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 Robin Harkin, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Brett Darcy, 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 Streaky Bay Area 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 a range of tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy.

It was recommended by the Review Panel that the school keep more detailed documentation about those students considered to be at risk because of poor attendance.

In 2014, the school reported attendance of 90.4%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Streaky Bay Area School is a Reception to Year 12 school and has a current enrolment of approximately 250 students, which has been a consistent trend for the past five years. The school has an ICSEA score of 999 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 7% Students with Disabilities and approximately 40% of families eligible for School Card assistance. The school reported 10% student transience in 2014.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal and Deputy Principal, School Counsellor and three Sub-School Leaders (Primary, Middle School and Senior School).

The Principal is in his third tenure of leadership at the school.

The school is a member of the Far West Partnership.
### Lines of inquiry

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

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#### How well are students achieving over time?

In the early years of schooling, reading is assessed and tracked against Running Records. In 2014, 73% or 16 of the 22 Year 1 students, and 78% or 14 of the 18 Year 2 students, achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) or above, which indicates a generally strong starting point for student reading skills.

The current DECD recommendation is that Running Records testing is done with an introduced or ‘seen’ text. During the course of the review it was revealed that school practice is to test student reading with an ‘unseen’ text, which may in fact be skewing the school’s achievement data down.

It is suggested that the school reviews its current Running Records testing practices so that they align with DECD recommendations, and develop a process for tracking student reading levels each term to ensure greater opportunities for all students to achieve the SEA.

In 2014, the reading results measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 72% of Year 3 students, 67% of Year 5 students, 83% of Year 7 students, and 50% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA. When the Year 9 cohort’s achievement data is tracked back over time, the evidence suggests that this is data specific to the particular cohort, and is below the school’s average Year 9 trend for the past few years.

Higher order reading skills are assessed in the higher proficiency bands in NAPLAN. In relation to students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands, 44% (11 of 25) were in Year 3, 27% (4 of 15) were in Year 5, 17% (4 of 23) were in Year 7, and 13% (2 of 16) were in Year 9.

Retention in the upper proficiency bands over time is one indicator of student achievement. For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading: 2 of the 3 from Year 3 (2012 NAPLAN test) remain in the upper bands at Year 5; 3 of the 6 from Year 3 (2010) remain in the upper bands at Year 7; and 2 of the 3 from Year 3 (2008) remain in the upper bands at Year 9. While the retention rates are relatively high, they represent the achievement of only a small cohort of students over time.

In 2014, the numeracy results measured by NAPLAN, show that 76% of Year 3 students, 60% of Year 5 students, 61% of Year 7 students, and 63% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

In relation to students achieving in the higher proficiency bands in NAPLAN, 16% (4 of 25) were in Year 3, 7% (1 of 15) were in Year 5, 17% (4 of 23) were in Year 7, and 13% (2 of 16) were in Year 9.

The challenge for the school is working to continually lift the numbers of students who are achieving in the upper proficiency bands in both reading and numeracy, particularly at Years 5, 7 and 9.

Student progress in the senior years is measured against the SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education). In 2014, 89% of Year 12 students completed their SACE, which is above the state average. The
DECED Standard of Educational Achievement for Stage 2 SACE is a ‘C’ grade or higher. The school’s Year 12 cohort attempted 39 SACE subjects and 37 (or 95%) were completed at the SEA or higher. It was reported to the Review Panel that a number of students achieved high ATAR scores (some in the high 90s), which was recognised by a SACE Board commendation, and is indicative of a strong focus on senior secondary achievement in the school.

How effectively does leadership facilitate effective teaching and a focus on achievement?

In 2014, the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities focused on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, and implementation of the Australian Curriculum. This year, the SIP has been redeveloped with a stronger focus on quality teaching (pedagogy).

In his presentation, the Principal described a well-coordinated and aligned focus on building teacher skills to effectively deliver the curriculum. Staff have engaged in professional learning delivered from a variety of sources and presenters, and have further developed that work in the various PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) that have been established, and which report back regularly to whole-staff meetings and to leadership. Feedback from staff is that the PLCs work very effectively and are a strong driver of professional growth. During the review, the panel heard comments such as: “That is the sort of work that we do in PLC”.

The quality teaching agenda is being progressed by a strong focus on explicit teaching practices, the development of common agreements, for example, in delivering literacy and numeracy, and is being extended through professional learning that has focused on developing learner skills in higher order thinking or ‘executive function’.

The key elements of the model that has been developed by the school are intentionality or clarity about the learning task, checking and reinforcing prior knowledge (warm-ups), explicitly teaching new concepts (I do, We do, You do model of gradual release of responsibility), common agreements about bookwork and classroom environments, and checking back at the conclusion of each lesson or section of learning, through effective feedback processes and assessment.

The Review Panel saw evidence of implementation of the model across all sections of the school, including senior secondary. Staff members were asked to share and analyse recent assessment tasks at the staff meeting. The panel generally heard and observed examples of well-developed and rich learning and assessment tasks that provided opportunities for stretch and rigour. However, an analysis of grade distribution for semester one would indicate that for some year levels, there is more work to be done by teachers in terms of assessment moderation. A check of student work books also indicated that there is a wide variation in the quality of written feedback provided to students, and this is an opportunity for further growth and discussion by teachers and leadership.

The school is in the early stages of engaging in the work of Carol Dweck, who proposes that people can change their mindset from what she describes as ‘fixed’, or ‘that’s all I can do’, to a ‘growth’ mindset. Her research demonstrates that people can grow their capacities to engage with more complex and rigorous learning through positive self-belief. Growth mindset practices are characterised by terms such as resilience or ‘GRIT’, which is an acronym for Growth, Resilience, Integrity and Tenacity.

During the review, the panel heard evidence of an increasing school focus on developing greater rigour and stretch in student learning. Each day, one lesson is set aside across the school for what is described as ‘extended learning time’. This is an opportunity for teachers and students to engage in learning activities designed to stretch and challenge. A middle school teacher described this as a time when students should be saying: “Okay, you are making my brain hurt now!”

The challenge for the school is to ensure that teachers maintain the intensity and continue to sharpen their practice in this context. Students present as articulate and, generally, are interested in how well they are engaging in their learning. There is an opportunity for teachers to share achievement data with students and work with them to identify specific learning goals that will stretch their learning.
Direction 1
Continue the focus on growth mindset practices and increased learning and teaching rigour, review feedback practices across the school, and work with students to set and work towards personal achievement goals that will stretch their learning.

Practices and outcomes in the senior school exemplify the school’s focus on quality teaching. As reported previously, SACE completion and achievement data is high in comparison to state trends, and this work has been recognised by the SACE Board.

Preparation for SACE commences towards the latter stages of Year 9 when initial course counselling and career pathway conversations occur. These options are firm ed up as part of the student’s Personal Learning Plan (PLP), and Stage 1 Research Project, which begins in Year 10, along with Stage 1 Numeracy and Literacy. Parents report that transition from Year 9 into the senior school is done extremely well by the school.

Students have a range of study options available to them: face-to-face, local delivery that is coordinated through a number of schools across Eyre Peninsula, or through the Open Access College. The Senior School leader and her team monitor and support students closely. Wellbeing and study patterns, including deadline checks, are made regularly using a stop-light system: green – doing fine, amber – more monitoring and supervision needed, red – intervention and support required. Students confirmed that they are well supported by their teachers.

Students have been encouraged to provide critical feedback on teacher practices across the senior school, and this data has been shared with teachers and the Governing Council. Senior School staff have engaged positively in this initiative. One teacher commented that: “It shows students that we are always learning too”. Teachers also engage in at least two peer observation sessions annually.

Performance Development conversations include analysis of the peer observations, reflection on student feedback about their practice, and analysis of assessment/task design practices.

There is significant use of ICT to improve practice and learning opportunities for students. Web alerts and updates are sent to parents and students, deadlines and reminders are posted online, and teachers film introductory lessons for a unit of work and post them on the school intranet for students to access.

There is also an increasing practice of teachers, in both the middle and senior schools, videoing their teaching and inviting feedback from colleagues.

Direction 2
Review practices in the senior school, in particular, but also other sections of the school, and identify those that are contributing to high quality outcomes for students, and adopt them as agreed whole-school practices.

How well is leadership building a culture where there is a positive and focused approach to improvement?

The Review Panel observed and heard of a number of indicators of effective, strategic educational leadership across the school. Parents and teachers report that the school culture is characterised by consultation, trust and commitment to improve student outcomes. Parents invariably spoke positively about the school, its leadership team, and the work of teachers and support staff. Some parents acknowledged that there were teachers at the school who often went ‘above and beyond’ to support their child. The Governing Council believes that the school is tracking well, that they have a good working relationship with the Principal and leadership team, that the school is proactive about a number of important matters, for example, student learning, attendance and bullying, and that there is a positive and forward-thinking leadership.
The Review Panel observed and saw evidence of a number of examples of how leadership is driving the improvement agenda.

Staff professional learning is underpinned by well-developed and coherent performance development processes. Staff report that performance development is clearly aligned to the school's improvement priorities, and to the work of the PLCs.

The Review Panel was provided with a range of data sets and analyses of that data, which provided evidence of a strong focus on self-review and continuous improvement. The school is data rich, and data is generally collected and analysed twice a term. The school's NAPLAN data indicates that a large number of students are tracking well. The challenge for the school is to identify what data and data sets are the most relevant to use to drive the improvement agenda and realisation of the current school priorities.

The PAT-R and PAT-M (Progressive Assessment Tests), which have been developed by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), provide objective, norm-referenced information to teachers about the level of achievement attained by their students in the skills and understanding of reading and mathematics.

The school is now beginning to collect PAT reading and numeracy data. An advantage of the PAT data is that schools can access the data far more quickly than NAPLAN, where there is often a lag time of several months between when testing is done and data received. PAT data can also be aggregated by class, year level or cohort group, for example, and benchmarks can be set to measure either individual or school improvement over time. Student performance can also be analysed to identify any potential areas of teaching or learning focus that might need to be reviewed and re-visited.

There is evidence that there is a correlation between student achievement in PAT tests, NAPLAN and the Australian Curriculum.

Implementation of the Australian Curriculum is a key school priority, and this involves development of moderated assessment and reporting practices using A to E grades or equivalent measures. Moderation is a quality assurance process that ensures consistency and appropriate standards. An analysis of the distribution of grade levels (A to E) awarded in first semester student reports, indicates that there is still some work to be done in terms of moderation of assessment tasks. For example, very few As were awarded in the Primary sub-school and, in the Middle Years sub-school, there was significant variation in the number of A and B grades awarded across some of the year levels. A check of the numbers of students achieving in the Higher proficiency bands in NAPLAN for the various cohorts from the previous year, and this year's A-E grade distribution, also supports this analysis.

**Direction 3**
**Work with staff to review assessment for learning practices as part of teaching design, with a particular focus on developing greater clarity about what influences successful moderation of assessment grades.**

Much work has been done to ensure that improving student learning is the major focus of teacher work, and that the pre-conditions for effective learning are in place. Classrooms are well maintained with resources and learning scaffolds. The Review Panel observed class areas where students were invariably on task and engaged in their learning, and they were able to talk confidently about their learning. Students commented that “this is a good school to attend ... you achieve here”.

There is evidence of significant work being done to build a school culture that is characterised by respectful relationships, emotional wellbeing and connection.

‘KidsMatter’ is a highly regarded Australian mental health and wellbeing framework that has been developed to support and help schools work with parents, carers, health services and the wider community to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.
The take-up by the school, and the wider Streaky Bay community, is significant and the impact on the school is very positive.

The school has also established a mentoring program. It was reported that approximately a dozen students, from across the three sub-schools, receive mentoring support from volunteers, and this contributes positively to their emotional wellbeing and success at school.

The wellbeing agenda is also supported by a very strong anti-bullying focus. Data, using the Survey Monkey tool, has been collected annually since 2009, and is analysed and shared with staff, student leadership, the student body, the Governing Council, community, and the KidsMatter Action team, to set goals and actions. Parents and members of the Governing Council spoke positively about the impact of this initiative, which has seen a significant drop each year in reported bullying incidents in the school.

The leadership team affirmed that its priority is to continue to build a school culture where learning is rigorous and students are challenged. The review highlighted a number of instances where the school can continue to “raise the bar”. The continuing work on growth mindset, and focus on ‘GRIT’ and resilience, is an opportunity to continue to build a school culture where risk-taking and achievement is valued. Similarly, a continuing area of growth for the school is to make even greater use of the broad range of student achievement and perception data available to it, to identify any knowledge gaps and potential growth points in student learning experiences, and to strategically plan incremental improvement goals for both individual students and targeted cohorts across the school.

As an example, there are a number of transition points in the life of this school, and parents generally acknowledge that the school manages these processes well, particularly into the senior school and pathways beyond, and when students first begin the transition from preschool to school. The Review Panel identified this latter transition point as an opportunity for even more focus, when early years teachers might implement an early screening process that focuses on children’s learning development, particularly in early language and phonological awareness skills and capacities, with the intention of identifying areas for early teaching interventions.

**Direction 4**

Work with teachers to maintain a strong focus on increasing rigour and stretch in their teaching and student learning, and to continue to strategically analyse the available data to identify areas for early interventions and incremental improvement.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Streaky Bay Area School is tracking well. There is evidence of a positive, supportive school culture where there is a focus on student wellbeing and raising student achievement, and where leadership is focused on a coherent and aligned improvement agenda.

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

1. Continue the focus on growth mindset practices and increased learning and teaching rigour, review feedback practices across the school, and work with students to set and work towards personal achievement goals that will stretch their learning.

2. Review practices in the senior school, in particular, but also other sections of the school, and identify those that are contributing to high quality outcomes for students, and adopt them as whole-school practices.

3. Work with staff to review assessment for learning practices as part of teaching design, with a particular focus on developing greater clarity about what influences successful moderation of assessment grades.

4. Work with teachers to maintain a strong focus on increasing rigour and stretch in their teaching and student learning, and to continue to strategically analyse the available data to identify areas for early interventions and incremental improvement.

Based on the school’s current performance, Streaky Bay Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL 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.

Chris Roberts  
PRINCIPAL  
Streaky Bay Area School

Governing Council Chairperson