

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Minlaton District School

Conducted in September 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 Maxine McSherry, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Mike Tate, 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

Minlaton District School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 200kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 256. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 269. The local partnership is Southern Yorke.

The school has a 2021 ICSEA score of 984 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 4% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background or children/young people in care, and 11% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

Minlaton is largely an agricultural community servicing the local farming industry.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 12th year of tenure, a deputy principal and 3 Band 1 leaders with responsibility for Primary, Middle and Senior years.

There are 15 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 8 step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1 Collaboratively develop teaching and learning agreements that provide clarity about what an ‘expert learner’ is, the pedagogical approaches to support their development, and strategies that enhance challenge and stretch in their learning.**
- Direction 2 Design and deliver personalised learning opportunities for all students by building consistent understanding of effective data analysis to inform intentional planning and teaching**
- Direction 3 Develop new, and consolidate existing processes, programs and forums that support parents to be involved as partners of their child’s learning, further enhancing the parent/student/teacher partnership.**

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

Minlaton District School has effectively implemented a range of programs and processes to address the previous directions. Whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements have been developed collaboratively and are now formalised, providing staff with clear direction around target areas, strategies, actions, and responsibilities. School improvement planning has been implemented at the whole -school and subgroup level with strategic opportunities for reflection and review, leading to shared ownership and collective responsibility. Goal setting has been introduced from reception to year 12 with students having increased levels of ownership for their learning. Professional development focused on dialogic talk and formative assessment is leading to an increased level of expert practice for educators. The development of a data collection agreement and analysis cycle is supporting improvement tracking and monitoring.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

Minlaton staff are knowledgeable and articulate regarding improvement planning and can explain in detail their involvement at the whole-school, sub-school and classroom level.

The school is to be commended on the strategies and processes they have embedded to ensure all teachers and school support officers (SSOs) are involved in data analysis from reception to year 12. Staff meetings are structured to ensure formal data sharing at least twice a term. All teachers have an awareness of the data for all year levels, building a sense of collective responsibility. A range of datasets are stored electronically and easily accessible for all staff. It is shared at the whole-school and sub-school level, and then analysed in depth to inform curriculum and classroom planning.

A whole-school review of literacy data led to research around a range of evidence-based reading and reading comprehension programs, including site visits to other schools. As a result, Read, Write Inc was resourced and implemented. Strong growth in data (particularly in phonics) is clear evidence of the consistent and committed implementation of the program, to a point where it is now embedded across the early years. Teachers are applying aspects of the program in the middle years through guided reading and comprehension activities.

Responsive programs are in place for children identified through data analysis, as needing additional support to meet the standard of educational achievement for their year level.

Parents reported they were informed of the school's goals for improvement with data presented at governing council meetings. This could be further strengthened through collaborative analysis. They indicated that their children's learning needs were met to a high level, inclusive of children who required challenge and those needing additional support.

The school is well positioned to build on their effective self-review and evaluation processes to further involve students and families in the improvement planning cycle.

Direction 1

Engage students and families in collaborative analysis of data sets, further ensuring they can effectively engage in and contribute to whole-school planning and improvement.

Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

Students at Minlaton are involved in collaborative decision making about their own learning, as evidenced by the panel across all age ranges. Early years examples included writing choice or the selection of spelling grid activities, whereas middle years students were able to choose one Personal Interest subject, twice a year. These subjects are based on interest and allow students to work with their peers in groups, which are inclusive of children from years 6-9.

Students develop and demonstrate leadership through buddy programs, school leader and captain positions. They overwhelmingly reported the positive, mutually respectful relationship they had with the Principal, school leaders and teachers as one of the best things about their school.

Students R-12 can describe their learning tasks, the success criteria, and their individual goals as witnessed in classroom observations. The school is to be commended on the work they have undertaken to academically motivate students through involving them in the learning process. Student goals varied from being general, 'I would like to gain confidence in speaking to others' to specific, 'I want to learn the skills of paraphrasing'. Most children reported that their goals were based on an area in which they wanted to improve. In the middle years personal goals were visible on student's desks, supported with written descriptors of steps leading to achievement, and were developed in consultation with their teachers. In the younger classrooms, goals were displayed through wall charts and in exercise books. Senior students set their goals through individual learning plans based on termly, student led, round circle conversations involving all their teachers and their parents.

The school is well positioned to build on their commitment to working collaboratively with students to set goals based on individual data. This would allow students to further assess, monitor and regulate their learning.

Minlaton is committed to ensuring that students are partners in their own learning and have strong foundations onto which they will continue to build.

Direction 2 Further enable students to become powerful partners in learning through supporting them to set goals based on the collaborative analysis of their own data.

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

The School is an authentic learning community. Classrooms are managed with care, and order allowing teachers and students to maximise the time spent on learning. Highly effective conditions for learning are enabling the school to continuously improve.

All staff at Minlaton have a shared commitment to and an ongoing responsibility for, the improvement of teaching and learning. Leaders support teachers formally and informally and walk alongside staff in training and development within the identified focus areas. Staff performance development plans embrace the school's learning centred vision. There is a strong sense of collegiate trust and respect which underpins professional development. The school is well placed to build on this high level of collaboration to embed critical reflection and peer classroom observations, with a targeted focus to further improve expert teaching practice.

Teachers seek feedback from students in a range of ways to further improve their practice. and students report that they are provided with feedback from teachers enabling them to further improve their grades. Some staff stated that formalising staff and student feedback processes, would be a positive next step.

Parents on the governing council are connected and supportive of the school's focus on achievement. They feel well informed of their child's progress via online platforms, formal reports, and interviews. They described teachers as approachable and responsive to their needs and felt comfortable in raising any issues with leaders.

Flexibility in the delivery of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) is enabling students who have the capacity to be challenged to work beyond their allocated year level, providing a strong base for post school options.

More recently the school has introduced the concept of the Thriving Learner and this is being promoted through classroom displays and activities. This approach is in response to developing a culture where all students are aspirational and can be challenged in their learning.

Direction 3 Further develop teaching expertise using critical and constructive feedback from peer observations, with a mutually agreed targeted area of focus.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Minlaton District School is a responsive learning community with a high degree of professionalism. A shared sense of ownership towards ensuring every young person is supported in their learning is highly evident. The school is to be commended on the sound processes they have established to ensure the school is on a continuous cycle of improvement, underpinned with effective conditions for learning. Educators are committed to using a range of high impact strategies and evidence-based programs to maximise engagement, wellbeing, and achievement.

The school vision of 'By Deeds Not Words' was evident in the actions of staff and students.

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

- Direction 1** Engage students and families in collaborative analysis of data sets further ensuring they can effectively engage in and contribute to whole school planning and improvement.
- Direction 2** Further enable students to become powerful partners in learning through supporting them to set goals based on the collaborative analysis of their own data.
- Direction 3** Further develop teaching expertise using critical and constructive feedback from peer observations, with a mutually agreed targeted area of focus.

Based on the school's current performance, Minlaton District School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Ali Bogle
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Governing Council Chairperson

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).

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.

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2020 38% of year 1 and 50% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2018 and 2020 the trend for year 1 has been upwards from 33% to 38% and downwards for year 2 from 70% to 50%.

In 2019 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 85% of year 3 students, 93% of year 5 students, 85% of year 7 students and 60% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

For years 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For year 9 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019 35% of year 3, 41% of year 5, 8% of year 7 and 4% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 80% of year 3 students, 93% of year 5 students, 85% of year 7 students and 72% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

For year 3 and 7 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For year 5 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For year 9 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

For 2019 year 5 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving above the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 10% of year 3, 26% of year 5, 31% of year 7 and 8% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020 83% 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. This result for October SACE completion represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020 90% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 100% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020 96% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 13% of grades were at an 'A' level and 44 % of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents little or no change for the 'C-' level or higher grade, a decline for the 'A' level grade and little or no change for the 'B' level grade from the historic baseline averages.

Fifty percent of students completed SACE using VET and there was 1 student enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance 68% of potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. In 2020 the school had a moderation adjustment of 1.5%.