

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR KINGSTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Conducted in August 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 Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Kylie Eggers, 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 Kingston Community 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 reported attendance of 89.8%, which is lower than the DECD target of 93%.

**School context**

Kingston Community School is located in a rural area in the south-east of South Australia, 300kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 336 students in 2015, from Reception to Year 12. The enrolment is gradually declining and this trend is expected to continue. The school has an ICSEA score of 989, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The student population includes 6 Aboriginal students, 11 Students with Disabilities, 2 students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), and 50 students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the third year of his tenure, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal, 2 Coordinators and a Student Counsellor.

### **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 Leadership:</b>	<b>How well does leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?</b>
<b>School Community Partnerships:</b>	<b>To what extent does parent-school partnership positively impact on student learning?</b>

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

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2014, Kingston Community School reported to DECD that 48% of Year 1 and 91% of Year 2 students achieved the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) or above. Between 2012 and 2014 there appears to be an upwards trend in the proportion of Year 2 students meeting the SEA. In 2014, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicated that 63% of Year 3 students achieved the SEA.

The Review Panel explored the reason why there was a significant difference in reading achievement between September in one year (as measured by Running Records) and May (as measured by the NAPLAN reading test), the following year. The school explained they take a basic record on a seen text at Year 2 to report students' levels to DECD Data Management. The school also takes more comprehensive records in which they assess decoding, fluency, reading strategies and comprehension for meaning. Using the school's approach, at the end of 2014, 56.5% of students and 71% of Year 2 students had achieved the SEA. The school needs to address this discrepancy and work with their partnership to develop a common and consistent approach to assessment using Running Records.

In 2014, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of Year 3 students, 65% of Year 5 students, 68% of Year 7 students, and 55% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

There is a 3-year downward trend in the proportion of students meeting the SEA in NAPLAN reading in Years 3, 7 and 9 over the period from 2012 to 2014. In Year 3, for example, 82% met the SEA in 2012, 75% in 2013, and in 2014 the proportion was 63%.

An intensive intervention programme of four sessions a week in the Primary section of the school is provided to students not meeting the SEA in reading. It is reportedly helping those students to 'catch up'. In light of the declining trend at Year 3, the school needs to review its intervention strategy to ensure students' learning needs are identified and addressed as early as possible.

In relation to students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN bands, 26% were in Year 3, 27% were in Year 5, 18% were in Year 7 and 12% were in Year 9. This compares to an average of 34%, 22%, 20% and 17% for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 respectively, between 2008 and 2013.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 77% or 7 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2014, and 80%, or 4 out of 5 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2014.

In 2014, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of Year 3 students, 65% of Year 5 students, 75% of Year 7 students and 55% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA. There is a 3-year downward trend in achievement in Year 9 numeracy. The Review Panel noted that the same proportion of students met

or exceeded the SEA as in reading, except for Year 7, where the proportion was higher (75% compared with 68%. i.e. 2 students).

In relation to students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN bands in numeracy, 18.5% were in Year 3, 19% were in Year 5, 7% were in Year 7 and 18% were in Year 9.

The school has been collecting and analysing the grade allocation in the Australian Curriculum for the past 3 semesters. They are beginning to triangulate the data with attendance and NAPLAN results. It is too early to identify clear trends; however, it appears more students obtain an A or B in English and Mathematics from Year 5 upwards. The staff at Kingston Community School is working towards consistency in their judgement by undertaking moderation processes with two other schools to assess and grade students' writing.

In 2014, 17 students out of a total of 18 (i.e. 94%) completed their SACE. This percentage is consistent with the last 4 years. In 2011 and 2012, 100% of the potential completers achieved their SACE and, in 2013, only 1 out of 21 students did not. Four merits were awarded in 2014. Senior school teachers use a traffic light system to ensure students are on track to complete their SACE.

#### **Direction 1**

**Address the downward trend in the proportion of students meeting the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by reviewing intervention strategies, and act to address identified learning needs as early as possible in children's schooling.**

#### **How well does leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?**

Members of the Leadership Team, teachers and parents reported that over the past two and a half years, the school has become more improvement and learning-focused. Significant changes were made to systems and processes to support a culture of student and staff learning. Position descriptions were redescribed to ensure the job role reflected the school's improvement drive. The terms of reference of committees were developed with a whole-school learning focus and with a clear purpose. Decisions are informed by contemporary research and consideration of relevant data sets. Consensus building processes are undertaken. By the time an initiative reaches the Leadership Team, staff or Governing Council for a decision to be made, respective stakeholders are confident the proposals have been carefully considered and formulated. Decisions about the deployment of teachers and resources have been targeted to contribute to improvement in student learning.

A continuous cycle of review and planning has been established. Consideration of key data sets and students' progress is a continuous process, rather than a one-off event. Staff members have a strong sense of purpose, evidenced by the use of time and the connection of everyone's work to the school's priorities. Teachers talked about a culture in which students are considered everyone's responsibility, not just the responsibility of their class teacher.

Professional learning is ongoing, systematic and encompasses internal and external providers. It is designed to build collegiate or lateral responsibility. Similarly, the performance development processes conducted each term have been developed to support teachers to align their performance objectives with DECD and school priorities. It is a strength-based process and encourages teachers to gain feedback on their performance from a range of sources.

The staff learning teams have been structured to enable teachers to develop Reception to Year 12 understanding of the curriculum and learning. The structures in the school are fluid and responsive to the improvement agenda. A comprehensive site Literacy Agreement outlines beliefs and expectations in standards, programming, assessment and key instructional pedagogies.

Guided reading is a key strategy expected in Primary years to enable teachers to provide differentiated instruction to small groups. The Review Panel observed this occurring in Junior and Middle Primary classes. Teachers provided explicit instruction and explored the text and text purpose with a different group each day. Students were able to explain what they were learning through guided reading. The Review Panel saw

examples in every classroom of the teaching of text types – the structure, the use of time connectives and purpose of the genre. They were less able to explain what they are learning while working independently. A few students said they do silent reading as a learning activity while the teacher is working with the guided reading group.

Students in all year levels talked to the Review Panel about the use of mass-produced worksheets (described by them as ‘sheets’) as being ineffective in supporting their learning and that these were commonly used in reading comprehension, mathematics and history. Some students talked about activities that did not seem to have a clear purpose and they could not see how these activities added to their learning.

To plan and provide rich learning experiences and tasks that support student learning, teachers need a deep understanding of the ideas, concepts and proficiencies in the Australian Curriculum. Teachers may be supported in this next phase of their improvement journey through the Curriculum Action Groups (CATs), which would assist them to have an understanding of the depth and breadth of learning from Foundation to Year 10.

## **Direction 2**

**Ensure that the tasks and activities provided to students add value to their learning by working collaboratively to develop deep pedagogical and content understanding of the Australian Curriculum.**

### **How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

Aboriginal students provided the Review Panel with a presentation on the way in which the school has acknowledged their cultural identity and the work the SRC did to help celebrate reconciliation. The students talked about their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and the support the school provides to help achieve their goals. The students are also encouraged and supported to network with Aboriginal groups and services beyond the school.

Some parents, students and teachers commented on the behaviour of a few students described as being disruptive and distracting. There was a perception from some people that these students gain more attention and this was considered not to be fair or consistent. In the annual parent opinion survey, 65% of respondents stated student behaviour was well-managed by the school; 18% gave a neutral response; and 17% disagreed with this perception. Frequently, this group of students find learning challenging and concentration difficult. The Counsellor and other staff indicated they are endeavouring to work with these students to address their learning difficulties and support them to set short-term achievable goals to help keep them on track. The Review Panel suggests the school monitors its efficacy in relation to behaviour management and is proactive in ensuring staff have the relevant skills and resources to teach self-regulation and resilience.

The views and perceptions of students are highly valued at Kingston Community School. Student feedback on the impact of teaching on their learning has been sought in two ways. Firstly, most teachers have used the TfEL Compass to gather individual feedback. Secondly, the Student Representative Council (SRC) interviewed groups of students in Years 9 to 12 in 2014 and Years 7 and 8 in 2015 to ascertain, from students, what helped them learn. Also, the SRC collected students’ opinions on what does not add value to their learning. These findings were fed back at a staff meeting. Teachers indicated to the Review Panel that they found the feedback insightful and useful, and many have acted on the findings in their own practices. Some teachers highlighted that, as a result of the Compass feedback, they have slowed down their instruction, gone deeper into the topic and ensured the learning intentions are clearly explained and understood.

Students were asked how they were doing in their learning and how did they know. The Review Panel heard that the effectiveness of feedback and use of exemplars varied considerably across the school, and appeared to depend on the teacher. Some students said they found out how they were doing from their reports, at parent interviews, or if they hadn’t been “told off for a while”. The majority of students interviewed by the Review Panel declared they wanted to improve, and if they knew how, they would. The older students provided interesting insights into what kind of feedback was useful. Some students talked about comments on their work from teachers telling them to “edit more carefully” or to “use more ideas”. They commented that if

they had more ideas they would have used them. In their inquiry into quality teaching, the SRC found that some comments from teachers on students' work advising them what to do to improve were seen as negative by younger students.

More effective feedback appeared to comment on the process needed to understand and perform tasks. An example given to the Review Panel was: "You need to use more powerful adjectives to show how the person is feeling e.g. devastated, dreadful".

The use of exemplars was also identified as a strategy used by some teachers to demonstrate to students the difference in work that would constitute an A compared with a C. The Review Panel saw several examples of this in classrooms, including at Year 3 level, and in several curriculum areas.

Students stated that one of the most effective methods of providing feedback occurred when teachers note common mistakes being made by some students. The teacher models for the class why it is a mistake and what the correct or better piece of work would encompass. In other words, it is feedback provided by teachers in a timely, formative manner. Several older students said they really pay attention when teachers do this, even if they haven't made a mistake, as it cues them into what is considered good or quality work.

### **Direction 3**

**Refine formative assessment processes and provide quality feedback, explicit instruction and exemplars to students on how to improve.**

#### **To what extent does parent-school partnership positively impact on student learning?**

The annual parent opinion survey resulted in 22% (45) of families responding. The Review Panel met with 11 parents, some of whom are members of the Governing Council. Through both forums, parents indicated they were satisfied with the communication and responsiveness of the Principal to their concerns.

The aspects of the school that parents would like to see improved related to their desire to have more information about the curriculum, what their children are learning and what progress they are making. Parents with whom the panel spoke are keen to support their child's learning and want to have a positive impact.

The school was aware of this desire from the results of the Parent Survey. They are endeavouring to include information through class curriculum overviews and the school newsletter about the kind of learning students need to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. An earlier newsletter, dated 7 August 2015, included examples of tasks students are doing to develop their collaborative disposition, critical and creative thinking and authentic (real world) learning. The school is considering other forums and methods of engaging with parents in a partnership to support contemporary learning.

### **Direction 4**

**Work with the Governing Council and Student Representative Council to provide parents with learning and curriculum information so that they may confidently make a positive contribution to their children's learning.**

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Kingston Community School has a learning-focused culture and has established structures and systems to support the school's improvement agenda. Student achievement data is used to guide decision-making. The Review Panel found many teachers have responded to student feedback on the effectiveness of their pedagogies and this is expected to be an ongoing process.

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

1. Address the downward trend in the proportion of students meeting the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by reviewing intervention strategies, and act to address identified learning needs as early as possible in children's schooling.
2. Ensure that the tasks and activities provided to students add value to their learning by working collaboratively to develop deep pedagogical and content understanding of the Australian Curriculum.
3. Refine formative assessment processes and provide quality feedback, explicit instruction and exemplars to students on how to improve.
4. Work with the Governing Council and Student Representative Council to provide parents with learning and curriculum information so that they may confidently make a positive contribution to their children's learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Kingston Community School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



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Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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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.



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Martin Lippett  
PRINCIPAL  
KINGSTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL



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Governing Council Chairperson