Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Millicent North Primary School

Conducted in October 2021

Review details

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.

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

This report outlines aspects of the school's performance verified through the review process according to the framework. It does not document every aspect of the school's processes, programs, and outcomes.

We acknowledge the support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Sue Mittiga, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Joyce Dinan, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal

- Class visits

- Attendance at staff meeting

- Document analysis

- Discussions with:

    - Governing Council representatives

    - Leaders

    - Parent groups

    - School Services Officers (SSOs)

    - Student representatives

    - Teachers.

School context

Millicent North Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 400kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 239. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 251. The local partnership is South East Coast and Vines.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 946 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 8% Aboriginal students, 36% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 43% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 8th year of tenure, a Deputy Principal (0.6) in their 3rd year of tenure and a wellbeing leader in their 3rd year of tenure.

There are 15 teachers including 3 in the early years of their career and 8 step 9 teachers

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **Embed intellectual stretch and challenge for all students through planned learning across the curriculum, which is strengthened by the implementation of Growth Mindset language and processes.**

Direction 2   **Develop and embed the collaborative design and implementation of learning experiences that will enable differentiation, moderation, and authentic student influence to be an integral part of everyday learning for all students.**

Direction 3   **Strengthen the Site Improvement Plan, providing a framework to guide and review the work of learning teams, year level cohorts, professional learning and performance and development processes.**

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
Direction 1. The school has implemented an online numeracy and literacy program for mathematics that aligns to the Australian Curriculum and identifies student mathematical skills, knowledge, and gaps. Through the pre-tests high achieving students have been identified and staff have designed individual on-line programs for them to progress their learning. Specialised teaching in science and music offers stretch and challenge for students. Direction 2. Learning teams have been formed and actioned. Teachers have worked collaboratively through learning teams to trial some programs across the school. Some teachers with common year levels work collaboratively together to design rubrics for students. Teachers share resources and programs and plan some learning together. Student support officers (SSOs) and teachers collaboratively develop and implement learning intervention programs for individuals and small groups of students. Direction 3. Staff understand the school improvement plan (SIP) goals and targets and analyse data to inform the SIP priorities. Staff are data literate and use data to inform their practice. Professional learning is aligned to the SIP as are some staff performance development plan (PDP) goals. Review processes have been documented in the school improvement plan.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

Quality school improvement planning expands teaching practice and strengthens its impact on student learning. School improvement is data driven. The analysis of whole-school data including NAPLAN, running records and progressive achievement tests (PAT), show an improvement and growth trajectory over time. Staff are data literate, analysing data to review the school improvement plan (SIP) goals and targets and to inform their planning and practice. Staff are committed to improvement as evidenced through their engagement with professional learning and aligning their performance development plan goals to the SIP.

Staff have a clear understanding of the SIP goals and some of the planned actions. They have implemented several evidence-based programs as a result, including a phonemic awareness program, an effective writing assessment tool and the mathematics online program. Pre and post assessment data collected from the implementation of these programs explicitly informs teaching and intervention practices through the identification of gaps in student learning.

When required learning teams have been formed to trial and review actions aligned to the SIP. There is a significant opportunity to establish and implement recurring professional learning community (PLC) processes to trial new pedagogical practices aligned to the SIP that focus on the changes to classroom practice and enable staff to evaluate the impact of these changes. Developing processes for PLCs to share their practice, the impact and evidence of changes with the whole staff would deprivatise practice and promote consistency. Teachers suggested that developing opportunities to participate in peer observations with embedded feedback processes would further deprivatise and strengthen their own practice.

Staff understanding of the SIP challenge of practice and success criteria is not clear. There is a significant need for staff to develop a common understanding and ownership of the SIP through participating in school self-review processes incorporating regular monitoring and check-ins. Engaging in rigorous professional conversations about the impact of their practice on learning would develop a clear line of sight from the SIP challenge of practice and success criteria to classroom practice.

Direction 1   **Develop a shared understanding and ownership of the SIP and the processes to monitor, review and evaluate the impact of changes to classroom teaching and learning.**

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Pedagogy is the science and craft of teaching. How teachers teach is critical to student engagement in learning and their achievement. There are many examples of effective teaching practice. Teachers are data literate and use data to inform their practice, identifying the gaps in learning and the next steps. An evidence-based phonemic awareness program implemented across the junior primary is positively impacting student achievement and delivering consistent technical language for staff and students. Teachers commented that this enabled them to be explicit and responsive to individual student needs.

Evidence-based targeted intervention literacy and numeracy programs are delivered rigorously to ensure students meet the standard of educational achievement (SEA). Programs are delivered through fluid groups and established through analysing individual student progress.

Staff provide effective feedback to students that supports their learning and motivation. Explicit learning and the use of assessment rubrics are evident across the school. Students reported that verbal and written feedback supported them in their learning. Peer feedback is a practice across many classrooms. Junior primary classes use circle time and gallery walks to develop students' language of learning and to give each other explicit feedback. Some students in primary classes reported using rubrics to give peer feedback, stating that it supports and encourages their learning. There is, however, an opportunity to strengthen the feedback from students to teachers about their learning, to further inform teaching and learning.

Teachers are committed to improving their practice and participating in trialling new approaches. Many programs are being investigated and trialled to determine the directions that the school will take to teach writing and spelling. Whilst there were some examples of challenging learning, there is an opportunity for staff to be less reliant on programs and worksheets and to instead plan and program rich learning experiences that will create engagement, stretch, and challenge. It is timely to deepen teachers' conceptual understanding of the curriculum to achieve greater consistent and coherent practices R-7.

Direction 2 **Deepen teachers' conceptual understanding of the Australian Curriculum to plan and deliver rich learning experiences that will drive engagement, stretch, and challenge.**

Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

Authentic student voice involves students in collaboratively planning and making decisions about their learning. Becoming partners in their own learning can strengthen students' meta-cognitive skills equipping them to assess, monitor and regulate their learning. Students have influence in their learning in some curriculum areas and during some lessons, particularly in humanities and social sciences (HASS) where students make decisions through developing content inquiry questions and assessment presentation styles.

Whilst some teachers are confident with teaching students the language of learning and modelled technical language with students, this is not consistently embedded across the school. Students were more able to describe technical vocabulary in mathematics and writing. The school is well positioned to support students to understand and apply the language of learning, through teaching students to use meta cognitive strategies to track, monitor and assess their own learning. Teachers reflected that a next step would be to consistently apply and embed the language of learning across the school.

Whilst learning intentions and success criteria are visible in some classes most students are unsure of what learning intentions and success criteria are. Strengthening and embedding the consistent use of learning intentions and success criteria will further support students to monitor, reflect on, and assess their learning.

Some students have learning goals in mathematics and writing and can describe their goals. There is an opportunity to develop goals and targets with students so that they review their progress as a continual process and are supported to identify the steps they will need to take to accomplish their goals. It is timely for the school to develop processes with students to take ownership of their own learning data and use this to determine their learning goals. The school is well positioned to develop authentic student influence, empowering students to build their language of learning, reflect on how they are going and know and describe their next steps in learning.

Direction 3   **Develop authentic student influence, through empowering students to understand and own their learning data, to set learning goals that are reviewed in a cyclic manner.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Millicent North has a positive, supportive school culture. Students are friendly and respectful. They spoke positively about the school and their teachers. Staff and leadership are committed to school improvement and achieving the best outcomes for students. The school's student achievement data shows consistent growth and improvement over time.

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

Direction 1   **Develop a shared understanding and ownership of the SIP and the processes to monitor, review and evaluate the impact of changes to classroom teaching and learning.**

Direction 2   **Deepen teachers' conceptual understanding of the Australian Curriculum to plan and deliver rich learning experiences that will drive engagement, stretch, and challenge.**

Direction 3   **Develop authentic student influence, through empowering students to understand and own their learning data, to set learning goals that are reviewed in a cyclic manner.**

Based on the school's current performance, Millicent North Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.

Kerry Dollman

Director

Review, Improvement and Accountability

Anne Millard

Executive Director

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools

Graham Slarks

Principal

Millicent North Primary School

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

School performance overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2020 97% of year 1 and 48% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2019 and 2020 the trend for year 1 has been upwards from 63% to 97%.

In 2021 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 91% of year 3 students, 77% of year 5 students and 69% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 7 this result indicates a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2021-year 3 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools. For years 5 and 7 the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2021 50% of year 3, 33% of year 5 and 16% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 67% or 6 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 40% or 4 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2021 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 91% of year 3 students, 83% of year 5 students and 90% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2021 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

Between 2018 and 2021 the trend for year 7 has been upwards from 80% to 90%.

In 2021 27% of year 3, 23% of year 5 and 19% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 62% or 5 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 7% or 5 out of 7students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.