

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Trinity Gardens School

Conducted in August 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Anne Lamont and Rebecca Read, Review Principals.

School context

Trinity Gardens School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 5km north-east of Adelaide in the suburb of Trinity Gardens. The school has a current enrolment of 725 students showing a steady enrolment growth. The school has an ICSEA score of 1097, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

Trinity Gardens School is a government school, where both the DECD mainstream curriculum and the Steiner Education stream have operated on the same site since 2005.

The school population includes 4 (0.5%) Aboriginal students, 46 (6.3%) students with disabilities, 245 (32.7%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 3 (0.4%) children in care, and 14% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her first year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, 2 Senior Leaders, 3 Coordinators, and 1 Preschool Director. There are 39.3FTE (50) teachers.

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 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 is there consistency of teaching practice across the school in literacy?

Improvement Agenda: To what extent does the school use assessment data or evidence to inform teaching for individual student learning?

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

Trinity Gardens School has a strong sense of community. In conversation with both parents and staff, the Review Panel heard about the collaboration and mutual respect between the school and families. The Review Panel met with 29 parents who represented the Governing Council and general parent body. Parents indicated that the two educational streams (DECD mainstream and Steiner Education system) further emphasise the uniqueness of the school, where inclusivity of the preschool, Children's Centre, the St Morris Disability Unit, and children from non-English speaking backgrounds, is valued. Parents also commented on a strong sense of belonging in the school and see the school as a focal point for the community. All were supportive and reported that the school is communicative and works with them to support the social, emotional and learning needs of all children. Parents shared a number of examples of ways that they work in partnership with the school staff to support their child. Governing Council members reported that they feel included in all matters related to the school.

The students value and respect all staff, are happy to be at school, and enjoy being with their friends. 'Student voice' was improving and the students recognised that they are being involved in decisions by adults. The student leaders identified a number of events and activities that included their involvement.

Students who spoke with the Review Panel were very articulate about their learning and clear about where their strengths and areas for improvement are. They identified maths and literacy as their strongest subjects. The students were able to provide strategies that they use to help themselves when the work was 'hard' and understood the term 'persistence'. In most cases where a child asked a teacher for help, the teacher did not give a direct answer but posed further clarifying questions. There were mixed responses

from the students when talking about the 'challenge' of the work provided in-class. These ranged from about "50% of the work is challenging" to "the same work is given and we progress through it at our own pace". Work that was identified as 'routine' was often subject-specific (for example, spelling tasks and maths workbooks) and does not provide the opportunity for students to be intellectually challenged, with engagement at a low level.

Parents recognised that the engagement of students with their work, and what was taught, is dependent on the individual teacher. Several parents commented on how their children talked about their learning activities with enthusiasm and interest. A small number of parents believed that their children were not being stretched or extended, especially in maths.

A number of staff recognised that quality questioning and the importance of providing problem-solving activities is conducive in supporting the stretch and challenge in children's learning. Some staff use feedback surveys to provide them with information from the students to help them reflect and plan their lessons. All staff identified that the Professional Development opportunities have built teacher confidence in identifying and developing their lessons to create challenge for students.

In her presentation to the Review Panel, the Principal identified the challenge of 'raising the bar' in relation to building the resilience of the students. This is to be achieved through work already started in the area of Growth Mindsets. The school has used the *Kids Matter* framework as a focus tool to support the wellbeing of the school community. Play is the Way is used extensively across the school, and supports the students in their ability to make positive choices with their learning and the way they interact with their peers.

The *Portrush Forest* is seen as a valuable asset by the staff, students and parents, all of whom enjoy its potential as an outside learning environment. Fifty-four percent of the staff used the forest to support their work in science and maths, and see the potential in it as a resource for STEM integrated curriculum activities.

Next steps include developing common understandings for all students, parents and staff that intellectual stretch does not equate to just the provision of work at a higher year level, and it is applicable to all students and across all areas of learning. Teacher and School Services Officer (SSO) professional learning around opportunities in this area could enhance teaching and learning at Trinity Gardens School. Planned work within year levels and learning areas in the development of transforming tasks would complement this, and is seen as important work for the school to undertake.

Direction 1

Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.

To what extent is there consistency of teaching practice across the school in literacy?

Trinity Gardens School is in a unique situation where two methods of teaching are shared across the same campus. The school operates a Steiner Education sub-school consisting of 8 classes from Reception to Year 7. This learning approach focuses on a holistic approach to learning. The two approaches offer differences in teaching practice within the school, which can be independent of each other. However, the school has ensured there is cultural interchange between the two learning approaches.

At Trinity Gardens School reading and numeracy levels are strong at all year levels. The combination of explicit and open teaching is evident across Reception to Year 7 mainstream learning, and is being taught consistently. Staff involved in both Steiner and mainstream learning recognised the strengths of each learning methodology in relation to engaging and challenging students. They appreciated the opportunities to be involved in shared learning practices which gave them scope to utilise good practices from either format in their own planning and teaching.

Students identified consistencies of practice in several classes with class routines, such as activity worksheets and weekly tests. Several senior students acknowledged that quiet classrooms and working by themselves helps them with their learning. Students identified that some teachers were engaging and interactive, and they learn better when they do 'hands-on things'. Consistency of the three phases of daily

class routines of the Steiner stream is easily understood by the students involved in this learning program, and they really enjoy the 'craft' element of their learning program.

Parents recognised that the two learning streams differ and accept that there are differences in what and how things are taught in the classrooms, acknowledging that it was very dependent on the teacher as to how lessons are taught and students are engaged. Parents thought the three-way conversations in Term 1 had given them a good picture of "where their child was up to", and would like this to continue, with some indicating a second session later in the year would be ideal.

The teachers acknowledged that professional learning opportunities provided for individuals and learning teams was of great benefit. Combined training sessions at the Partnership level enabled staff to further develop their understanding of task design by drawing on the experiences of colleagues from neighbouring schools. Teachers from the Steiner stream were able to modify the focus of these combined meetings to suit their particular style of teaching.

The release time and timetabling structure within the school has enabled year-level teams to share and reflect on their work. These opportunities are open for both streams of learning, and the teachers commented on how they were able to make connections between the two methodologies and adapt elements from each within their own practices. The Leadership Team has recognised the positive work that has been achieved with the year level teams. They see this process as the start in strengthening the teams to promote the de-privatisation of practice and increase the congruence and connectedness of learning across the R-7 range. The recent appointment of a Coordinator in Numeracy, with a focus on staff Professional Development (PD) and collaborative curriculum planning, has been supportive of individual teachers and some year level teams.

The Play is The Way social skills program has been very successful across the school, and the use of the Kids Matter program has been beneficial in identifying student social and emotional wellbeing. The data demonstrated that the vast majority of students enjoy coming to school, value their friendships and trust the adults around them. This information has been shared with all staff. The appointment of a Senior Leader in Student Engagement and Wellbeing is making inroads into supporting staff in understanding the social and emotional issues of students and how to plan for their engagement in learning.

Professional Development processes for staff are comprehensive, and teachers see the link with the Site Improvement Plan, the Partnership, and DECD professional learning initiatives. The use of a variety of classroom observation strategies (for example, peer observations, video, and a 'critical friend') is emerging as a positive process for teachers to reflect on their classroom practices.

By strengthening teacher knowledge in task design that involves students through learner voice and co-design, will further embed effective and consistent pedagogical practice in curriculum planning.

Direction 2

Strengthen the work of teaching teams by developing and implementing teaching agreements that ensure the consistency of practice and coherence of high-quality curriculum planning and evidence-based teaching practice in literacy and numeracy.

To what extent does the school use assessment data or evidence to inform teaching for individual student learning?

The Site Improvement Plan focuses on literacy and numeracy improvements with specific emphasis on understanding textual information in reading and foundation knowledge in numeracy. The SIP specifies that teachers will develop a consistent plan to share data with individual students, and a whole-school approach to provide student feedback in these two subjects.

The Principal and staff are open to learning and beginning to use data in a strategic manner. With this in mind, the school is implementing the electronic data management system *Senral* to enable teachers to access student achievement data. Whole-school achievement data is tracked to ascertain student achievement growth. This information is managed by the Leadership Team and is shared through staff meetings and year level teams.

The school uses a variety of diagnostic test programs such as *Quicksmart*, *Too Smart Maths* and *MultiLit*, to support students with learning difficulties. These programs are implemented and managed by the Deputy Principal in consultation with teachers and SSO personnel. A small number of students with learning difficulties in the Steiner stream are involved in some levels of intervention support.

Students in the mainstream are assessed regularly by teachers through formal weekly tests. Students in the Steiner stream are assessed in a multi-intelligent approach where each teacher has their own unique way of collecting and utilising achievement data. These can take the form of artwork, photographs, ML books, workbooks, anecdotal evidence and checklists.

Student achievement is compared year-to-year to identify trends and monitor growth. The school has a documented and active assessment schedule that focuses on literacy and numeracy. Formal assessments, such as PAT-M and PAT-R, are analysed to look for gaps in students' knowledge and skills. This information is used to plan intervention support for targeted students.

Both learning streams provide formal written reports using the A-E grading. The Steiner stream reports incorporate a subtle difference in the wording when assigning competency levels. Student groups spoke of their grade scores, but were unable to clearly articulate how to move from a 'C' to a 'B' or an 'A'. Most responded with the strategy of asking the teacher or to 'practice' more. Overall, the parent community clearly understood the function of written reports. Some parents questioned the inconsistency of the grading given in the written reports, especially when compared with NAPLAN results. All members of the school community, but particularly students, will benefit from seeing and knowing what the 'A', 'B' and 'C' standard looks like in a specific learning task or activity, and how to achieve the desired grade.

It has been recognised that the school does use information from a variety of datasets to support and plan for student learning, particularly those students with identified learning difficulties. The next phase of the school's future planning would be to develop learning agreements and processes to cater for the abilities of all students, Reception to Year 7.

Direction 3

Deepen the application of whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback to develop explicit target-setting and intentional teaching.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Trinity Gardens School.

[Trinity Gardens School values environmental education and active natural play as an integral part of educating children attending the school.](#) The Nature Play concept has been successfully implemented in the school through the development of the *Portrush Forest*. The school has a core group of parents and volunteers committed to the program to ensure its longevity. The school recognises the value of this asset and its potential connection with the curriculum and STEM methodologies. The school has also recognised that the forest has had an impact on social and emotional dispositions of students, including co-operation, sharing, respect and responsibility for the environment. The *Portrush Forest* is available to all facets of the school campus where students and young children from the Child Care Centre and Preschool have access to the facility. Future consideration is encouraged to upgrade the access to the forest for students attending the St Morris Centre.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Trinity Gardens School provides effective leadership in strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions for a diverse and complex student population. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative planning.

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

1. Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.
2. Strengthen the work of teaching teams by developing and implementing teaching agreements that ensure the consistency of practice and coherence of high-quality curriculum planning and evidence-based teaching practice in literacy and numeracy.
3. Deepen the application of whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback to develop explicit target-setting and intentional teaching.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Marg Erwin
PRINCIPAL
TRINITY GARDENS SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Trinity Gardens 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 – Site bullying data/trends/initiatives for the purpose of updating the school Governing Council twice a year.

Part 2: Learning Improvement: Item 1 – The South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework; Item 9 – Implement the Aboriginal Education Strategy 2013-2015.

Part 3: School Organisation: Item 4 – Implement a Bullying and Harassment Policy and complete the policy implementation checklist.

Part 4: People and Culture: Item 4 – Finalise documentation for the Site Induction Policy.

Part 5: Safety: Item 4 – Finalise documentation for the Volunteer Policy.

Part 6: Site Procedures: Item 1 – Use the WHS Specific Risk Assessment Tools for infection control, hazardous manual tasks, inclement weather, hazardous chemicals and plant management.

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 2016 was 93.0%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Trinity Gardens School over the years 2012 to 2016.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 65% of Year 1 and 58% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). For both Years 1 and 2, this result is above the baseline average.

In 2016, the reading progress, as measured by NAPLAN, indicates that 59% of Year 3 students, 70% of Year 5 students, and 78% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this was an improvement, for Year 5 within, and for Year 7, below the baseline average. It should be noted that Steiner students in Year 3 were withdrawn from the NAPLAN test, which will result in a lower overall achievement figure.

In 2016, Year 3, the school is achieving below, and for Years 5 and 7, within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 40% of Year 3 students, 31% of Year 5 students, and 25% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this was an improvement from the baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in literacy, 65%, or 22 of 34 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 46%, or 16 of 35 from Year 3 remain in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 59% of Year 3 students, 72% of Year 5 students, and 77% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this was an improvement, for Year 5, within, and for Year 7, below the baseline average. It should be noted that Steiner students in Year 3 were withdrawn from the NAPLAN test, which will result in a lower overall achievement figure.

In 2016, Year 3, the school is achieving below, and for Years 5 and 7, within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 24% of Year 3, 18% of Year 5, and 26% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result was within the baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 44%, or 10 of 23 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 58%, or 11 of 19 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2016.