

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

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Report for Jamestown Community School

Conducted in July 2017



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 framework underpinning the External School Review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.*

*The overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"*

*This Report of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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.*

*The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.*

*This External School Review was conducted by June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Cindy McGarry, Review Principal.*

## School context

Jamestown Community School is located 216kms from the Adelaide CBD. There has been a steady decline in student enrolments from 282 in 2013 to 250 in 2015. The school has an ICSEA score of 997, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 0.4% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1 child in care, and 20% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal who was contracted to the school for 2017, a Deputy Principal, and 2 sub-school leaders, Intervention and Wellbeing Coordinators.

The school is a member of the Upper Mid North Partnership.

## Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

**Effective Teaching:** To what extent is there a culture of improvement that provides for the varied needs of all students?

**Improvement Agenda:** How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

**Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

## To what extent is there a culture of improvement that provides for the varied needs of all students?

Jamestown Community School has had a number of changes in leadership in recent times, with the current Principal appointed on a one-year contract. In this context, the 2017 Leadership Team came together before the commencement of the school year with the intentional focus to build the team and provide clear direction for the school. Building the collegiality within the Leadership Team was a purposeful action, with the aim of driving the improvement agenda across the whole school.

The Principal spoke of the deliberate focus to review and document purposeful actions, which will then provide the catalyst for sustainable improvement in the years ahead. The Site Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP), together with the strategies for each priority area, was developed. To build ownership and individual and collective commitment there was a comprehensive consultation and reflection process with all stakeholders. Staff members spoke of the continual process of providing evidence and timely celebrations to acknowledge the improvement journey. Staff spoke of their appreciation of being involved and how they are regularly consulted in the process. Governing Council and parent representatives also commented on the high level of communication and their involvement in the review and improvement planning process.

Jamestown, like many communities, is undergoing a change as new families move into town. All students need support to develop personal dispositions to be resilient and flexible, to learn strategies that can be transferrable and to be able to solve problems and address challenges. The School Counsellor shared the actions that have been taken to develop students' resilience and stamina, particularly for those students new to the school.

The change in demographic profile of the school has resulted in a broader range of student skills and knowledge levels within each class. Staff commented on the need for high expectations for students and to provide a differentiated curriculum. This requires teachers to be conversant with students' skill strengths

and needs, so that teachers know where the student 'is at' and where they 'should be'. Through conversations, and observations, it appeared to the Review Panel that this was a 'work in progress.' Teachers are tending to pitch their instruction to the 'middle', rather than designing learning experiences that scaffold and tailor the learning for all students to support them to progress.

At times there appeared to be a difference between teachers' cultural norms or expectations of the classroom and that of some students. Some students spoke of how their teacher asks the same students and how those not asked tend to feel unimportant, as an unintended result. Teachers have a professional responsibility to apply strategies to build all students' academic self-concept, and a belief in themselves that they can all learn and participate in the class, and ensure it is not just the dominant group that have a voice.

#### **Direction 1**

**Maintain high expectations while supporting all students to make progress through more tailored and targeted planning and personalised teaching practices.**

### **How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?**

The Review Panel was keen to explore the depth of understanding of how data and evidence is used to inform improvement processes and strategic evaluation and planning. The Principal acknowledged the school is collecting and looking at data, however, "*what we're lacking are the actions or next steps as a result of the data*". Staff in conversations spoke of data to inform planning and programming as an area they want to improve.

The Review Panel sighted evidence of how the school is collecting data from a range of school-based tests. While this is purposeful at this time, the triangulation of this information with process and perception data isn't as strong. This inhibits the school's ability to conduct strategic evaluations to determine if programs and models of learning are having a desired impact and, if not, why, and which cohorts of students are not gaining sufficient benefit.

The Review Panel heard of various programs and models of learning, some of which have been traditionally in place for many years. For example, the school adopted a common approach to teaching reading and writing (WRAP) some years ago. An examination of the student achievement in reading suggests the impact of WRAP has not been sustained over time. A much deeper data analysis at a diagnostic level is required to find out which students have made or exceeded expected progress, who may be benefiting from this approach and who isn't. While the school has sought to provide a common and consistent approach for students, they also need to be confident that these approaches are having a positive impact, rather than staying with an approach because 'it's what has always been done'.

Another area that the use of data could assist in decision-making is the high use of TRTs to cover classes and the impact it was having on student learning. The Review Panel recommends a rigorous review of all school activities and events to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is not impacted negatively as a result of these additional activities and events.

In summary, schools need to evaluate, using perception, progress and achievement data, to be sure that programs, traditions and models of learning continue to provide a positive impact on student learning. The Review Panel found the staff members want to do their best for students and are willing and wanting to improve. The school's narrative needs to become one of ongoing evaluation to inform strategic planning and teaching practices for improvement.

#### **Direction 2**

**Develop and enact rigorous evaluation of programs and practices over time, to ensure they are having the intended positive impact on students' learning, and make strategic decisions and plans on the basis of this evidence.**

### To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

The Review Panel noted that there is a percentage of students achieving in higher proficiency bands as measured by NAPLAN, PAT tests, and the Achievement Standards in the Australian Curriculum. The Review Panel was interested to find out how these students are intellectually challenged and progress in their learning. In response to the survey conducted for the review, many teachers indicated the provision of intellectual stretch is an aspect of their teaching they would like to work on.

When students were asked how they are challenged and stretched, they spoke about being given a harder worksheet, or going to an older year level class to get a worksheet. Some stated they only do what they have to and take their time, otherwise, there is an expectation they help others, and then others rely too heavily on them for the answers. Some students admitted they were coasting, and it not often they experienced learning challenges. This sentiment was expressed in the middle school, but was not as evident in the senior school where most students 'put their heads down'.

The Review Panel did not get a clear picture of how students are supported and expected to apply their learning in new contexts. There were few examples of students involved in creative and critical thinking. Students were able to talk about the tasks they did, but not the key conceptual understandings that stretch their thinking. The Review Panel observed pockets of very effective practices where students were highly engaged and involved in their learning at a deeper level; however, these practices were not evident in every class. The sharing of good practice is happening and appreciated by staff. This opportunity needs to be extended and deepened so that all teachers become proficient in learning design that facilitates higher-order thinking.

Learning design is inextricably linked to assessment of student learning. Parents and students should feel confident that their work products would be of the same standard, regardless of the teacher and school. The Review Panel noted there did not appear to be a common understanding about the criteria for a particular grade. Some students spoke of how rubrics are shared with them, however, when they get their reports it doesn't match with what they believed the criteria were. Involving students as co-constructors in designing assessment criteria, such as rubrics, empowers them in developing their understandings of the standards (A-E) and what they can do to improve their own learning.

The opportunity to moderate student work to build consistency in the judgement across the school would be advantageous. Student work samples will provide the basis to allocate a grade level, but the value of moderation is the professional reflection about the rigour of the tasks provided to students. Additionally, moderation processes provide teachers with the opportunity to converse with others about the interpretation of the descriptors in the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards. This process could then be extended to the Partnership and beyond, empowering staff with the confidence to bring their knowledge to class and student level when designing tasks and discussing success criteria.

#### **Direction 3**

**Challenge all learners to improve through the design of learning tasks, making learning intentions clear and involving students as co-constructors in the criteria for success.**

### What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Jamestown Community School.

**An effective improvement culture exists that recognises the need for continuous monitoring, evaluation and self-review processes.** Staff and parents all referred to the ongoing processes of consultation and reflection to support the school's improvement agenda as positive and effective. Clear documentation, together with the ongoing indicators of success and the processes used, will support the sustainability and careful monitoring of the Site Learning Improvement Plan. All staff and parents commented on the effective communication and mutual trust between all the stakeholders. Parents and students referred to the Leadership Team as being visible and approachable.

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Jamestown Community School's effective Leadership Team provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions, which will support the ongoing improvement agenda from 2018 and beyond.

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

1. Maintain high expectations while supporting all students to make progress through more tailored and targeted planning and personalised teaching practices.
2. Develop and enact rigorous evaluation of programs and practices over time, to ensure they are having the intended positive impact on students' learning, and make strategic decisions and plans on the basis of this evidence.
3. Challenge all learners to improve through the design of learning tasks, making learning intentions clear and involving students as co-constructors in the criteria for success.

Based on the school's current performance, Jamestown Community School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Mark Ireland  
PRINCIPAL  
JAMESTOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

## Appendix One

### Policy compliance

*The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.*

The Principal of Jamestown Community of School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 91.7%.

## Appendix Two

### School Performance Overview

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

#### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 73% of Year 1 and 65% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). For Years 1 and 2, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of Year 3 students, 80% of Year 5 students, 55% of Year 7 students, and 83% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 9, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Years 3 and 7 has been downwards, from 83% in 2014 to 74% in 2016 in Year 3, and from 89% in 2014 to 55% in 2016 in Year 7.

For Years 3, 5 and 7, the school is achieving within, and for Year 9 the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 32% of Year 3, 50% of Year 5, 18% of Year 7 and 21% of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 3 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, 2 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7, 2 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 and 4 of 5 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016.

#### Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 84% of Year 3 students, 80% of Year 5 students, 73% of Year 7 students, and 90% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Year 3, 5 and 9, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been downwards, from 89% in 2014 to 73% in 2016.

For 2016 Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 11% of Year 3, 30% of Year 5, 9% of Year 7, and no Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Years 3 and 9 has been downwards, from 67% in 2014 to 11% in

2016 for Year 3, and 18% in 2014 to none in 2016 for Year 9. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 8% in 2014 to 30% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 3 of 6 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, 1 of 1 students from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 7, no students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9, and no students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016.

### **SACE**

In terms of SACE completion in 2016, 75% of students enrolled in February and 89% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE, did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2016, 86% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 96% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Literacy units, 87% successfully completed their Stage 1 Numeracy units, and 95% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-four percent of grades achieved in the 2016 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2016, 21% of students achieved an 'A' Grade, and 36% achieved a 'B' Grade. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline averages for the 'B' Grade and an improvement from the historic baseline average for the 'A' Grade.

In terms of 2016 tertiary entrance, 10 students achieved an ATAR and 13 students achieved TAFE SA selection score. There were also 2 students who were successful at achieving a merit.