Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Marree Aboriginal School

Conducted in March 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 Phil Garner, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Mark Vincent, 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

Marree Aboriginal School caters for birth to year 12. It is situated 700kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 15 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 25. The local partnership is Far North.

The school is classified as Category 1 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 85% Aboriginal students, 23% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 78% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 3rd year of tenure.

There are 5 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 teacher.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1 **Improve the school and staff capacity to collect, analyse and synthesise a range of data at regular intervals to strategically plan for and implement effective strategies to achieve learning growth for every student at the school.**

Direction 2 **Use various datasets to establish SMART growth targets with students and parents to ensure clarity of expectations and tracking and reporting of learning growth and improvement over time.**

Direction 3 **Improve student engagement and challenge by creating further learning opportunities, such as those created in 'investigations' and 'open-ended' maths challenges, to support productive 'struggle' and relevance in learning.**

Direction 4 **Improve student learning outcomes through effective strategic implementation of the teaching practices of differentiation and formative assessment to an extent where these strategies are highly embedded in each class at the school.**

Direction 5 **Develop a succinct, clear and understood Attendance Policy and practice that reflects the school's and community's expectations for learning improvement at Marree Aboriginal School.**

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
Direction 1   The use of data to identify where students are in their learning and their next steps is still an area for development. While staff have a sense of student progress, a strategic approach to analysis and an evidence-based understanding of the next steps in learning and clear documentation are the required next steps. Refer to line of inquiry 2 in this report.   **Direction 2**   The school indicated that each child has an Individual learning Plan. However, these represent personal learning goals with limited focus for significant improvement in student learning. There was no evidence

of parent awareness, and achievement of learning goals was not evaluated. This continues to be an area for improvement.

Direction 3
Student engagement and challenge was a focus for this review. Refer to line of inquiry 2 in this report.

Direction 4
The use of effective differentiation and formative assessment is still variable across the school. Refer to Line of inquiry 2 in this report.

Direction 5
The school has further developed the attendance policy and has a clear process to follow. The principal has indicated that the policy is still a work in progress as they work with the community to improve student attendance.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

To what extent has the school drawn on evidence of best practice to determine strategies and actions for improvement?

The school's site improvement plan identifies 3 challenges of practice in numeracy, literacy and SACE achievement. A wide range of evidence-based pedagogical strategies and programs, including Departmental guidebooks and best practice papers, were consulted. Actions were identified; however, a number of them are quite complex and could be considered to be challenges of practices in themselves.

Statements of practice in all 3 goal areas were recently developed with the purpose of increasing consistency and continuity across the school. While staff are aware of the improvement focus, the clarity of what is expected or required to be achieved is not thoroughly understood by everyone. The next step would be to include evidence-based pedagogies and high-impact teaching strategies that will provide absolute clarity of expected practice across the school.

Data collection requirements are clearly documented. To effectively improve student outcomes, the school will need to focus attention on:

- the purpose of this data collection
- effective ongoing analysis and tracking of student growth and progress
- measuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning programs
- identifying next steps in teaching and student learning
- implementing effective change that reflects outcomes of data analysis.

Staff value the professional learning provided during staff meeting time. Informal discussions occur between teachers that focus on identifying the gaps in learning and how they might be addressed. However, with limited time allocated to professional learning, the effectiveness in terms of building teacher capacity has yet to be evaluated.

Review and evaluation of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) occurs at the beginning and the end of the year. Time allocated and the processes used are ineffective in identifying progress or guiding the next stages of improvement. The SIP will need to be continually reviewed and evaluated against the success criteria and impact on student learning and adjusted when necessary for maximum impact.

The SIP and unclear expectations of responsibilities makes it difficult for teachers to connect deeply with the SIP actions. Going deep and narrow with explicit expectations and accountability will help staff focus on developing and embedding their skills and improving student achievement.

Direction 1 **Collaboratively redesign the SIP to ensure a narrow and deep focus for improvement with absolute clarity of expectations, responsibility and accountability.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school has relatively low numbers of students in each class, which provides greater opportunities for formative feedback and improved learning adjustments. A variety of pre-assessment tasks are used by some teachers to identify where students are in their learning. The inclusion of low entry point learning tasks provides an element of success and allows teachers to ensure concept foundations have been mastered.

Teachers, support staff and students can identify strategies used to support individual learning in classrooms. These include different expectations and tasks, and increased challenge through questioning for those students requiring stretch in their thinking. However, the panel did identify some lessons and learning tasks where the learning was less than challenging, with little differentiation for the learning needs of students.

Primary students were not able to articulate how they were going in their learning or what they needed to do to improve. They have limited opportunities to analyse their assessment data and understand their next steps in learning. Assessment data is seen by students as something that is confidential and not connected to learning. When students know what and why they are learning and what the expected outcomes are they are more engaged and challenged.

Assessment for learning provides students with access and ownership. It provides them with an understanding of what is expected, their next steps in learning and allows them to set achievable goals and targets.

Individual learning plans are important documents designed to specifically target the learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These will need to be developed and appropriately monitored to ensure success in learning.

Senior students understand what is expected of them and what the success criteria is. They have ownership of their learning and are highly supported by their teachers, effectively engaged and striving to do their best to achieve their SACE.

Direction 2   **Improve student understanding and ownership of their learning through the use of learning intentions, success criteria and assessment for learning strategies.**

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using the Australian Curriculum and SACE to support and improve student learning?

Verified strengths

Teachers at this school plan and program using the Australian Curriculum and include elaborations and general capabilities. This is particularly evident with the combination of HASS, science and literacy subjects. The format in which the planning and program is recorded varies between teachers. Developing a common planning tool would enable greater consistency across the school.

Teachers are trying to balance the curriculum and cater for multi-level classes by incorporating cross-curricular links and adapting and transforming learning to suit the differing needs of students. Modifying tasks to suit student learning needs and interests within curriculum areas and similar methods of teaching and learning across the school are beginning to show consistency of meta language. There is evidence of quality units of learning being developed that engage and challenge students across the school.

Teachers indicated a lack of clarity around the previous teacher's curriculum coverage. They begin learning at a lower level to identify starting points, and continually assess and adapt the content and learning tasks as they progress. While this provides some students with an opportunity to revise, others find it less than challenging.

Literacy and numeracy progressions are currently not being used widely to identify individual next steps in learning for students. Building an understanding and embedding their use as a whole-school practice would bring about consistency in teaching and learning and cater effectively for individual student needs.

Whole-school initiatives, such as Big Write and oral language, are beginning to improve consistency of practice. Further opportunities for teachers to engage collaboratively in planning and programming would develop greater consistency and ensure equity of access to all students.

Development and adoption of a whole-school reception to year 9 scope and sequence that supports the school context would ensure:

- students are progressing with required knowledge and skills
- continuity and progression of learning across all year levels
- consistency of teaching and learning and pedagogy
- collective understanding of learning across reception to year 9
- teaching and learning expectations for new staff.

Direction 3   **Improve equity of access and continuity of learning through the development and implementation of a whole-school R-9 scope and sequence.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Marree Aboriginal School has a stable and dedicated staff that are passionate about providing the best possible education for their students. The recent success of students achieving their SACE is having a positive effect on the rest of the school, with all students indicating that they too want to achieve their SACE. A lot of effort goes into supporting and guiding students in subject choice and pathways, with many hours of extra tutoring and encouragement. Commitment of staff in supporting students is commendable. This support is not just confined to the school, but also extended to application writing, work experience, post-high school education and work placement. 'Thank you for the support you so generously provide to the students and their families at Marree Aboriginal School'.

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

Direction 1   **Collaboratively redesign the SIP to ensure a narrow and deep focus for improvement with absolute clarity of expectations, responsibility and accountability.**

Direction 2   **Improve student understanding and ownership of their learning through the use of learning intentions, success criteria and assessment for learning strategies.**

Direction 3   **Improve equity of access and continuity of learning through the development and implementation of a whole-school R-9 scope and sequence.**

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

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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. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Marree Aboriginal School from 2015-2019.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2015 and 2019, 14% of year 1 and 55% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of year 3 students, 14% of year 5 students, no year 7 students and 14% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019, 22% of year 3, no year 5, no year 7 and no year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

Between 2015 and 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 66% of year 3 students, 14% of year 5 students, no year 7 students and 14% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2015 and 2019, no year 3, 14% of year 5, no year 7 and no year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 100% 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, 100% 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.