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 overarching review question is “How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?”

This External School Review has evaluated:
- the school’s self-review processes and findings,
- the school’s achievement data and progress over time,
- the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and
- parent and student views about the school.

The External School Review included an analysis of the school’s key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Lee Sansom, Review Principal.
Policy compliance
The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Nairne 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 policy:

- Teaching and Learning Item 10: the Aboriginal Strategy will be included in the Site Improvement Plan in 2016

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 91.9%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Nairne Primary School is a metropolitan school with an enrolment of approximately 474 students, catering for students from Reception to Year 7. The enrolment has been relatively stable over the past 5 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 1009, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% (32) Students with a Disability, 0.5% (2) Aboriginal students, 1% (3) students under the Guardianship of the Minister, approximately 20% (94) of students eligible for School Card assistance and 3% (12) students verified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Principal has noted rising vulnerabilities in children just starting school through the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), particularly in language and cognitive skills.

The leadership consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, School Counsellor and in-school Coordinator focused on ICT. The Principal is in her second tenure of appointment and has witnessed the school grow from 11 classes to 21 classes over a short period of time. This has now stabilised to approximately 18 classes due to the influence of Same Day Start, downsizing of defence force barracks and expansion of a nearby independent school.

The school operates with four staff learning teams: Preschool, Junior Primary, Middle Primary and Upper Primary.

The onsite Preschool has a current enrolment of approximately 65 children. It achieved a result of ‘Excellent’ in its National Quality Standard (NQS) assessment. The school enjoys a close working relationship with the children and families of the Preschool. Two Playgroups operate to cater for the needs of local families.
Lines of inquiry
During the review process, the panel focused on two key areas from the External School Review Framework:

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<td>Effective Teaching:</td>
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How well are students achieving over time?

Analysis of reading achievement (based on Running Records) through Years 1 and 2 from 2011 to 2013 (the 2014 result was not available), indicates that an average of 35% of Year 1 students achieved the expected DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA), and at Year 2, 65% achieved the SEA. Assuming that a high proportion of students move from Year 1 to Year 2 at the school, the data indicates an increase of 15% achieving the SEA from 2011 to 2012 (from 36% to 61%), and a 38% increase from 2012 to 2013 (from 31% to 69%).

The reading achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), shows an average of 75% of Year 3, 72% of Year 5 and 77% of Year 7 students at the SEA. The Year 3 achievement at SEA has dropped over time from 89% in 2010 to 68% at the SEA in 2014. The Year 5 data shows increased achievement from 2011 to 2014 from 62% to 73% at the SEA. The Year 7 cohorts show steady achievement at the SEA over time.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher reading bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last 7 years, there was, on average, 39% at Year 3, 23% at Year 5 and 22% at Year 7 in the top two bands. For those students who achieved in the top two bands in reading at Year 3, just over 50% of the tracked students remain in the upper two bands through to Year 7.

The numeracy achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), shows an average of 76% of Year 3, 69% of Year 5 and 76% of Year 7 students at the SEA. The Year 3 achievement at SEA has dropped over time from 83% in 2010 to 69% in 2014. This same pattern was evident for reading. The Year 5 result has been relatively consistent over time with 73% at SEA in 2014. The Year 7 results show a steady rise in achievement from 68% in 2008 to 80% in 2014.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher numeracy bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last seven years, there was, on average, 21% at Year 3, 12% at Year 5 and 17% at Year 7. For those tracked students who achieved in the top two bands in numeracy at Year 3, approximately 40% of them were retained in these bands through to Year 7.

The challenge for the school is to retain students in the upper two bands for reading and numeracy as they progress through school. Of note, is that the school has a proportion of students (average 9% in 2014 across the school) who are absent or withdrawn from the NAPLAN tests which impacts the school’s performance, as they are regarded as not meeting the SEA.

Direction 1
Improve reading and numeracy achievement, growth and retention in upper bands across the school through the consistent implementation of effective evidence-based pedagogical practices in all classes.

The Principal’s presentation cited a number of school initiatives to improve student achievement within the school context at Nairne Primary School. These initiatives included: working on ‘multiple fronts’, personalising learning for both teachers and students, ensuring curriculum and pedagogical continuity for all learners and making learning intentions clear for students.
As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel pursued the following line of inquiry.

**How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

The school collects and uses a wide range of student assessment data to guide decisions about strategic directions for the school and to align intervention for student learning based on presented evidence. The data collection is mapped out on a schedule across the school year. The school data is stored on an electronic student management system and is used to “watch progress from Reception to Year 7” and share progress with families. The school undertakes effective self-review and develops its Site Improvement Plan (SIP) using the analysis from various data sets. The Principal maintains the plan as an ‘organic’ document that responds to emergent needs. This was evident in documentation and staff room displays. Staff improvement teams are established to enact the strategies evident in the SIP.

The Principal has challenged teachers’ long held assumptions about personalising learning for students over recent years. An inquiry approach was undertaken with staff and a commitment was made to focus on Literacy and Mathematics learning through pedagogical approaches that would further support, engage and challenge students. External consultants and mentors to the school were engaged for this professional learning and implementation of the work. The school chose to work on ‘multiple fronts’ with these initiatives rather than tackle them as separate entities. The Review Panel verified this as a consistent understanding and approach referenced in staff comments during interviews.

Consultants and mentors have worked with staff individually about Literacy and Maths learning, and teachers personally reflect on their pedagogical practices through the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework. The consultants met with each staff member and Principal or Deputy Principal to model the teaching practices, personalise the professional learning, undertake observations and provide feedback to teachers. Professional learning plans are developed by each teacher and shared in small teams to maintain professional accountability to one another. Personalised aspirations for each staff member, in each priority area, are displayed in the staffroom in the spirit of transparency for whole school improvement.

Staff comment in meetings confirmed that personalisation of learning was working for them as professionals. One staff member acknowledged that, "We are all at different places with our learning." The professional learning has certainly impacted on common language used across the school. The Review Panel heard the terms 'fluency', 'reading stamina' and 'just right books' consistently from staff, parents and students. Staff comment verified that there was indeed a deliberate focus on the needs of individual students. One powerful reference from a teacher was: "No-one gives up at Nairne, on any child." Staff used TfEL tools to reflect on their ability to modify teaching practice in reading across three of the TfEL domains from 2011 to 2015. The single domain that staff indicated they had achieved the most professional growth in teaching practice as it related to reading, was ‘personalising and connecting learning’ for students.

**Direction 2**

Build the capacity and pedagogical approaches evident in classroom practices across the school to personalise learning for students by sharing ‘best practice’ amongst the staff through multiple modes.

The analysis of data has led the Principal to a belief that “We think our kids are capable of achieving more.” The Principal also believed that it was important to personalise learning for staff too so that they could relate this to their students in classes. One of the school’s underlying principles was that every teacher is a teacher of reading and that it was important for ‘reading stamina’ to be developed for students. This concept was confirmed by teachers and students during the review and verified as an embedded concept in the school. The provision of class miniature libraries was a sample of evidence that demonstrated the reading emphases across the school and linked to age appropriate genre, themes, interests and ability levels. Parents and Governing Council members made reference to the coloured take-home levelled reading books being instructive to both parents and children, as to their reading fluency and comprehension.
The teachers established a school-based level system against the Australian Curriculum (AC) standards to inform students about their growth. For instance, all students are tracked in Mathematics using an established framework (Maths Content Overview) using advanced level (AL), at learner level (L) and beginner level (BL) in assessing against the standard. This terminology was consistent in staff and student commentary. The assessment framework was verified through documentary evidence provided. A focus on maths fluency in recent years, getting students to a stage of automaticity in Base 10 number, has been described by students, staff and parents as successful.

The development of positive psychology is aligned to the needs presenting in the AEDC data and the school’s approach to the development of the ‘whole child’. The school has focused on a positive educational approach through the establishment of virtues as a guide to relationships and behaviours across the school. The school has also established a working relationship with Summit Health which provides an onsite counselling service for families. Behaviour data, coupled with student, staff and parent comment, verified that the school approaches to wellbeing, engagement and inclusion were effective on the whole. Parent comment supported approaches to bring ‘real-life’ learning experiences into the program at Nairne Primary. One parent commented: “Not all learning is uncertaken in the classroom. This is one of the things I liked about the school.” Another stated: “There has been a good level of flexibility within the learning to hook my kids in.”

Intervention in reading, spelling and maths is targeted through a number of specific program approaches delivered by trained SSO staff. The programs were overseen by teachers who recommended certain students for participation in the range of intervention possibilities. There was evidence of significant hours of support provided through specifically-named intervention strategies for students with Negotiated Education Plans and other targeted students who would benefit from intensive, short-term support (colloquially known as One Plans). The SSO staff verified the importance of reporting progress back to the class teacher and parents. Intervention reports were confirmed as being sent home at the same time as other formal reports.

The SSO group presented as a committed and professional team that offered effective support to students and teachers. Of particular interest was their level of enthusiasm with the school strategic work in student engagement in learning. For example, all SSO staff undertook training to support students on the autism spectrum, some integrated the kitchen garden resource to provide stimulus for recount writing, and others involved students in cooking opportunities as a part of technology in Educational Research Projects (ERP). To build their understanding of the school focus to engage all learners, the SSO group has participated in staff training days to further align their work. One SSO commented: “Some of our students need to be engaged in different ways.” There was endorsement of the SSO commitment to the school and of being highly valued by leadership and teaching staff. This was evident through such comments as: “We’re encouraged to bring our ideas forward” and “We’re all on the same page, at the same time.”

A school strategy to create learning continuity for students is to have students remain with the one class teacher for two or three years, where this is strategically possible. Parents commented on learning continuity as being important for challenging and enthusing students. The Same Day Start has affected this practice somewhat.

In discussing phonic development and phonemic awareness with teachers in the early years, there were a number of different approaches used by different teachers for reading development. Changes in classroom teachers may be problematic for students moving from one class teacher to the next with these different approaches in place. An agreed and consistent approach in this aspect of literacy development would further provide learning continuity for students.

**Direction 3**
**Support learning continuity in literacy through an agreed evidence-based approach to oral language, phonological awareness and phonics instruction taught consistently across all Junior Primary classes.**

Through the pedagogical work undertaken with the external consultant, two approaches have been developed within the school. Junior Primary students engage in ‘Discovery Time’ a number of mornings
each week, which allows for student choice in play-based learning with clear curriculum links to learning. Parents commented about this approach as engaging and building skills of negotiation with children. Governing Council members knew about these approaches as they had been discussed at meetings and communicated via school newsletters. Parents commented positively about the many ‘discovery zones’ to engage students. They also commented about other learning spaces, such as the ‘tech shed’ and science room with robotics, which provide hands-on learning opportunities.

In the Primary section, the students undertook Educational Research Projects (ERP) which the teachers and students confirmed as integrated learning involving literacy, numeracy and at least one other subject. This approach verified the learning on ‘multiple fronts’ principle raised earlier. Learning intentions were made clear for students on the planning sheets provided to each student and timelines for completion were adhered to. Students verified that teachers had expectations for their personal achievement, expected students to do their best and made these expectations clear to them. Teachers verified the use of marking rubrics in their classes to break the learning intentions down and to make the assessment criteria ‘really explicit.’ Students and parents commented that it was helpful when scaffolds for developing ERPs were explained and made explicit for students.

Upper Primary students presented self-assessment sheets used in their learning using the BL, L and AL grading system. They commented that the teacher would agree or disagree with their self-assessment and provide an explanation. Students described a range of strategies used to engage them in their learning, particularly as it related to literacy and numeracy. They readily described strategies such as the Reader’s and Writer’s Notebook, Banker’s Game (for Base 10), ‘Please Explain’ for writing, reading goals, quick writing and quick maths that motivated them to learn. Junior Primary staff described approaches such as using peer to peer feedback that had to be ‘kind, respectful and helpful’, developing class inquiry questions, working with three focus students for a morning, building the dendrites of ‘magic brains’ and asking literal and inferential questions to stimulate comprehension, as specific approaches to support young students in their learning.

The students verified that ongoing student assessment in the classroom was used to ‘tell the teacher what you know or don’t know’. It was verified by student comment and through student work samples that teachers provide feedback to students along the way to help guide them with their learning. When asked by the Review Panel: “What do you do when you get stuck?” one student replied: ‘The teacher will help you nut it out!’ One example that a teacher cited as a change in teaching practice was to provide students with opportunities to draft their writing more than once, with feedback to improve provided each time. This is reliable evidence of the influence of the teacher professional learning and personalising learning for students to an extent that students know what to do to improve.

**Direction 4**

*Make learning intentions and success criteria clear for all students, to challenge them further in their learning. Use goal setting, reflection, formative assessment, learning scaffolds and exemplars of expected standards to support higher levels of achievement for all students.*

The school presented evidence of effective leadership for school improvement at all levels within the organisation. The Review Panel collected evidence of the school’s capacity to undertake self-review and target specific actions that lead to realised improvements in student learning outcomes measured against DECD standards. There is ample evidence of a united and connected staff team who are working together to implement the designed curriculum and pedagogical changes being sought across the school. There was evidence of reporting progress made with school improvement priorities to Governing Council as an aspect of effective governance and accountability at the local level.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Nairne Primary School is performing well. The school has a well-defined culture of improvement and is working diligently to actively engage all learners with their learning. Decisions about strategic directions, curriculum and pedagogical improvements are based on effective analysis of multiple measures of data. The Australian Curriculum is used to plan, assess and track student achievement and growth by all teachers at the school. Improvement in teaching practice reflects the TEL framework and is supported by professional learning, performance planning and feedback.

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

1. Improve reading and numeracy achievement, growth and retention in upper bands across the school through the consistent implementation of effective pedagogical approaches in all classes.

2. Build the capacity and pedagogical approaches evident in classroom practices across the school to personalise learning for students by sharing ‘best practice’ amongst the staff through multiple modes.

3. Support learning continuity in literacy through an agreed evidence-based approach to oral language, phonological awareness and phonics instruction taught consistently across all Junior Primary classes.

4. Make learning intentions and success criteria clear for all students, to challenge them further in their learning. Use goal-setting, reflection, formative assessment, learning scaffolds and exemplars of expected standards to support higher levels of achievement for all students.

Based on the school’s current performance, Nairne Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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.

Leesa Shepherd
PRINCIPAL
Nairne Primary School

Governing Council Chairperson