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

This External School Review has evaluated:
- the school's self-review processes and findings,
- the school's achievement data and progress over time,
- the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and
- parent and student views about the school.

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

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

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Josephine McBain, Review Principal.
**Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of North Adelaide Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal of North Adelaide Primary School advised of the actions being undertaken to ensure compliance:

**School organisation**
- Monitor the site bullying data at least twice a year. The school has implemented a bullying and harassment policy and has the required data. This data was not reported to Governing Council in 2014 and does not appear in the 2014 Annual Report; however, the school has plans to do so in 2015.
- Camps and Excursions policy. The school is compliant with DECD requirements, however, does not have a documented policy. The school is in the process of documenting this policy.

**Safety**
- The school is currently compliant with the Volunteer Policy in line with DECD guidelines. The policy is in the process of ratification by the Governing Council.

**Site Procedures**
- Business Manager documentation and assurance is not current. Effective management to address this system has been put into place to address the backlog and future requirements.

**Governance**
- The Governing Council and the school leadership team have agreed to strengthen their collaboration in the development and review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- Previously, student achievement has not been discussed at Governing Council meetings. It has been agreed this data will be presented as part of the Principal’s Report to the Governing Council.
- The link between the school budget and SIP priorities will be made clearer at Governing Council meetings.
- Suspension data will continue to be reported to the Governing Council and extended to include exclusions and expulsions.

Implementation of the **DECD Student Attendance policy** was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 93.4%, which exceeds the DECD target of 93%.

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**School context**

North Adelaide Primary School is an inner metropolitan zoned Reception to Year 7 school with a current enrolment of 301. The school was one of the first schools in South Australia, established in 1877. It has limited space and is currently at capacity. The school has an ICSEA score of 1132, and is classified as a Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 74 (21%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background. Students come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, some have lived in Australia for only a year before starting school, and their families have had experience in school systems outside of Australia.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal appointed at the beginning of 2015, and two Assistant Principals; one has responsibility for the primary section of the school and resource-based learning and the other has a teaching role and responsibility for the junior primary section of the school.
Lines of inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

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How well are students achieving over time?

A majority of students at North Adelaide Primary School achieve above the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in Running Records. By September 2014, 33 out of 37 Year 2 students had met the SEA. The percentage of students achieving this level of performance has been consistently high over the 2011 to 2014 period.

Achievement of the SEA in NAPLAN reading is similar across year levels. Two students in Year 3, two in Year 5 and two in Year 7 did not achieve the SEA in reading. In numeracy, the number of students demonstrating expected achievement was slightly lower, with three students in Year 3, four in Year 5 and seven in Year 7 achieving the SEA. The proportion of Year 7 students not meeting the SEA in numeracy in 2014 was lower than previous years. In relation to the allocation of the Australian Curriculum A-E grading, it was noted that the allocation of grades in mathematics in Year 4 to Year 7 appeared to be high considering the results in NAPLAN numeracy and PAT-M.

The challenge for the school is to support students to achieve in the higher proficiency bands. Of the 33 students in Year 3 who achieved the SEA in reading, 24 were assessed in the higher proficiency bands. In Year 5 and Year 7 the percentage of students achieving in the upper proficiency bands varies between 44% and 55% over the period from 2008 to 2014.

DECD aims to retain students achieving in higher proficiency bands as they progress through their schooling. At the school, 13 out of 23 students from Year 3 to Year 5 were retained in the upper proficiency bands. In numeracy, the numbers were lower with only 6 out of 13 students retained in the upper proficiency bands. The Principal provided the panel with the names of the students who had dropped out of the proficiency bands. This data has been considered by teachers and the school is now aware of the need to track and intervene to support these students between the NAPLAN testing periods.

There are 21% of students identified as EALD students at the school. These students require support with the English language to be able to access the curriculum at their year level of schooling. For this cohort, achievement in the NAPLAN test is lowest in writing compared with other aspects of the test, including grammar and punctuation. An analysis of the writing criteria shows that students struggle most with vocabulary and with formulating their own ideas. This data was confirmed by some students. They told the Review Panel that the aspect of writing they found most challenging was thinking of ideas, especially when writing narratives.

The achievement and attendance of students of Aboriginal background is tracked individually and targeted interventions were evident.

Based on the review of achievement data, together with whole school agreements, the Review Panel focused on the use of formative assessment to guide targeted instruction and the design of assessment tasks to deepen and further raise student learning.
To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

In 2013, the school participated in a self-review validation process. The school has subsequently implemented many of the recommendations and established whole-school approaches for teaching literacy. Teachers have developed a deep understanding of the English Curriculum from Reception through to Year 7. They have produced a comprehensive scope and sequence document under each sub-strand and expanded on the key pointers for teachers at each year level. It includes language and literacy skills requiring explicit teaching in print and screen, and recommended resources.

The agreement was developed collaboratively by staff. It includes a synthetic method for teaching phonics to support students in the early years to be able to decode words, a spelling approach to extend vocabulary in middle and upper primary, and a guided reading instruction. Students and parents indicated they valued the development of oral language skills for a range of purposes. There is a genre map which sets out the explicit instruction in the text type at developmental levels. Examples of student writing in cross-curriculum processes were evident in many classrooms.

Teachers reported that assessment processes to inform targeted curriculum planning have improved in recent years with the introduction of literacy agreements. Teachers use a range of formative assessment approaches including success criteria and checklists. In junior primary, the Review Panel observed photos being taken to record the work of students and to track and illustrate their learning over time.

The focus of guided reading groups is informed by the information teachers gather from taking Running Records until students are deemed to be independent readers. Teachers talked about how they use Running Record miscue analysis, which demonstrates they have a deep understanding of how children learn to read. The Review Panel was keen to find out what assessment teachers use to guide their instructional focus when students are deemed to be independent readers. Several teachers advised they focus on inferential comprehension as PAT-R results revealed that students' skills were low in this component.

Currently, the assessment and moderation of writing to apply for EALD funding is undertaken by the Assistant Principal (Primary) and EALD teacher. Expectations of students to produce written work relevant to each curriculum area will increase as they move through their schooling. To support students to develop these skills, teachers need to understand what constitutes quality writing. The school has an opportunity to build the capacity of teachers to assess language and literacy levels. Through this process, teachers will be able to support rigorous and deeper learning.

Intervention processes have been carefully planned and targeted to support students who are struggling with their reading in the early years. Their progress is frequently tracked and assessed. There is a close connection between the withdrawal program and the classroom.

The school is in the early stages of developing a comprehensive understanding of the mathematics curriculum and problem-solving based pedagogies. In the meantime, teachers have discussed and agreed upon a set of essential skills students are expected to know at the end of each level. They also use Quicksmart, the online maths tutorial, and mental maths to build and monitor student progress in fluency and automaticity in mathematics.

**Direction 1**

Strengthen teachers' capacity to develop and use formative assessment practices, particularly in mathematics and numeracy, to inform their curriculum planning and instruction.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

The vision for the school, as a thinking and learning community, represents the desire to support and achieve higher order thinking and quality work. The school has developed a Thinking Skills scope and sequence identifying key strategies for teachers to use at each year level. These include De Bono's six thinking hats, questioning techniques, thinkers' keys, and Bloom's taxonomy. Teachers integrate these
approaches into learning areas to encourage different ways of thinking and representing ideas, rather than teaching them as stand-alone skills.

Teachers are aware of the need to intellectually stretch students. Several teachers told the panel they had closely observed students undertaking the higher order questions in the recent NAPLAN test and in the PAT tests in November last year and noted that many students were guessing the answers. Teachers concluded students did not have sufficient strategies to transfer and apply their skills.

The Review Panel saw evidence of teachers using success criteria in literacy (narrative and exposition writing) and in history/geography inquiry tasks. Students were involved in using the success criteria to conduct peer assessment. The student exposition checklist encouraged students to use information to support their arguments and to use persuasive language. The history criteria were mainly focused on content knowledge.

The Review Panel view this practice as one which could be extended and deepened. The success criteria, for example, could include evidence of students applying historical skills to their inquiry and the use of relevant technical vocabulary. Similarly, in mathematics, success criteria need to reflect the assessment of skills in the proficiency strand of problem-solving and reasoning. The process of designing success criteria requires teachers to design a task in a way that enables students to demonstrate they have applied their understanding and skills in new contexts. Teachers talked about the difficulty they found in designing assessment tasks of this kind. Teachers are keen to share, to learn and to improve their practices. They support each other in developing new approaches to their suite of pedagogical skills. All of the leadership team members appear to have strong curriculum experience and have worked to build an improvement culture where teaching has been ‘deprivatised.’ The school is well placed for teachers to work collaboratively to design tasks that assess the application and transfer of skills into new contexts.

Although students were aware of the success criteria, they did not know the standard of the work they were producing. Most students talked about wanting to do their best but were not able to say confidently if they were producing work at or above year level standard (DECD C level) or how they could improve. They told the Review Panel they gauge how well they are doing based on how many answers they get right in maths or that they loved getting 80% or more correct on the maths online tutorial, and in their biannual reports. Feedback that provides guidance to students on how to improve was more common in English. Students need to know what an A standard of work looks like compared to a C standard. Goal setting enables students and teachers to personalise their learning and, through instructive feedback, students learn what they need to do and how to improve.

**Direction 2**
Increase the proportion of students in higher proficiency bands by designing assessment tasks that require students to apply their understanding and skills to new contexts.

Work with students to set and review goals, provide ongoing formative feedback that leads to improvement and by explicitly outlining standards to be achieved.

How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

Staff members collaborated to develop the current SIP 2014-2017, and see their work as critical to the completion of the plan. It is considered a working document. Throughout last year, the school reviewed the plan by highlighting the strategies that have been implemented.

In key discussion between the Review Panel and school leaders, questions were raised about whether the implementation of the SIP would lift and sustain achievement. It was difficult for the Review Panel to envisage how the current plan would result in more students achieving in the higher proficiency bands in numeracy, how the quality of writing in curriculum areas would be improved or how a greater breadth of vocabulary would be developed. There are some excellent activities and actions in the current SIP, which contribute to the smooth operation of the school and that build the parent-school partnership from the point of transition into school. It would be ideal to retain these positive actions while moving the focus back to the core purpose of the SIP, which is to positively improve student learning, particularly by retaining
more students in higher proficiency bands as they move through the school. The SIP needs to reflect the analysis of the achievement data and articulate the key priorities and strategies to get the desired lift. The current plan could be incorporated into an action or operational plan and mapped onto the school’s calendar.

Direction 3
Use student achievement and growth data as the centrepiece of self-review processes and the development of the School Improvement Plan.

Ensure the Governing Council has a clear overview of achievement and growth trends to support the school in setting the broad directions for the School Improvement Plan.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

North Adelaide Primary School is tracking well. Good performance was evident by the cohesive whole school approach to curriculum and pedagogy development and comprehensive tracking and monitoring processes.

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

1. Strengthen teachers’ capacity to develop and use formative assessment practices, particularly in mathematics and numeracy, to inform their curriculum planning and instruction.

2. Increase the proportion of students in higher proficiency bands by designing assessment tasks that require students to apply their understanding and skills to new contexts.
   Work with students to set and review goals, provide ongoing formative feedback that leads to improvement and by explicitly outlining standards to be achieved.

3. Use student achievement and growth data as the centerpiece of self-review processes and the development of the School Improvement Plan.
   Ensure the Governing Council has a clear overview of achievement and growth trends to support the school in setting the broad directions for the School Improvement Plan.

Based on the school’s current performance, North Adelaide Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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.

Rebecca Pears  
PRINCIPAL  
NORTH ADELAIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson