

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Coober Pedy Area School

Conducted in April 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 Nigel Gill, 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

Cooper Pedy Area School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 850kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 250 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 237. The local partnership is Far North.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 780 and is classified as Category 1 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 50% Aboriginal students, 23% students with disabilities, 30% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 3% children/young people in care and 60% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 2nd year of tenure, an Assistant Principal (primary: reception to year 6) in the 1st year of their first tenure, an Assistant Principal (secondary: years 7/8, timetabling/daily organisation, one B2 leader (intervention and support), and four B1 leaders (early years: preschool and support services, student wellbeing, and Aboriginal education).

There are 27 teachers, including 16 in the early years of their career and 1 AST Level 2 teacher.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Improve the level of challenge and engagement in learning by supporting staff to work collaboratively to plan, design and assess learning, use differentiated teaching approaches and moderate professional judgements.**
- Direction 2** **Establish and enact strategic whole-school agreements that will enable learning continuity for all students and consistency of practice amongst teachers, especially in relation to literacy and numeracy, and secondary course requirements.**
- Direction 3** **Improve the school's capacity to successfully deliver systematic and evidence-based approaches to intervention and support for identified students.**
- Direction 4** **Develop and implement an attendance and engagement improvement plan that is proactive and responsive, results-oriented and supportive of the needs of the students who are non-attendees.**

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

Direction 1: Teacher planning was strengthened through dedicated non-instructional time. Timely and targeted professional learning built the capacity of teachers in the agreed priority areas. Teacher practice is further reinforced by coaching and mentoring. Structured Hub meetings supported teams to have professional conversations linked to SIP priorities and training. Staff meeting structures now encourage collaborative professional learning and accountability processes, such as learning sprints and regular check-ins.

Direction 2: A collaboratively developed school improvement plan (SIP) identifies the improvement priorities based on student achievement evidence. Learning sprints and regular structured staff meetings allow for the development of these priorities and checking the SIP progress. Established literacy, numeracy and Explicit Directed Instruction (EDI) agreements provide teachers clarity of expectations and guide their practice. Data collection and analysis is well-documented in the school's data schedule.

Direction 3: Wave 1 intervention practices were strengthened in classrooms with additional assistance through the alternative Learning Centre and Learning Hub. Targeted intervention programs support Wave 2 and 3 intervention.

Direction 4: Attendance review teams were created and use multifaceted tracking and monitoring techniques. Further support is given through the remote school's attendance strategy. A learning aid and motivational program, designed to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, was organised through the Clontarf foundation. Additional support, with the help of a departmental attendance officer and programs in the Alternative Learning Centre and Learning hub, are available.

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 current SIP clearly outlines the priorities, actions and resources to support improvements in reading, numeracy and SACE achievement. Many staff commented that, while not involved in the original SIP construction, they maintain its ongoing implementation by refining and evolving the challenges of practice. They saw strength in the school's current leadership, holding firm on agreed processes, having a persistent focus on removing distractions from classroom teachers, being mentors for advice, and ensuring a focus on quality teaching and learning. Student achievement data in several areas is showing indications of growth. Parents and school council representatives described growing confidence and trust in the school's direction. Many pointed to the influence of the current leadership in establishing the existing school environment – one that is more focused on learning and clear in its expectations of learners.

Monitoring of the SIP progress occurs in leadership team discussions, using multiple sets of student achievement data. Updates of progress are regularly reported in staff meetings, involving the reviewing of the actions and their implementation. Teachers and leaders explained how teacher capacity has strengthened in the agreed priorities, through targeted and timely professional learning. Dedicated planning time and leadership support highlight the importance leadership placed on intentional teacher preparation.

Teachers' responses varied when describing processes and structures that support self-reflection about their impact on student learning. Some teachers referred to meetings to self-reflect on student achievement and the impact of their actions. However, many staff explained that the focus of discussions in some hub meetings was on the targeted professional learning within sessions and its possible impact on learning. Few staff members described self-reflection on their practices using data, feedback or other evidence, to inform their influence on student learning.

Opportunities exist in staff and hub meetings to implement regular evidence-based review processes of the SIP's progress and self and peer reflection of teacher impact. These processes can strengthen ownership and connection to the improvement cycle.

Direction 1 Support improvement of teacher practice by strengthening structures and processes that incorporate evidence-based reflective practices that impact student learning.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Many teachers were positive about the extensive and targeted professional learning enlisted to improve quality teaching and learning. The Principal highlighted this as the school's core business. Teachers across the school focused on improving strategies that upheld student acquisition in literacy and numeracy using pedagogical practices in EDI.

Leadership directives made expectations about EDI implementation in classes to attain consistency across the school clear to staff. Explicit Direct Instruction was visible in many classroom observations across the school. Teachers, through their training, could verbalise a language of learning, explaining the elements of its approach and how it sustained student learning achievement. They explained how they deliver new concepts in class and promote mastery through questioning strategies, to verify student understanding before carrying on to the next steps in learning. Many were positive in their comments about the professional support provided to build consistency of practice in this area. Some teachers were concerned that the EDI approach inhibited their effectiveness in differentiating learning to promote challenge for all students, and engage in other aspects of the curriculum, such as the general capabilities. They saw merit in different approaches, including team teaching, inquiry, and collaborative-based learning. These maintain engagement and challenge, especially for students in the middle primary and secondary years. Some staff believed there was a greater need in advancing aspects in the conditions for learning. Attendance, learning behaviours and interruptions to the continuity of learning from other programs or external influences, were seen as areas that could be addressed to improve teaching and learning across the school.

Several teachers, including some early career teachers, spoke positively about the focus on EDI in the early and lower primary years. They felt supported by leadership through professional learning, dedicated planning time, and a focus in staff and learning hub meetings, reinforcing clarity of expectations and consistency of practice across the school.

An opportunity exists for leaders to engage staff in a collaborative review of the schools' pedagogical approaches to learning. While considering other evidence-based pedagogical approaches, consolidation of current EDI strategies could lead to agreements of highly effective practices that meet a range of student needs, while promoting challenge and engagement.

Direction 2 Strengthen teacher practice by developing a collective understanding and agreement of high-yield pedagogical approaches that engage and challenge all learners.

Effective leadership

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

The leadership team remain resolute in improving teaching and learning across the school to ensure quality curriculum delivery. The Principal highlighted that, historically, there was a lack of consistency in quality teacher practice to meet the challenging needs of students at the school. Several teachers and students described how many students in the past disengaged with learning, displaying poor learning behaviours in class, with some not attending. Parents and teachers explained how the current Principal has drawn 'a line in the sand' and made expectations for teaching and learning clear.

Strategic planning by leadership is evident, outlining actions, resources and timelines to build teacher expertise to implement quality teaching and learning. A range of effective professional and performance development processes were described by leaders sustain this focus. They outlined how staff and hub group meetings were times for teachers to present professional learning, reflect on data, report back, and discuss the effectiveness of trialled strategies. Several teachers believed this was not common practice in all hub group meetings. The strengthening of hub group teams was essential through more consistent and robust leadership and expectations.

Dedicated non-instructional time, and help towards teacher planning, ensured effective planning to incorporate school agreements into practise as well as aspects of professional learning. Coaching and mentoring through external experts and staff champions, is supplying some teachers with performance feedback and support for planning. To ensure the achievement of SIP priorities and implement quality teaching and learning strategies, cohesive evidence-based performance development processes are necessary to give effective feedback to teachers and leaders in the improvement of practice. A strategic approach in consolidating existing performance development structures and processes, while investigating new ones, with clear expectations for leaders, teachers, and auxiliary staff, will provide the necessary support for staff to achieve school priorities and student learning targets.

Direction 3 Strengthen teacher capacity to implement agreed school priorities and quality teaching and learning through highly effective, cohesive evidence-based performance development processes.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

At Coober Pedy Area School, the influence of previous directions is evident in establishing a clear roadmap for improvement, supported by planning processes that are evidence-based and targeted to raise student achievement. Effective systems that build capacity are developing, reflecting positively on teacher and leader practice. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Support improvement of teacher practice by strengthening structures and processes that incorporate evidence-based reflective practices that impact student learning.**
- Direction 2** **Strengthen teacher practice by developing a collective understanding and agreement of high-yield pedagogical approaches that engage and challenge all learners.**
- Direction 3** **Strengthen teacher capacity to implement agreed school priorities and quality teaching and learning through highly effective, cohesive evidence-based performance development processes.**

Based on the school's current performance, Coober Pedy Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



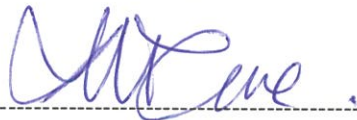
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Appendix 1

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 2019, 38% of year 1 and 25% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 20% of year 3 students, 33% of year 5 students, 17% of year 7 students and 18% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5, 7 and 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools. For year 5 this result is within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 15% of year 3, 10% of year 5, and no year 7 or year 9 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 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 67%, or 2 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5. No students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 25% of year 3 students, 14% of year 5 students, 22% of year 7 students and 14% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5, 7 and 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 has been downwards, from 35% to 25%.

For 2019 year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 5% of year 3 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 13% to nil percent.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 18% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE, did go on to successfully achieve SACE.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020, 82% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 74% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 58% successfully

completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project. For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 100% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 16% of grades were at an 'A' level and 50% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents a decline for the 'A' level grade and a decline for the 'B' level grade from the historic baseline averages.

One hundred percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.