

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Freeling Primary School

Conducted in November 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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Liz Pelling, 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

Freeling School P-7 caters for students from pre-school to year 7. It is situated 67 kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 348. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 367. The local partnership is Goyder & Light.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 980 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 5% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, less than 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 26% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of an Acting Principal (appointed in term 3 2021), a Deputy Principal (Band 2), a Student Wellbeing Coordinator (Band 1), and a Literacy Coordinator (Band 1).

There are 22 (including 10 part-time) teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 5 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Continue to build on the capacity of staff in the design of consistent teaching practices in numeracy that link student learning from reception to year 7.
- Direction 2** Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.
- Direction 3** Develop and embed authentic student influence on learning, which is strengthened by embedding learning intentions, goal setting, and student feedback as part of regular reviews, including at the beginning and the end of units of work.

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

The numeracy agreement was reviewed and refined in 2019 with the appointment of a numeracy and STEM leader. Scheduled professional learning and spotlight sessions have built staff capacity in Big Ideas in Number (BiIN) pedagogies with screening techniques being undertaken during each term. Agreed mathematics strategies were revisited to ensure consistency of lesson structures and the use of a common language. The leadership team have made targeted observations of mathematics lessons and provided feedback to the staff of observed strengths and areas for improvement.

Analysis of BiIN, NAPLAN and progressive achievement test (PAT-M) data identified areas of challenge and informed teaching and learning programs. Teaching teams collaboratively planned mathematics tasks designed to provide stretch. Agreements were reached in moderation activities to gain greater consistency in task design and judgement. Department for Education scope and sequence and units of work have been trialled with further development of resources that are easily accessible to all staff. School improvement committees met twice per term to track progress towards the goals and the development of the challenge of practice (COP).

Leadership in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing have been maintained for the life of the school improvement plan (SIP). Targeted professional learning in programs that support literacy and numeracy development, and open-ended tasks in numeracy have maintained staff knowledge and skills. Investigation of NAPLAN data identified the need to focus on developing and retaining high band students. Professional learning on high impact teaching strategies was undertaken with staff documenting a commitment to action. Expectations of teacher programming were established referencing agreements and SIP priorities. These were collected and reviewed by line managers with leaders formally and informally monitoring classroom practise and providing feedback to teachers. At the end of 2020, professional learning communities (PLCs) were established to provide opportunities for professional dialogue and reflective considerations of practice referencing evidence-based embedded formative assessment and how to support young writers from birth to year 8.

Leaders provided support for teachers to communicate their learning intentions for each lesson or co-construct them with students. In the upper primary team, collaborative planning was well supported through the enterprise education project, writing assessment tool, moderation, feedback, and next steps planning. Professional learning in growth mindsets and goal setting has supported the development of students constructing SMART goals. Developments in the co-construction of success criteria and bump-it-up walls has supported writing and mathematics learning. PLC work has enhanced teacher skills in providing feedback to students and a focus on pre, and post-testing to develop the collection of learner growth data sets.

Changes to the student cohort, pandemic interruptions, building programs, staff sickness and leadership changes have challenged the development of the directions resulted in the necessity for them to be ongoing work.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The school has undertaken a collaborative, evidence-based approach to developing the SIP goals, actions, and challenges of practice for teachers to improve success in reading, writing, and mathematics. A range of learning and wellbeing data is collected, analysed, and reviewed to monitor the progress and impact on student learning at a school, team, and individual class level. All staff are assigned to the literacy or numeracy SIP committee, where review of data and critical reflection tracks progress of improvement priorities each term. Whole school and year level progress is monitored through staff and team meetings and pupil free days. Collaborative whole-school data analysis occurs each term, with a particular focus in term 4 on reviewing progress against agreed targets and resetting for the following year. Collaborative moderation in literacy has influenced practice and built shared understanding and consistency of judgement.

Teachers positively described teaching team structures have provided cohesion, professional dialogue and support. Many were positive in their descriptions of spotlight sessions in staff meetings for sharing of best practices. Professional learning has been targeted and supportive in building teacher capacity in school priorities. Professional development planning (PDP) processes are well documented, understood by all staff and aligned through agreed goals with professional learning and the SIP. Teachers are required to provide evidence of improvement and impact in their discussions with line managers. Classroom observations and student feedback were strategies used to collect feedback but were not prominent in current practice. Revisiting and strengthening these strategies would provide valuable sources of evidence for teacher reflection.

Teachers' responses were limited in describing how they use evidence-based practices of self-reflection that lead to improvements in and agreements of best practice. Some referenced collaborative work in improvement teams or past professional learning communities for this work. An opportunity exists to review, connect, and reach agreements on processes and structures that enable teachers and leaders to reflect and monitor their impact on learning.

Direction 1 **Strengthen teacher evidence-based critical reflection through connected, purposeful structures and processes to know their impact on student achievement and influence practice.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Several elements govern teaching and learning including evidence-based pedagogy and programs. Classroom observations and conversations with teachers confirmed a clear understanding of curriculum requirements and their implementation in highly supportive learning environments. School improvement plan priorities are well supported, with a range of evidence-based pedagogical practices and programs demonstrated across the school.

Statements of practice provide clear guidance for teachers in links to curriculum, expectations of quality teaching, delivery of agreed evidence-based programs, assessment and intervention strategies and resources. Many aspects of these agreements were implemented successfully, including learning intentions and success criteria visible in all classrooms, and teachers demonstrating through observed practice. Most students could explain the learning task, referencing learning intentions, and what they needed to do to succeed.

Teachers use evidence of student achievement and wellbeing to plan for learning. Composite classes and an increasingly diverse student cohort challenged their ability to differentiate learning successfully. In several classes, student groupings allowed teachers and support staff to implement activities and utilise learning plans, achievement data and anecdotal evidence to determine and monitor individual student and group progress. Teachers and leaders described and demonstrated various pedagogical approaches to differentiate the learning, including learning tasks with multiple entry points, open-ended problems, scaffolding, class groupings, school services officers (SSO) support, questioning and formative feedback, and modelled writing. Many staff acknowledged that students in higher achievement bands needed greater attention.

Teacher responses varied in the clarity and understanding of highly effective evidence-based pedagogical practices and differentiated learning. Some teachers described elements of high impact teaching strategies, while others described choices or levels in tasks. It is timely to review the effectiveness and connection of current practice to student achievement data and how teacher practice can meet all learners' needs to provide stretch and challenge.

Direction 2 **To support stretch and challenge student learning, revisit and consolidate agreements of high impact teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students.**

Effective leadership

How effective are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes in building teacher capacity?

Teachers and SSOs described their leaders as very supportive, having high expectations and being passionate about student success. They valued the collaboration with leadership in developing programs, documented agreements of practice and resources in literacy, numeracy, and wellbeing to provide clarity in their work. Targeted professional learning has built teacher capacity in the identified priorities for improvement which has been well received by staff. Recent leadership changes may necessitate a review of roles to maintain the alignment of leadership support for agreed priorities.

Many staff commented that they value opportunities to receive feedback from peers and leadership to support improved practice. Several described the importance of their teams and how they shared practice and provided support for each other. They believed their sub-school and improvement teams could be strengthened with designated time to reflect on and share practice. Specialist teachers have perceptions of isolation from the improvement work. Developing their capacity in relation to the school priorities would enhance whole-school approaches to literacy and numeracy.

Professional learning and PLCs have provided an opportunity for staff to develop their understanding and skill in areas aligned to the SIP. While professional development processes are well-documented descriptions by staff of current practice vary in the clarity of expectations and consistency of the process. Connecting a range of consistent, evidence based professional development processes linked to school priorities, providing effective feedback would improve practice for all.

Leadership has identified priorities for future development, including reflecting on and addressing the barriers to effective instructional leadership and aligning their roles in supporting and building teacher and SSO capacity. The development and consolidation of a range of well-structured and connected professional development and professional learning processes will support improvements in practice and student learning outcomes.

Direction 3 To achieve school priorities and student learning targets, develop and connect robust performance development structures and procedures (mentoring, coaching walkthroughs, and observations) that build staff capacity.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

At Freeling Primary School, the influence of the previous External School Review directions is evident in the school's improvement. The demonstrated growth in student achievement is at or above what a similar school would expect in a similar context. There is a coherent and engaging curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum and appropriate pre-foundation curriculum. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Strengthen teacher evidence-based critical reflection through connected, purposeful structures and processes to know their impact on student achievement and influence practice.**
- Direction 2** **To support stretch and challenge student learning, revisit and consolidate agreements of high impact teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students.**
- Direction 3** **To achieve school priorities and student learning targets, develop and connect robust performance development structures and procedures (mentoring, coaching walkthroughs, and observations) that build staff capacity.**

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



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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 79% of year 1 and 60% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2021 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 83% of year 3 students, 92% of year 5 students and 70% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5 an improvement, and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2021 21% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 9% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 44% or 4 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 38% or 3 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2021 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 66% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and year 7 this result represents a decline, and for year 5 an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2021 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving lower for year 3 and within for years 5 and 7 the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2021 13% of year 3, 8% of year 5 and 20% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 60% or 3 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 67% or 4 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

