

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR BELLEVUE HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Conducted in July 2016



**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.*

*This External School Review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and David Manuel, Review Principal.*

### Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Bellevue Heights Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

Part 1 Governance: Item 8

The school will add the item 'report bullying trend data to Governing Council twice a year' to specific Governing Council meeting dates.

Part 3 School Organisation: Item 1

The school will cease using the old form and implement the new DECD form as per the DECD Enrolment Policy.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

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 2015 was 92.5%, which is slightly below the DECD target of 93%.

### School context

Bellevue Heights Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 13kms south of the Adelaide CBD and is part of the Mitcham Hills Partnership. The enrolment in 2015 was 284 and 262 students in 2014. The enrolment trend has fluctuated since 2010 when it was 244 students. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1059.

The school population includes 4 Aboriginal students, 4.2% Students with Disabilities, 14% families eligible for School Card assistance, 58% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect background, and 3 children and young people in care. In 2015, 34.2% of Reception students were assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains in the *Australian Early Development Census*. This is up from 20% in 2013. In the Middle Years Developmental Index in 2015, Year 6 and 7 students had low levels of perseverance, high levels of lack of sleep, and high levels of worries.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of his tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal, a Senior Leader IELP, and a Coordinator: Inquiry Learning. There are 18.3FTE teachers, including 3 in the early years of their career and 10 Step 9 teachers.

The school motto is: Learning and growing together to enrich the world.



### 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 2015, 68% of Year 1 and 66% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). For both Year 1 and 2, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 3 students, 68% of Year 5 students and 85% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 60% of Year 3, 36% of Year 5 and 20% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 3, there is an improvement from 32% in 2013 to 60% in 2015, and for Year 7, there is a decline from 39% in 2013 to 20% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 100%, or 5 of 5 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 50%, or 3 of 6 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

#### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 70% of Year 3 students, 68% of Year 5 students and 80% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 37% of Year 3, 20% of Year 5 and 15% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 was downwards, from 56% in 2013 to 15% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

## Lines of Inquiry

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

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

**Effective Teaching:** To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

**School Community Partnerships:** To what extent does parent engagement with the school impact on student learning?

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

During the review at Bellevue Heights Primary School, the panel could conclude, because of the strong consistency between how teachers, parents, students and leaders spoke about their work, that hard work, challenge and academic achievement for all are deeply valued in the school and central to the school's moral purpose.

Teachers described to the panel the work being done in all classes on growth mindsets, emotional self-regulation for learning (5-point scale) and executive functions, enabling students to successfully engage in productive struggle. Teachers explicitly teach 'go to' strategies to scaffold productive struggle. The panel found a living narrative about 'the generative potential of failure' in the school that is positively impacting student motivation and engagement.

Students told the panel that they value schooling, have a high work ethic and that they enjoy challenge and problem-solving in their school work. Students stated that they value productive struggle and they could describe it to the panel. Students could tell the panel clearly how well they are going in learning, and said they value the grades in reports indicating their achievement against a standard.

The panel found evidence of the activation of student agency in learning. Strategies identified by teachers, SSOs and students include: choice, design of tasks, feedback strategies, reflection strategies, goal-setting, explaining the purpose of intervention to students, and involving students in the development of assessment rubrics. Students talked to the panel about the value of these rubrics to them. A next step for the school is to commit to even deeper empowerment of students in learning, by developing practices that make learning intentions clear to students, both in statements prior to lessons, and in reflection against the stated intended learning at the conclusion of a lesson.

The panel was told by parents that they have strong trust in the school, stating that the school does not just talk – it acts in response to the talk. Parents said that teachers are happy and highly collaborative. Relationships between them are professional. Parents told the panel that they value the quality of reporting, in particular the effort and comments sections. Parents stated that communication between home and school is good. A next step for the school is to harness the goodwill and support from parents for the school to extend opportunities to students for deeper engagement and intellectual challenge through more regular play-based and experiential inquiry-based learning.

All teachers are sometimes designing learning that builds in intellectual stretch, and there is a range of capabilities in transforming tasks across the school. Strategies identified by teachers and students include: higher-order questioning, open-ended tasks, digital learning, *Back-to-Front Maths*, inquiry-based learning, development of assessment rubrics, modified 'Word Work' and 'Genius Hour'. The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program teacher expertise is focused on staff strengths, the setting of challenging learning tasks, and the routine framing of higher-order questioning in learning design. The school is well-placed to strengthen the coherence for its hard-working and aspirational teachers between all aspects of their work, ensuring that the commitment they have to continuously improve practice is connected and consistent, and is referenced in student learning.



**Direction 1**

**Align training and development, performance development, professional learning teams, and coaching in the interests of effective teaching across the school, in order to develop and sustain a culture of improvement.**

**To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**

During the review at Bellevue Heights Primary School, the panel was provided with evidence that there are strong, valued site tools for tracking student learning against systems datasets over time. These are in both hard (Blue Folders) and electronic form. Leaders and teachers talked about these tools and the panel could conclude that they are strongly embedded. A next step for the school is to investigate the benefits of the development and implementation of a whole-school assessment map that references student learning over time against class and school, as well as the system's assessments.

Parents told the panel that teachers use an evidence-base to report student growth and described coherence between what they know about their child and what is reported about their child by the teacher.

The panel concluded that the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) is verifiable as a strength of the school, and it embeds valuable staff capability in data literacy, intentional teaching, and evidence-based evaluations and student growth, as well as quality outcomes for EALD students. The panel found that IELP students are strongly supported to transition into the mainstream at Bellevue Heights Primary School and other sites. Students and parents spoke about the strong extra-curricular opportunities provided for all students, which benefit equally IELP and mainstream students, as well as the relationships between them. The school explicitly and consistently develops social and emotional student self-regulation for learning, and the IELP teachers have strengths in fostering risk-taking and critical and creative thinking in the learning of EALD students whose cultural backgrounds often do not elevate such learning dispositions.

The panel could conclude that data is being used to effectively identify students for intervention. This is done regularly and is well-coordinated across the school through the Learning Support Team (LST). Procedures are known about and valued by all groups of stakeholders. The LST is embedded as a successful and valued structure for special needs support. A next step for the school is to investigate the value of including the EALD and special education teachers as members of the LST. In addition, strengthening communication across the school about special measures put in place for students with specific needs will enhance the effectiveness of the case-management of complex individual students.

There is a wide range of intervention programs available, which are flexibly delivered at the school, and are rigorously overseen by the LST. This was stated by leaders and verified by teachers, parents and SSOs. The school is well-placed to extend and formalise its review of the efficacy of the intervention that it creatively and generously resourced.

Teachers stated that they value the provision of planning time with support SSOs with which they are sometimes provided. The school is well-placed to strengthen the coherence for students between intervention and mainstream programs and the quality and consistency of differentiation by extending and formalising the structures for such planning time. The exceptional personal capacity and work ethic of individual SSOs was widely reported to the panel by teachers. A next step for the school is to document the roles and responsibilities of support SSOs in order to sustain the quality of this work at the school.

The panel concluded that data is used by teachers to 'set the scene' with students at the start of the year. At this time, data is used by all teachers to inform their starting points for work with students. In its conversations with teachers the panel found evidence that some teachers also use their own datasets to inform cycles of teaching. The 'diamond' self-review process that was used by leadership with all teachers is the beginning of teacher self-review and the use of an assess-plan-teach cycle. A next step for the school is to support teachers to use regular data-informed cycles of assess-plan-teach to identify intentional teaching points for groups of students in order to systematically improve their learning outcomes. This will serve to re-align the focus of teachers from being researchers of best teaching practice to evaluators of teaching impact.



**Direction 2**

**Develop the data literacy of teachers through highly effective regular and strategic self-review processes that are evidence-based and standards-driven, in order to ensure growth in student achievement over time.**

**To what extent does parent engagement with the school impact on student learning?**

The school identified, for the purposes of the review, a commitment to enabling quality engagement of the full range of families in the school community, including those of the many EALD students, both IELP and mainstream, who make up the school enrolment. During the review, the panel found much evidence across multiple sources that the school is overwhelmingly successful in this endeavour, and that families are deeply satisfied with and appreciative of the school's lived commitment to include them as authentic partners in their children's learning and wellbeing for schooling.

Teachers acknowledged to the panel that there is strong parent support in, and for, the school, feeling fortunate for the high levels of parent involvement. The school works hard and continuously to involve EALD parents, and is continually seeking more ways to do this at ever-increasing levels.

The panel found that the Governing Council is deeply and authentically involved in decision-making in the school. The recent nature play initiative is an example of this. It was clear to the panel that the Governing Council understands its responsibility to consult with the wider parent community. The Governing Council is actively seeking a constitutional amendment to ensure IELP parent representation.

Parents told the panel that they value the cultural diversity of the school, which is seen as a strength, and the high levels of parent engagement, and said that they recognise that the school is continually and actively seeking to foster such engagement. Parents also mentioned and recognised the value of continuous teacher availability and the strong community of the school, and that it often influences them to choose Bellevue Heights Primary School. The playgroup that is resourced with some SSO time is highly valued. The school's resolution of conflict between students and a reduction in the level of bullying has been appreciated by both the parents and teachers.

The quality of school leadership is recognised and highly valued by teachers and parents, and is described as highly available, open, transparent and responsive. There is strong, calm, consistent leadership in the school, where leaders don't just talk, they act, quickly and effectively, in ways that diffuse rather than inflame situations. Leadership inspires and motivates in teachers and SSOs great heart for their work. The structures for leadership are coherent and valued at the school.

The panel also found evidence of strong authentic structures for student voice, and it is estimated that 60% of student ideas and issues are acted upon.

Bellevue Beginnings is valued by all groups of stakeholders. It is a 2-week values education program that is run Reception to Year 7 in all classes, at the start of each year. Bellevue Beginnings facilitates the development of a common agreement for the year about a classroom culture that supports learning for all. During its presentation to the panel, the Leadership Team identified that that school's vision statement and stated values have been in place since 2008 and that it may be timely to revisit them. A next step for the school is to come together again for this purpose, to harness the strong unity and harmony that exists in this community in the interests of excellence and equity.

**Direction 3**

**In partnership with parents and students review the school's vision and values, in order to reflect and further enhance its high expectations for students.**

### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

At Bellevue Heights Primary School teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning. There is a coherent and engaging curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum, and teaching practice reflects the TfEL framework. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders and there is shared leadership across the school and authentic student influence in decision-making.

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

1. Align training and development, performance development, professional learning teams, and coaching in the interests of effective teaching across the school in order to develop and sustain a culture of improvement.
2. Develop the data literacy of teachers through highly effective regular and strategic self-review processes that are evidence-based and standards-driven, in order to ensure growth in student achievement over time.
3. In partnership with parents and students review the school's vision and values, in order to reflect and further enhance its high expectations for students.

Based on the school's current performance, Bellevue Heights Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
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Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Vince Mulkerin  
PRINCIPAL  
BELLEVUE HEIGHTS PRIMARY  
SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson