

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

On-track evaluation report for Frances Primary School

One-year return conducted in February 2020



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3 year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the ESR report is available on the school website.

The ESR framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

In some cases, when the review panel identifies limited achievement and growth, together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school is advised that they will be visited again in 1 rather than 3 years' time (1 year return).

Schools with a 1 year return are assisted by the education director and other department staff to receive additional coordinated and targeted support. This intervention is focused on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve improved student learning results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement.

Following intervention, which occurs for 12-15 months after the ESR, a review panel conducts an on-track evaluation (OTE) to determine the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is the main document used to inform the OTE.

This OTE visit was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate, and Paul Harmer, Review Principal.

The OTE report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Frances Primary School in November 2018.

Directions from the External School Review report November 2018.

- Direction 1** **Work collaboratively to develop and implement whole-school approaches to literacy and numeracy.**
- Direction 2** **Provide growth targets which are data-based, evident and owned by every student and used to track progress.**
- Direction 3** **Increase the level of rigour and challenge to students through quality task design which engages all students through inquiry and problem solving.**

Additional information about the school context

The principal has advised that:

- There had been a decrease in enrolments from 35 to 26.
- The schools leadership structure has changed with the appointment of a new principal at the start of 2019.
- A graduate teacher was appointed in 2019 and another graduate teacher in 2020.
- In 2019, the school has introduced LOTE Spanish across the whole-school.

Development of a school improvement plan

The principal has advised that:

- The actions taken to address the ESR directions was developed in conjunction with the implementation of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) with input from the education director, site leader, principal consultant as well as input from a Learning Improvement Division (LID) Project Officer.
- Meetings to discuss the schools progress has occurred at a site level each week during staff meetings.
- Regular meetings with the Local Education Team (LET), LID and other key stakeholders has occurred 5 times throughout 2019.
- Progress was monitored each term by the education director.

Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

The principal has advised that:

- The principal consultant visited the site and met with site leader on 13 occasions during the year to support and monitor progress. This support also included phone conversations, organising a Senior Leader, Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP) to support teachers to develop their practice, particularly in numeracy and learning design at staff meetings on a regular basis.
- SLLIP facilitated pupil free day sessions.

- LID Project Officer worked with the site around developing literacy agreements and consistency of practice, as well as analysis of data to inform teaching points. The Project Officer also worked one-on-one with a new graduate teacher.
- Additional release time for the site leader for 2 terms was negotiated by the education director through the department's People and Culture Division. This supported the new site leader with release time to focus more intently on the ESR recommendations.
- The principal was supported through a principal mentor program with the mentor principal visiting the school 2 times in addition to regular phone conversations.
- Progress was monitored closely by the principal consultant, with a check-in each term with the education director.

Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the school improvement plan

Direction 1 Work collaboratively to develop and implement whole-school approaches to literacy and numeracy.

On-track evidence

The focus actions identified to address Direction 1 targeted the implementation of educational agreements. Referring to the SIP actions, conversations with staff, relevant documentation and the principal's presentation indicate the following work has been undertaken during 2019:

- The principal, staff, students and parents reported that a culture of high expectation in learning and behaviour is growing from all members of the school community.
- It was evident to the review panel that improved planning and organisational structures across the school has enabled the staff to focus on their reading pedagogy and daily classroom practice.
- A focus in literacy and mathematics has been a catalyst for change in practice amongst teachers.
- The use of a literacy intervention system including expanding Running Record assessments across the whole-school has enabled staff to identify reading levels for all students, develop teaching tasks and monitor progress.
- The use of the literacy agreement, which includes the assessment cycle, has been implemented and is referenced regularly at staff and professional development planning meetings.
- The use of department curriculum reference material such as the literacy and numeracy guidebooks has provided guidance for staff in understanding, developing and implementing explicit teaching strategies to engage all learners.
- The adoption of the learning sprint model is used as a vehicle for improvement and drives learning across the school. An ongoing commitment to using this approach is continuing in 2020.
- The governing council representative identified that literacy and numeracy has been heightened with the introduction of literacy and numeracy agreements, scheduled blocks for daily reading and maths and the focus on getting the basics and fundamentals of these subjects 'right'.

Review panel evaluation

The panel recognised that the principals' work in leading the ESR directions with actions was conducted in a strategic and logical manner to enable a comprehensive approach. This was done with strong support from LET personnel and department specialists. Regular meetings and sessions have been undertaken over the past 12 months involving all school staff.

The collective decision of all staff to refine their focus on reading and numeracy is based on sound data and contemporary teaching practices which has created the opportunity to focus on a more rigorous process of consistency in pedagogy and student learning.

The principals' presentation highlighted the development of a systematic approach to the strategic operation of the school which included developing staff understanding and agreement of high expectations for learning, the use of curriculum agreements and the collective actions in teaching as catalyst for student improvement.

The review panel believes that the school has established an environment that promotes staff capacity with a focus on student learning.

Direction 2 Provide growth targets which are data-based, evident and owned by every student and used to track progress.

On-track evidence

The actions identified to address Direction 2 include the provision and tracking of data-based growth targets and the involvement of students understanding achievement data include:

- Big Ideas in Number and PAT assessment data has been charted for all students and used in the form of a progress data wall for staff to monitor and update.
- All students have individual learning plans which is easily accessed by teachers to update or draw upon to track and monitor student progress.
- The school is currently moving to document student progress through the One Child One Plan (OCOP) for targeted students.
- The use of student data as a catalyst for professional development discussions has been well received by all staff with teachers now discussing student data both formally and informally.
- The principal indicated that professional learning has enabled all staff to be more purposeful through connections of the teaching programs and the data collected to ensure consistency of practice and learning for all students.
- The governing council representative cited that achievement data is presented at council meetings with discussions relating to student progress and the achievement of meeting SIP goals and targets.

Review panel evaluation

The school is collecting, analysing and using data in both a systematic and strategic way. It is using data at the school level to make strategic decisions about curriculum priorities, and at the classroom level to monitor and track student learning. The analysis of data in determining the focus for improvement was evident in classroom planning.

The review panel believes that the school is poised to further develop data literacy knowledge, skills and application of teachers in their planning and teaching. Further work in developing teacher expertise in combining all of the elements of formative assessment strategies with particular reference to student inclusion in understanding achievement data are the next steps for the school to consider.

Direction 3 Increase the level of rigour and challenge to students through quality task design which engages all students through inquiry and problem solving.

On-track evidence

- The school has undertaken intensive professional learning in the Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) process through support from the principal, teaching mentors and LET and SLLIP personnel.
- Teachers indicated that the adoption of programs such as Daily 5, Words Their Way and Jolly Phonics/Grammar have enabled them to design and scaffold the learning for students.
- Given the multi-aged class groupings, the teachers were able to describe the differentiated approaches they used when planning assignments where the modification of the tasks were structured to cater for different learning levels.
- Students could talk about their goals and could see the benefits they have to guide and improve their learning.
- The students were able talk about the level of challenge, mainly in maths, and how initially it is difficult but once the concept is understood the work is easily understood. Several students indicated that the level of challenge presented to them was increasing.
- Some students were able to talk about the growth mindset principles and were able to describe how the learning pit concept helps them with their learning.
- The use of learning intentions and success criteria is a developing aspect of teacher planning and practice, and is recognised by the teachers as an improvement opportunity.

Review panel evaluation

The school recognised the diversity of learners across the school ranging from students with specific learning needs to those students achieving in the higher bands. The principal cited that a changing culture of learning is developing within the school community to a 'school for learning'. This was confirmed by similar comments from the governing council chairperson.

The review panel acknowledged the support provided by the principal, teaching mentors and curriculum consultants in developing their curriculum knowledge, planning of task design and program delivery which has been greatly valued by teachers. The collegiate desire to improve their pedagogy was evident to the review panel.

The principal and staff believe that students have the potential to develop their ability to become more independent with their learning, and are focusing on the task design process to provide student agency within the learning opportunities, that combines success and challenge for all learners.

The next steps for the school is to continue building teacher knowledge and capacity in the current and contemporary practices in teaching and learning through SIP priorities and challenges of practice to enable achievement and growth in student learning.

Outcomes of the on-track evaluation

Based on the evidence provided, Frances Primary School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions.

The review panel found that:

- The influence of the previous ESR directions is evident in the school's improvement.
- The school is effectively using improvement planning processes to raise student achievement.
- Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions.
- Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by effective systems that build capacity.
- The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.
- Effective teaching is developing that actively engages and challenges students.


Based on current performance, Frances Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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