

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Adelaide West Special Education Centre

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 Cam Wright, 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

Adelaide West Special Education Centre caters for young people from reception to year 12. It is situated 22kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 79. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 77. The local partnership is Le Fevre Peninsula.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 996 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 5% Aboriginal students, 100% students with disabilities, 26% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care, and 17% of students are eligible for School Card assistance.

Students are placed at the school through the special options process due to their need to have significant adaptations to the curriculum and learning programs to accommodate physical disabilities. Many students have severe, multiple disabilities including medical and health needs. 15 students receive support from Health Support Officers (HSOs), provided by the Access Assistance Program. Each class at Taperoo is staffed with one teacher and 2 SSOs, with 23 students receiving additional IESP (RAAP) funding. There are 9 classes onsite. The school facilitates around 200 therapist sessions onsite each fortnight for speech therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, behavioural support, and psychology.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their first year of tenure, a Deputy Principal in their fifth year of tenure, and a Band 1 Coordinator.

There are 15 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers, 1 Highly Accomplished teacher, 2 lead teachers, and 42 School Services Officers (SSOs).

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1**    **Embed proficiency and consistency in the implementation and use of ABLES data and associated resources across the site, strengthened by the review and use of valued datasets to inform instruction.**
- Direction 2**    **Embed the work in PBIS across the school and develop systems, including protocols for collaborative planning within class teams, to strengthen the positive learning culture at Adelaide West.**
- Direction 3**    **Embed and strengthen professional learning and performance and development, including planned classroom observations, within an agreed framework for feedback.**

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

Several processes embed consistency, and effective data use to monitor student progress across the site. ABLES data is moderated twice per year in class team meetings to ensure consistency of teacher judgement. Dedicated staff meetings provide opportunities for teams to review progress with achievement data against One Plan goals. Data is displayed and accessible on the ABLES data wall and school reports and forms an integral part of performance development meeting discussions.

A review and refinement of the centre's positive behaviours in schools (PBIS) program took place early in 2021. As a response to changes in the Department for Education policy, it was acknowledged that existing approaches did not meet the increasing number of students' needs with behaviours of concern related to complex communication needs and Autism. The school values of friendliness, respect and safety have been embedded and made visible in communication systems, shared books in library lessons, staff whole-school language and class programs. A range of whole-school professional learning has taken place in building staff capacity in understanding Autism, the sites behaviour support policy, functional behavioural analysis, safety, managing actual and potential aggression (MAPA) and becoming familiar with the use of a behavioural communication tool in line with the Department for Education's behaviour support policy. Leaders detailed the next steps in developing teacher capacity in planning differentiated learning programs, with clear intentions for Student Services Officers (SSO's).

Distributed leadership is developing to strengthen the effectiveness of professional learning and performance development processes, including establishing administration leaders and curriculum leader groups. Lead teachers completed training in the 7 habits of highly effective people with the view that mentoring and coaching of teachers will be part of their role moving forward, and their collaboration with staff will be effective and positive to maintain professional relationships. Classroom walkthroughs as practice, and formal classroom observations, are provided by invitation or request. Performance conversations with any identified staff occur promptly when concern is identified. Professional learning communities have been established to provide targeted professional learning.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

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

The centre has processes and structures in place to support their improvement work. Most staff could articulate the school improvement plan (SIP) goals, their actions in developing the challenges of practice (COP) in their classrooms, and how professional learning has supported them in developing their practice. The panel reviewed teaching and learning plans showing teachers' intentional planning to meet curriculum requirements while accounting for student learning goals aligned to the SIP priorities for improvement. Teachers varied in their responses to their development and understanding of the COP in their classrooms. Termly reviews of the SIP's progress occur in collaboration with the local education team (LET). Reflections on the next steps in improvement, feedback from the LET, and formalised review processes, strengthen the continuity and connection of the improvement work and are guiding the next iteration of the SIP for 2022-24.

Several teachers articulated the growing focus on the use of data to measure and describe learning growth. A range of learner growth data and other evidence of student learner growth is used to inform the development of One Plans and SMARTAR goals for improving communication, literacy, and numeracy. Several formative assessment tools are used to assess student's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Leaders provided a documented assessment and reporting agreement which clearly showed the agreed data sets and tools for tracking and monitoring learner growth and the schedule for collecting evidence and reporting progress. Leaders highlighted ABLES data moderation listed in the schedule as the ongoing dialogue between teachers to gain consistent judgment. Data walls prominently display student progress for staff to reference or review.

Teachers' responses were limited in describing how they use evidence-based practices of self-reflection to improve their practice and reach best practice agreements. An opportunity exists to strengthen teacher and leader evidence-based critical reflection through purposeful structures and processes that enable discussions on student learner growth and achievement that support improvements in teacher practice.

**Direction 1      Support improvement in practice through evidence-based critical reflection of student achievement and learning growth.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

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

In classroom observations, students ranged widely in their abilities and learning styles. Teachers demonstrated a variety of effective teaching approaches, including highly structured explicit teaching on a one-to-one basis and in small groups to engage students and meet their learning needs. Questioning techniques, oral feedback, routines, and scaffolds were prominent in many classrooms to reinforce concepts. Teaching teams use collaborative learning methodologies to elicit an understanding of concepts and guide the next steps while encouraging learners' active participation. Information technology is used extensively across classrooms to assist communication and learning. Leaders are exploring further opportunities and partnerships in acquiring and developing IT to support learner engagement and challenge.

Leaders recognised the challenges teachers faced in identifying authentic engagement and learning versus mimicking learning and passive engagement for students with disabilities. Several teachers described professional learning in the school priorities to recognise learner capabilities and assess the incremental steps of learning growth. Documented One Plans negotiated with parents outline individual learning goals, adjustments and focus areas of support. Goals are regularly reviewed as part of the Access, Plan, Teach and Respond cycles and discussed at performance development meetings with leaders.

Teachers provided a variety of approaches of how they engage and challenge their students. Several described successful strategies currently being used in classrooms, including high-impact teaching strategies or techniques from past training and shared practice. When asked how they effectively design differentiated learning to meet student learning needs, responses varied, but all referenced the importance of the One plan and achievement data in documenting planning through their differentiated learning plans.

It is timely to review the effectiveness and connection of current practice while developing agreements of highly impact teaching that meets all learners' needs. To ensure consistency of approach, further develop and embed pedagogical statements of practice that clearly articulate the roles of teachers, SSO's, students and parents to affect high student achievement.

**Direction 2 To support engagement and challenge in student learning, revisit and consolidate agreements of highly effective high impact teaching strategies that meet the needs of all students.**

## Effective leadership

How effective are the schools professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capacity?

The Centre's leadership are perceived by many as a highly effective cohesive team. Governing council members and parents pointed to their development of high expectations for teaching and student achievement. The Principal outlined the importance of developing a more distributive leadership model to ensure a greater line of sight to classroom practice, developing instructional leaders to support staff by establishing a curriculum leaders' group and leaders working with lead teachers. Professional learning in the 7 habits of highly effective people has been completed by lead teachers that could provide essential mentoring and coaching of staff at the Centre.

Teachers appreciated leadership's timely and targeted professional learning to support school priorities and staff needs. Training in understanding Autism, reviewing, and refining the Centre's behaviour support policy, MAPA training in acknowledging feelings and de-escalation strategies, and exploring the use of the behavioural communication tool has built staff capacity to better meet the challenges of learners. Professional learning communities have been established, enabling targeted professional learning and dialogue for small groups.

The team structure of teachers and SSO's is a strength in the organisational support for learning in classrooms. Classroom walkthroughs by leadership have become more familiar with staff receiving formal and informal feedback. Some teachers welcomed more formal classroom observations to receive detailed feedback for improvement in practice. Many teachers and leaders believed that formal observations by leadership and peers would be instrumental in further developing classroom practice.

Performance development processes are well documented and understood. PDP documents show the alignment of individual teacher goals to SIP priorities and records of discussions and feedback in how line managers support achieving agreed goals. However, staff descriptions and documentation of PDP processes were inconsistent in utilising evidence-based discussions of learners and learning growth and connections to other performance development processes that provide staff feedback about their practice. Strengthening and connecting these processes by developing a coherent school-wide approach focused on robust evidence-based discussions would build teacher capacity and improve learner outcomes.

**Direction 3**     **To achieve school priorities and student learning targets, develop and connect targeted professional learning and performance development structures and procedures that build staff capacity.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

At Adelaide West Special Education Centre, the influence of previous External School Review directions is evident in the school's improvement. The centre's planning processes are evidence-based and targeted and effectively use improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement. Effective teaching is consistently practised and actively engages and challenges students. Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by targeted professional learning and regular performance development discussions that build capacity.

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

- Direction 1**    **Support improvement in practice through evidence-based critical reflection of student achievement and learning growth.**
- Direction 2**    **To support engagement and challenge in student learning, revisit and consolidate agreements of highly effective high impact teaching strategies that meet the needs of all students.**
- Direction 3**    **To achieve school priorities and student learning targets, develop and connect targeted professional learning and performance development structures and procedures that build staff capacity.**

Based on the school's current performance, Adelaide West Special Education Centre will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Governing Council Chairperson

# Appendix 1

## School performance overview

### One Plan goals – record of progress toward goals in 2021

All students who attend Adelaide West Special Education Centre are verified under the Department Students with Disability policy. Based on the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) every student has entitlement to the provision of the Australian Curriculum and appropriate adjustments to support each student. These adjustments can include: Educational (curriculum, assessment, and reporting); Instructional (individual teaching programs and strategies) and Environmental (space, equipment, and support). Adelaide West Special Education Centre use a 1 – 5 Rubric of Achievement to track achievement in One Plan goals, with 1 indicating partial achievement, 3 indicating satisfactory achievement, and 5 indicating excellent achievement of a goal.

The school uses a range of assessment tools that enable students to be assessed based on their abilities:

- One Plan SMARTAR goals
- ABLES – Literacy (English Speaking & Listening and Reading & Writing) and Numeracy
- Emergent Literacy Assessment (ELA)
- Roadmap of Communicative Competence (ROCC) – communication skills
- Modified SACE.

### ONE PLAN GOALS:

#### Literacy:

All students have at least two literacy goals incorporated in their One Plans – usually one for reading and one for writing. These goals reflect the literacy expectations for three groups of students: Emergent, Transitional and Conventional.

In 2021 70% of students achieved at least a 4 or a 5 in their literacy goals and 50% achieved both of their literacy goals. 67% of students achieved their reading goal, and 55% achieved their writing goal.

#### Numeracy:

All students have one numeracy goal incorporated in their One Plans.

In 2021 73 % of students achieved a 5 in their numeracy goal, and 6% achieved a 4.

### LITERACY:

**ABLES** - shows 40% of students assessed in 2019 and 2020 made progress in Reading and Writing.

35% of students made progress with Speaking and Listening.

**Emergent Literacy Assessment** shows that in 2021 23% of students made progress in all three areas assessed, 30% made progress in 2 areas and 17% progressed in 1 area.

**ROCC** – shows that in 2020 21 students have made progress with initiating in a way that is recognisable by unfamiliar communication partners. 11 students progressed in one area, 12 in two areas, 10 in three areas, 5 in four areas, 4 in 5 areas, 2 in six areas and one each made progress in seven, eight and nine areas.

## **NUMERACY:**

### **ABLES**

54% of students assessed in 2019 and 2020 made progress in their numeracy achievements as measured by the ABLES Mathematics assessment.

### **SACE Modified**

Please note that SACE Modified includes a three-year plan for students to achieve their credits, and goals are based around literacy, numeracy, community access and communication. School data reflects that all students are supported to achieve their Modified SACE by the end of their schooling.