

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Yalata Anangu School

Conducted in September 2018



Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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 Julie Bishop, Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Christine Bell, Review Principal.

School context

Yalata Anangu School is situated 1,000kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 85 students, and has fluctuated over the past 5 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 572, and is classified as Category 1 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 100% Anangu students, 16% students with disabilities, 100% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 5% children/young people in care, and 100% of families eligible for School Card assistance. Attendance data indicates that 35% of students are habitual non-attenders and 3.5% of students are chronic non-attenders.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in an acting capacity since the beginning of the year, an Anangu coordinator in their 3rd year of tenure and a STEM coordinator in their 1st year of tenure.

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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

Student Learning: How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

The principal was appointed in an acting capacity at the beginning of the school year and reported that consultation with the education director revealed the following aspects as priority areas to address:

- employment of local staff
- re-engagement of the community with the school
- re-establishment of the governing council, and
- sustaining high levels of engagement with the Wiltja Secondary College (a residential school for Aboriginal students from remote communities).

Development of the site improvement plan (SIP), a school context statement, and review of the 2017 school progress were urgent aspects to be achieved within the first few weeks of school.

A functioning governing council has been established, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at the beginning of the year, and there are now regular meetings. Development of the SIP and subsequent connection with student learning growth was explained and discussed with governing council. Council members reported to the panel that the school was now stronger than it had been.

Staff were pleased that the SIP was data-driven; however, embedding and using data to inform term planners was new learning for staff. All term planning documents now reference the SIP targets.

The school has implemented culture trips each term to re-engage and strengthen community relationships. In term 1, the junior and lower primary students visited the Ooldea soak (Daisy Bates campsite) an important cultural and historical site; in term 2, the older students visited Maralinga: a historical site that had immense implications for Anangu people. Community members of the local South Australian Police (SAPOL) and the rangers from the Yalata Land Management (YLM) joined the school on both occasions. The principal reported that all culture trips have had a high degree of local family support and attendance. Community members mentioned they would like to see the frequency of cultural trips increased to further strengthen school and community relationships.

Family days have been established, where significant occasions (Easter, Mother's and Father's days) are celebrated at the school. Families are invited to come to the school, share food and interact with teachers and students in classrooms. It was reported that these events had been very successful, and provided opportunities for students to share and celebrate their learning.

The school has worked diligently to ensure that students and their families are supported to successfully manage the separation from family and country when the students are in residence at Wiltja. Strategies include; running family meetings before students go to Wiltja, helping students manage their anxiety about flying, and encouraging families to come to the school to speak with their children via phone conferences. The school encourages community members to visit Wiltja for short stays to reduce homesickness and, consequently, support students to remain and succeed at Wiltja.

Community elders informed the panel that the original community members of Yalata are known as the Spinifex people and that the Spinifex dialect of Pitjantjatjara is different to other dialects. The elders stated that it was important that Spinifex speakers are entrusted to work with the current Anangu language teacher to ensure the dialect of the Spinifex people is taught to the students of Yalata.

The school has undertaken significant work in reviewing practices and processes to inform, shape and sustain improvement across the school, including student learning and strong school-community relationships. Community members reflected that the school has improved, and they value the connections that have been made with the community and the principal.

Next steps for the school will be to work with community to develop shared understandings and practices in relation to the teaching of culture and language. Working with community to embed planned, regular opportunities to work together and build students' strength in learning, culture and language, will be significant work for the school and community.

Direction 1

Strengthen and embed collaborative self-review practices in all aspects of site improvement planning, with specific reference to the development and implementation of shared understandings and practices in language and culture as pertinent to the Yalata community.

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Parents and community members stated that it was very important for students to become strong learners, and be confident speakers and readers of English. Students need to learn 'two ways', that is, to be strong in language (the Spinifex dialect of Pitjantjatjara) and in English. Community members emphasised that this learning should be taught 'side-by-side'. Community members suggested that workshops for secondary students would help them to become strong in reading, and be prepared and succeed when they go to Wiltja.

For many remote schools, the first step in sustaining effective learning growth begins with student attendance. At the time of the review, the school's average daily attendance rate was 61%. The school has implemented a wide range of processes, strategies and incentives to improve and sustain attendance. These initiatives are outlined in further detail in the effective practice section of the report.

Many students enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by an observed group of students eagerly waiting for the school gates to open each morning. The school has worked diligently to support students' engagement in schooling.

All students have a completed 'One Plan'; samples provided to the panel included evidence of long and short-term goals, including mid-year reviews of progress against the short-term goals.

Students from the lower and middle primary classes identified their strengths in literacy and numeracy as criteria to indicate they were achieving. The same students, when asked what they needed to do when stuck in their learning, provided lower-order strategies, such as 'sit and wait', 'put your hand up' and 'ask a friend'. Students will benefit from planned opportunities to learn the language of learning, including higher-order strategies to use when stuck.

Classroom observations provided evidence of the monitoring of learning growth in a range of literacy aspects, including reading levels and sight words. Student learning data indicating growth for each student is visible in every classroom. Students are able to track their own progress, and confidently used the classroom charts to share and discuss their learning growth with panel members. Community members were interested in tracking the reading progress of family members from the charts on display in the staffroom. Implementing regular opportunities to share student learning growth with families and community will further strengthen the collective ownership of student learning progress and outcomes for students.

The school has made significant progress in the collection of literacy data to inform planning and teaching, and is now well positioned to undertake discussions relating to assessments that are shared within and across classes. There was some evidence of students setting personal learning goals; work in this area could be further strengthened by providing opportunities for students to set short-term goals that result from their personal data. Students will subsequently be provided with ongoing opportunities to develop a language for learning and become active participants in their own learning.

It was reported that the school is expecting a turnover of teachers at the end of the current school year. The establishment of shared data across the site will be significant work for the school to undertake in ensuring that transitions for students will include ready access to each student's current learning assessments.

Students from Oak Valley frequently relocate to Yalata for family and cultural reasons, and a significant number of Oak Valley students attended Yalata Anangu School for the first 6 weeks of this school year. Staff reported that datasets were established for the Oak Valley students at the beginning of the year; however, there was no handover or sharing of data when the students returned to Oak Valley. Several students returned to Yalata Anangu School later in the year. The school reported they had to reassess students to ascertain starting points for learning.

Both schools would benefit from developing processes and protocols to ensure that learning data is shared, current and accessible across sites. The establishment of a shared, common electronic data system will support both sites to access current data for individuals and groups of students. In this way, students who travel between the sites will be provided with learning opportunities that are informed by consistent datasets, which accurately reflect their current learning levels.

Direction 2

Develop and embed common understandings, practices and assessments to ensure that learning growth is regularly tracked, monitored and shared within and across classes.

Direction 3

Collaboratively develop processes to share learning and assessment data between Oak Valley and Yalata schools via a common electronic data system.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

There is strong commitment to provide learning opportunities that are differentiated, carefully planned and engaging. The student population is complex, with several students being English first speakers, thus requiring considerable differentiation in their learning to ensure ongoing challenge and engagement. There was evidence of comprehensive and quality planning, including clear scaffolds for learning, in many classrooms. Student workbooks in several classes provided clear evidence of annotated work undertaken in reading, writing and numeracy.

All staff indicated via a survey conducted during the review that they had undertaken professional learning in the EALD language and literacy levels (LALL); however, only 33% of staff indicated via the same survey that they had undertaken recent professional learning in the teaching and learning cycle (TLC). The TLC framework is a highly effective pedagogical practice, which provides explicit stages of scaffolding in the deconstruction, joint construction and subsequent independent construction of texts with suggested activities that are closely aligned to the LALL. Collaboratively undertaking professional learning in the TLC would be beneficial to the school. Embedding the TLC across the site will provide context and support for the development of common understandings in LALL, whilst also providing explicit scaffolding of genre writing for all students.

Staff said they would appreciate an opportunity to undertake observations in settings that were not remote; such opportunities could be linked to the teaching for effective learning framework and individual performance and development plans.

Several staff said their teaching practice was effective when students were engaged in their learning. They provided various strategies that supported high levels of engagement, including students being confident to attempt the task, a class commitment to 'give things a go', using a classroom communication app, and activating student prior knowledge. One teacher stated they would like to include more 'hands on' learning with a focus on science.

Staff identified some strategies to improve engagement and challenge, including developing a process to track and monitor if learning is too hard, and providing opportunities for students to develop and regularly review short and long-term goals. It was reported that 'shame' was a highly significant factor for older students and, subsequently, it was important for students to operate in family or gender groups. Staff have observed significant growth in students' confidence to attempt tasks since the beginning of the year; however, it was noted that some students would not attend school if the work was too hard.

Currently, growth mindset processes and the 'Rock 'n' Water' program are available for the older students. The school is in a position to develop and embed growth mindset language across the site for all students. The Rock 'n' Water program is relevant for students from the age of 6. The program is focused on a physical/social approach to assist students in increasing their self-confidence, self-respect and self-awareness, whilst also teaching students to deal with power, strength and powerlessness. When all staff

and students work from the same premise, using common processes and language, the opportunities for students to develop resilience in learning will be optimized.

The panel observed a reliance on maths worksheets in several classes. One staff member specified that establishing a maths assessment board would assist in improving differentiation in maths. Staff also indicated that development of assessments to track and monitor numeracy growth was an ongoing challenge. Developing and implementing whole-school understandings in effective pedagogical practices and processes in numeracy is the next significant area for improvement across the site.

The school is currently researching the opportunity to locate and implement a diagnostic maths tool for all year levels. In the interim, the school may benefit from exploring the Australian Curriculum numeracy learning progressions as a tool to support consistency in tracking and monitoring progression in numeracy. Numeracy progressions locate the numeracy development of students, and identify the numeracy development that should follow; they also facilitate a shared professional understanding of numeracy development.

The Australian Curriculum numeracy learning progressions are inclusive of the modes of number sense and algebra, measurement and geometry, and statistics and probability. Numeracy learning progressions provide discreet markers of improvement between each that can be encouraging for both students and teachers, particularly when conventional assessment indicators often take an extended time to show learning growth for English as another language or dialect (EALD) learners. This process provides a common starting point across the site to track and monitor student learning in numeracy.

Direction 4

Collaboratively develop and embed common understandings of effective numeracy pedagogical practices and assessments, through the development of a whole-school numeracy agreement, strengthened by growth mindset practices and processes across the site.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices in school community partnerships that are contributing significantly to improved school engagement and attendance at Yalata Anangu School.

The school works closely with the Remote Attendance Strategy Team (RAST) to implement a range of incentives to improve attendance and, subsequently, engage students in schooling. This includes school trips, camps, short-term Wiltja visits and reward days. Some senior male students are supported by the school to participate in the local football league at Ceduna. All of these incentives are dependent upon 80% attendance.

Each class has a weekly attendance chart that is colour-coded to represent the following indicators: 'in class, late, not in class, away with family, ill with a note, and inappropriate behaviour'. Weekly and term percentages, together with a comment from the teacher, are also included in the chart. The colour-coding clearly indicates individual group attendance patterns. Awards are presented to students with the highest attendance in each class at the weekly assembly.

Colour-coded attendance charts are displayed at the local store prior to significant school events, including bush trips and camps. Attendance rates are transparent to the whole community, and clearly indicate which students will be attending, with the underlying implication of the values attached to

regular attendance. This strategic approach signals that regular attendance to develop strong learners is everyone's business.

Additional strategies to reward consistent positive attendance, behaviour and engagement, were provided through the opportunity to attend the STEM room at break times. Students are provided with the opportunity to engage in a range of activities, such as creating models with complex technical functions, using drones, a diverse range of computer games, and earn points for a class-based communication application.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Yalata Anangu School has provided comprehensive evidence of a culture of improvement, and effective leadership has provided strategic direction and planning. The school has worked diligently to develop and sustain effective collaborative partnerships with the community.

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

1. Strengthen and embed collaborative self-review practices in all aspects of site improvement planning, with specific reference to the development and implementation of shared understandings and practices in language and culture as pertinent to the Yalata community.
2. Develop and embed common understandings and practices to ensure that learning growth is regularly tracked, monitored and shared within and across classes.
3. Collaboratively develop processes to share learning and assessment data between Oak Valley and Yalata schools via a common electronic data system.
4. Collaboratively develop and embed common understandings of effective numeracy pedagogical practices and assessments, through the development of a whole-school numeracy agreement, strengthened by growth mindset practices and processes across the site.

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



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Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 64.8%.

Appendix 2

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).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school.

The school provided the panel with a range of datasets as per the Anangu Lands assessment policy and procedures. The following datasets were included: Running Records, sight words, language and literacy levels and phonological awareness. The school-based datasets were aligned against year level and indicated growth over time.

Reading

Between 2013 and 2017, 1 student at year 2 has demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2013 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 1 year 3, 2 year 5, and no year 7 or 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Numeracy

Between 2013 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 1 year 3 and 1 year 7 student demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

SACE

There was no reported SACE data for the school.