

# **Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### **Report for Elizabeth South Primary School**

Conducted in August 2019



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Debbie Grzechkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Dianna Jarman, Review Principal.

## Review Process

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

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Support Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Elizabeth South Primary School caters for children and young people from reception to year 7. It is situated 25kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 224 students. Enrolment is steady over the past 5 years. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 206.

The school has an ICSEA score of 875, and is classified as Category 1 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 21% Aboriginal students, 34% students with disabilities, 16% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 6 children/young people in care, and 90% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the first year of their second tenure, a deputy principal, a student wellbeing leader, a student support coordinator and a curriculum coordinator. There are nine reception to year 7 mainstream classes. The school also hosts two Area Resource special classes, one junior primary and one primary class.

## Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Strengthen the learning-power capacities of students by providing them with authentic opportunities to influence their own learning; what they learn, how they learn and how they demonstrate their progress.
- Direction 2** Raise student achievement levels by using formative assessment processes to collect and analyse evidence of learning, providing feedback, inform planning and instruction, and monitor progress.
- Direction 3** Extend students and support those experiencing difficulties by ensuring that they can track, monitor and discuss their own learning growth, against the curriculum standards, particularly in numeracy and literacy.

### What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

Since the last review, the previous directions have guided the school improvement agenda. Significant professional learning aligned to the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) has been a feature at the school over the previous three years. A significant outcome of work in this area has been the implementation of a common language for the school ethos across the community. Leadership have strategically appointed staff to work collaboratively, using trauma informed practice in a complex learning environment.

All staff create individual learning plans for identified students. Staff routinely track and triangulate a range of data which is used to access evidenced based intervention programs. Goal setting, learning intentions and success criteria are evident across the school. Leadership have supported staff through strategic coaching and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to enable staff to share and build on their practice.



## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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

The panel found that all teachers are engaging with a wide range of achievement and growth data, supported by a published data collection schedule. Leadership have aligned staff meeting structures and PLCs to facilitate the opportunity for staff to meet regularly and interrogate data as part of ongoing practice.

The leadership team has a clear understanding of how to achieve improvement outcomes at Elizabeth South Primary School. Staff are supported through a strong coaching model focused on pedagogical improvement to enable delivery on the SIP goals. Teaching staff have monitored the improvement plan in their PLCs, and there is further opportunity to build whole-school review through monitoring the plan collectively and reviewing the practice of all PLCs against the SIP.

Leadership regularly observe teacher practice on a formal basis and through their coaching program. However, most staff indicated they would like formal feedback on their performance and are open to ways of improving current practice. Using focused observations to improve teacher pedagogy is a critical driver for school improvement and although Professional Development programs (PDPs) are linked to the SIP, not all staff have received an observation or had feedback from observations provided, which the panel felt would provide further opportunity to link teacher practice directly to the SIP.

The panel evidenced clear structures and processes to support the improvement agenda at Elizabeth South Primary School. Leaders take an instructional approach and actively support the building of capacity in others through a structured coaching model. However, the panel felt that the biggest barrier to delivering on the SIP was the volume of student behaviour impacting on the learning. The overwhelming evidence from staff, students and parents indicated that consistency and clarity around behaviour was needed, with the majority of staff indicating this was an area for further development. The school has a strong wellbeing and positive education focus, but with new staff joining the school the panel believes there was opportunity to revisit, support and clarify behaviour expectations which would strengthen the focus back onto learning and contribute to growth outcomes in student achievement.

**Direction 1**      **To enable a strong focus on learning collaboratively re-visit behaviour education to ensure it is trauma aware, developmentally appropriate and consistently understood.**

### EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

#### *How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?*

All classes at Elizabeth South Primary School are open, deprivatised spaces where staff genuinely want to support student learning. The strategic and differentiated coaching offered by leadership is building capacity and shaping the 'Elizabeth South' way of doing things. Staff appreciate the coaching model which supports the concept of learning sprints and provides teachers with tangible data showing the impact of changes to their pedagogy. The principal and deputy principal coach together, however, not all staff currently access this coaching. The panel felt there was opportunity for leaders to coach individually and amplify the impact of the coaching model across all classes.

All identified students have a current individual learning plan to support and direct their learning, with staff being allocated time to enable the production and review of plans. SSOs deliver a mix of class and group support as well as providing quality, evidenced based intervention.



The panel evidenced that teachers had good understanding of the Australian Curriculum with most teachers using pre-assessment to refine planning and post-assessment to track student growth. All staff track data to identify students but the panel found little evidence of how this was being used to inform student learning as differentiated lessons were not evidenced as consistent practice.

Most students who spoke with the panel indicated that their work was 'too easy' and felt they needed to be challenged and provided with harder work to push and stretch their learning. Tasks evidenced in bookwork, and through discussions and observations provided limited opportunity to achieve higher grades. Students and staff all report that teaching is interrupted by behaviour, with students feeling they are given 'busy' and 'repetitive' work whilst staff manage behaviour.

Evidence reveals that if students access a differentiated curriculum with engaging tasks at their level, anxiety and behaviour incidents reduce. The panel felt that increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes would enable stretch and challenge to become routine practice for all students. Supporting all staff through the strategic coaching model would further strengthen this capacity.

**Direction 2** For all students to receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge, strengthen teachers' capacity in learning design and use of data for intentional teaching.

## CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING


### *To what extent does the school provide conditions for effective student learning?*

All students who met with the panel stated that they felt connected to the school and report being supported by staff who genuinely care about them. The values are known by all students and underpin the ethos of Elizabeth South. It is apparent that staff have created positive, enriched and flexible learning environments to welcome and support students. The panel evidenced scaffolds and prompts in all classrooms but felt this could be further enhanced to include Aboriginal perspectives through the use of visuals across all classes.

The school has utilised space to create an interoception area and a wellbeing hub which provide safe areas for students to de-escalate and work with staff to self-regulate before re-entering class. The intent of these areas is clear, but the panel felt further clarity is needed to ensure the areas are used to their full potential. Staff reported inconsistencies within these areas provided mixed messages and sometimes resulted in students not participating in triage conversations before returning to class.

Students are further supported by regular goal setting, learning intentions and success criteria. Whilst there was consistency in expectation, the panel evidenced practice in these areas varied between classrooms. Some teachers have clear learning intentions and success criteria which are understood and support student outcomes, but this was not evidenced as consistent practice and identified as an area for improvement.

Although students feel strongly connected to adults at Elizabeth South Primary School, they report a sense of frustration with having no voice in their learning or the running of the school. Student Representative Council is currently not in operation which has resulted in students feeling disempowered. The panel evidenced a vibrant student community who would like input into their school and their learning, but felt they had no avenue to explore this further. A few staff hold class meetings but students have little opportunity to impact on whole-school issues. Implementing and embedding processes which provide all students with regular opportunities to provide input into their learning will deepen their ownership and promote their sense of themselves as learners.



**Direction 3**    Enable students to authentically own their learning through collaboratively developing and embedding student agency through the creation of student forums and the consistent implementation of teaching pedagogies.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Elizabeth South Primary School has a welcoming atmosphere and a strong wellbeing focus. Staff are a united and collegiate team who want the best for their students. Students feel their teachers genuinely care about them and these strong relationships are evident throughout the school.

Parents and Governing Council representatives report that staff are approachable and there is good communication. They are very supportive of the leadership team and appreciate how they embody schools values. Staff are supported by a strategic leadership model of robust coaching. The school strategically uses space to create areas such as the wellbeing hub, rainforest area, nature play and central areas.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1 To enable a strong focus on learning collaboratively re-visit behaviour education to ensure it is trauma aware, developmentally appropriate and consistently understood.
- Direction 2 For all students to receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge, strengthen teachers' capacity in learning design and use of data for intentional teaching.
- Direction 3 Enable students to authentically own their learning through collaboratively developing and embedding student agency through the creation of student forums and the consistent implementation of teaching pedagogies.

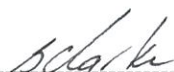
Based on the school's current performance, Elizabeth South Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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