLCs should operate, their success was attributed to the opportunity for teachers to have allocated time in year level teams and professional trust from leadership. There is a culture and drive to continually improve.

The PLCs are focused on students' achievement and growth. Teachers show each other work samples; they discuss reading levels and are beginning to use moderation processes to ensure there is greater consistency in their judgements. Teachers talked about how consistency in assessment was leading to consistency of practice. An example of this was the focus in one PLC on levels of questioning. Each teacher trialled this

approach and shared and reflected on their practice in their PLC. They use their professional learning and the Australian Curriculum to continually refine and inform their planning and practices.

It was evident from examples provided by teachers and in discussion with students, that teachers were applying their new knowledge to their planning and practices. Several teachers talked about how their professional learning in science and mathematics had significantly impacted on their way of thinking about learning. They are using a more inquiring approach and getting students to think more deeply about a problem. They still support students to develop automaticity and fluency in recall skills, but are increasingly supporting students to look at learning from a more problem 'raising and exploring' perspective.

It was noted by the Review Panel that there did not seem to be a forum for sharing the work of the year level PLCs to inform whole-school improvement. While the work of the PLCs was largely focused on students' achievement, growth and teaching pedagogy, the Review Panel was of the view that there needed to be a mechanism to ensure effective communication and collaboration between the PLCs.

The performance development processes in the school are based on the Professional Standards for Teachers and the observational tool supports this work. This is a relatively new approach in the school and provides a balance between career development and continual improvement of each individual's performance.

#### **Direction 2**

**Ensure coherence and consistency for learners by establishing a process and structure to enable a whole school overview of the work of the year level Professional Learning Communities.**

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

The PLC work is an example of regular and effective self-review practices to inform and shape improvement at classroom and year levels. The effectiveness of the whole school 'big picture' self-review processes was less evident. One PLC advised the Review Panel they had considered the evaluation measures in the SIP to provide feedback on whether they were achievable from their perspective. The Review Panel did not get a clear sense that all teachers understood that their classroom work was integral to the achievement of the whole-school targets. The targets were ambitious and mainly focused on the percentage of students achieving the 'benchmark.' The 2015 SIP also includes targets related to mandatory aspects of teachers' work, such as using the Australian Curriculum. The current stated evaluation measures are constructed as a combination of strategies and measures. Additionally, some targets were written as strategies, not targets.

When developing a SIP it is useful to ask: "If implemented, will this plan get the desired lift in student achievement and progress and how will we measure this?" Through the strategic review of the 2015 SIP, the school is encouraged to use the current attendance, achievement and growth data to set their targets and then identify the key improvement strategies that will further stretch students' learning.

#### **Direction 3**

**Use self-review processes to work with staff to evaluate and revise the annual Site Improvement Plan.**

Governing Council members had a good understanding of how their children were progressing with their learning and social development, but less of an understanding of how the school as a whole entity was performing.

There is an opportunity in this process to work more closely with the Governing Council (and the wider school community) as partners and to keep them informed of the school's performance in relation to the DECD standards of attendance and achievement so they may become active partners in the drive for improvement.

#### **Direction 4**

**Work with the Governing Council to ensure it has a clear overview of attendance, achievement, growth trends and stakeholder perceptions to support the school in setting the broad directions for continued improvement.**

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Port Lincoln Junior Primary School is tracking well. Good performance was evident by a strong improvement culture, use of data and formative assessment to guide planning, and collaborative professional learning that is impacting on pedagogical practices.

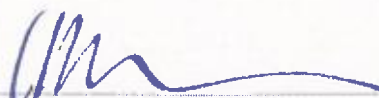
The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Support students to continually improve by developing and refining pedagogical practices across the school and by making the success criteria for tasks explicit.
2. Ensure coherence and consistency for learners by establishing a process and structure to enable a whole school overview of the work of the year level Professional Learning Communities.
3. Use self-review processes to work with staff to evaluate and revise the annual Site Improvement Plan.
4. Work with the Governing Council to ensure it has a clear overview of attendance, achievement, growth trends and stakeholder perceptions to support the school in setting the broad directions for continued improvement.

Based on the school's current performance, Port Lincoln Junior Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunnie  
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.

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Deborah Hemming  
PRINCIPAL  
PORT LINCOLN JUNIOR PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson