

External School Review

Gulfview Heights Primary School

Final School Summary Report

February 2024



External School Review details

Public education is for every child and young person in every community across our state. Educators and staff work in partnership with families and communities to nurture, develop and empower all South Australian children and young people with the knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to become fulfilled individuals, active, compassionate citizens and lifelong learners.

External School Review teams work in schools with school leaders and staff to enable in-depth evidence-based reflection on their recent improvement journey and their current strengths and challenges, in the areas of expert teaching, school leadership, and conditions for optimal learning.

Round table participants

Chris Zunis	Principal
Ilia Tsoutouras	Education Director
Dani Samuel	Deputy Principal
Leanne Thomas	Senior Leader
Sheree Wingard	Senior Leader
John Burns	Review Officer
Julie James	Review Officer (Mentor)

Review team

John Burns	Review Officer
Julie James	Review Officer (Mentor)
Michele Russell	Review Principal

Post review meeting participants

Chris Zunis	Principal
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Expert teaching line of inquiry: How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction to improve outcomes?

Strengths and challenges

- The leadership team and staff have a strong commitment to literacy improvement. Focused and explicit instruction in phonics and spelling occurs every morning, reception to year 6. Targeted intervention programs, such as MiniLit, are in place for identified students requiring additional support with trained SSOs. As a result, phonics screening check data trended upwards from benchmark 56% in 2019 to 85% in 2023, following the specific initiatives with the Literacy Guarantee Unit (LGU).
- Teachers use a range of data sets to plan and differentiate learning. DIBELS, Brightpath, early years screening, individual student's phonics and maths assessments are used to group students, set learning intentions, student success criteria and learning goals.
- Teachers utilise three days in week 0 to analyse data for their new class. This enables identification of students who may require differentiation, intervention, stretch and challenge.
- Learning intentions are visible in most rooms and are shared with students. There are a range of student understandings about them across the school which impacts on their effectiveness. There is an opportunity to make learning intentions and success criteria more impactful by co-constructing them with students, supporting them to access self, peer and teacher feedback.
- The use of goal setting is varied, including setting the same goal for many students and how often the goal is reviewed. Students are not able to consistently describe what learning goals are or how they support them to improve. Co-constructing student determined learning goals will empower students to understand their next developmental steps.
- Students reported that feedback provided by teachers is both verbal and written in books. Some students describe giving peer feedback to each other in pairs or small group activities and perceive this helps them improve their work. Teachers describe using 'just in time' verbal feedback with students. There is an opportunity to develop learner agency through formative peer and self-assessment feedback that informs their next steps in learning.
- Formative assessment and feedback strategies include thumbs up and down, pair-share and report, and the use of mini white boards. There is ongoing opportunity to refresh and strengthen teacher knowledge of formative assessment and feedback processes.
- Students report that assessment data is often not shared with them. Consequently, they are unsure of their strengths and their next steps in learning. There are opportunities to continue to strengthen this work by sharing assessment data with students, identifying their strengths and next steps in learning, particularly in maths.
- Documented literacy and numeracy draft assessment schedules are in place and drive whole school data collection. Teachers are using a range of assessment data to inform planning and monitor impact of teaching on student learning outcomes. Some teachers use pre and post-testing regularly to inform their teaching and identify next steps in learning for students.
- Brightpath writing assessment enables teachers to collaboratively moderate student writing and has been a valuable tool to share next steps in learning, and to establish associated goals with students.
- The Departments maths units are utilised to support teaching in all year levels. Students identify mostly doing the same work in class and many feel that they are not stretched in their learning. During classroom walkthroughs, differentiation to provide stretch was not visible. Opportunity exists for greater differentiation of maths to provide additional stretch and challenge.
- Teachers work in year level teams to moderate common tasks and summative assessments from The Departments units of maths work. They report that this process assists them assign A-E grades. Moving towards triangulation of PAT M, NAPLAN and A-E data would further confirm reliability of judgements. Opportunity for a whole school documented approach about moderation processes would support consistency of assessments.

Potential next steps

- Make student success criteria visible, accessible to students and an active part of the learning cycle.
- Co-construct student learning goals to empower students to understand their next steps in learning.
- Provide regular opportunities for students to receive feedback based on their data and evidence of learning to inform action.
- Establish teacher moderation processes to include the use of A-E grades to ensure consistency.

Opportunity for improvement 1

Co-construct and make visible student success criteria and learning goals that empower students to be an active part of the learning cycle.

Quality leadership line of inquiry: How effective are the school's professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capability to accelerate student learning?

Strengths and challenges

- During the leadership walkthrough, it was evident that a whole school literacy block is embedded. Teachers demonstrated school improvement planning initiatives with a systematic approach to phonics, reading groups, explicit writing approaches and phonemic awareness.
- Evidence gathered through teacher meetings and classroom walkthroughs indicate that the staff are highly collaborative and closely align teaching practice to improve student learning.
- There is alignment between improvement planning, performance and development plans (PDPs), and professional development (PD) enhancing the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.
- Staff demonstrate clear understanding of the school's approach to improvement, with genuine engagement in its development, review, and design of next steps.
- Regular monitoring and review of school priorities supports decisions about what should be continued or stopped. Teachers report that more time to embed processes, rather than adding new priorities, would support the direction of the school and allow for greater efficacy.
- Professional learning communities (PLCs) are aligned to school improvement initiatives, teacher planning and PD. There are both learning teams and PLC structures at the school. PLCs work together in year level teams during scheduled staff meeting times and outside of school hours. The opportunity exists to clarify the role and processes used for PLCs to ensure they are consistent, rigorous and improving student learning.
- Systems are established to develop teacher and leader capability, focusing on instructional leadership and evidence-based pedagogical feedback during PDP meetings. PDP goals are data informed and aligned to school improvement priorities.
- There have been an extensive range of professional learning opportunities focused on literacy approaches including DIBELS, Orton-Gillingham and Literacy Pro delivered through staff meetings, student free days and PLCs. Teachers articulated their professional learning emphasised why the approach is utilised, its purpose and the implementation processes.
- Mentoring, coaching and associated informal feedback is provided by the school leaders when incidental walkthroughs are provided. Staff identified that by formalising this process, feedback would be effective, timely and support their next steps to adjust and improve their teaching practice.
- Graduate and early career teachers receive leader and peer teacher support, including mentorship for written curriculum planning and regular support check-ins. Specialised coaching and involvement with literacy and numeracy programs and The Departments units of work has been a focus. This allows early career teachers to feel confident about their practice and implementation of school priorities.
- A documented program of PD is established for the school year and includes a range of professional learning opportunities in different collaborative formats such as PLCs and learning teams. This allows teachers time to embed and deeply understand new approaches and initiatives.
- SSOs are included in all classroom based literacy and numeracy PD which supports their learning. Intervention practices are aligned across the school, supporting cohesion and building capability.
- Students discuss that there is limited opportunity to provide feedback to teachers about their teaching. Some students suggest they have ideas and feedback to add value to current learning processes. The opportunity for reciprocal feedback between students and teachers will allow for students to become authentic partners in learning.
- Governing Council and parents are aware that the school has an improvement plan. Most are aware of the learning areas that are the focus for improvement. Teachers and leaders describe high parent engagement with the school. The Department parent survey includes data that demonstrates an opportunity to explore and improve school to family communication and connect parents with their child's learning goals and achievement. Responding to this data could enhance understanding and support further engagement with the community.

Potential next steps

- Increase staff collaboration through developing an agreed PLC structure.
- Establish and document processes for regular classroom walkthroughs and feedback to teachers.
- Create opportunities for student feedback to teachers about teaching and learning.

Opportunity for improvement 2

Develop processes for teacher feedback from leaders and students about teaching and learning.

Conditions for optimal learning line of inquiry: To what extent does the school provide, maintain and monitor a safe, supportive and respectful environment to maximise engagement, wellbeing and achievement?

Strengths and challenges

- The principal and leadership team has significant impact on the implementation of the school values and culture, ensuring that all members of the community feel a strong sense of belonging. The culture allows for the implementation of initiatives and staff encourage each other.
- Students articulate that their school is friendly and caring. There is a positive learning environment due to kind and encouraging teachers providing interesting learning opportunities and supporting wellbeing. Feedback from students is very positive about the range of specialist opportunities and events available at the school.
- Parents describe the school as extremely welcoming, respectful and inclusive environment, where all students are supported by school leaders who are open and available. This is also evident in the 2023 parent survey where 86% of parents ranked highly that teachers and students are respectful.
- There is a positive learning culture throughout the school. Students come to school ready and wanting to learn. The review team observed a high level of engagement in all classrooms and teachers have a clear understanding of the dispositions and fundamental learning habits they want to develop in their students. Governing councillors that attended the parent meeting want to contribute to the school community and see all children thrive.
- Classroom fixtures, furniture and resources allow for student collaboration and provide a modern, safe and stimulating learning environment. Student feedback indicates there is a strong sense of pride in both their indoor and outdoor surroundings.
- School values prompts are evident in all classrooms and demonstrate expectations for learning. Morning circles focus on the Resilience Project, Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness (GEM) values implementation and Berry Street practices. Teachers describe the implementation of trauma informed practice and the Resilience Project as highly effective.
- A wellbeing hub has been developed and is staffed over five days by the two wellbeing leaders and the pastoral care worker. The space provides opportunity for students to take a break and self-regulate. Students report that this is a positive experience and helpful to their learning.
- SSOs are highly trained and valued at the school. They provide seamless support both inside and outside of the classroom. Intervention and special education programs are a feature of their work with individuals and small groups.
- Teachers state there are high expectations across the school but not all were able to articulate what this looks like. Students gave varied responses when asked about high expectations for learning with some describing high level ideals and others not being able to articulate any. There is an opportunity for the school to clearly define what high expectations for learning and citizenship are at the school and implement a school wide approach to these.
- The teacher survey stated that learning rigor is provided at the school, however, examples included class routines and general expectations rather than learning examples. Most students indicated that they would like to be involved in more rigorous and authentic learning opportunities that enable them to participate in higher order thinking, problem solving and group work with their peers.
- Increasing learner agency is of interest to school leaders and is seen as an area for development. Students are unable to provide examples of any influence in their own learning. As the school begins to engage with the Strategy in 2024 and beyond planning could be collaboratively undertaken, developing actions to increase learner agency opportunities.
- Students and parents are positive about a range of student leadership opportunities such as SRC, sports captains, canteen monitors and additional leadership roles. An opportunity exists for leadership opportunities and student involvement in decision making that would enhance meaningful student voice.

Potential next steps

- Leaders clearly articulate high expectations for teaching and learning.
- Provide opportunities for authentic learner agency and student leadership in classrooms and across the school.

Opportunity for improvement 3

Provide opportunities for authentic learner agency and student leadership in classrooms and across the school.

Review Summary

The school community recognises and highly values the principal and leadership teams' significant impact on the positive school culture. The school is welcoming and engaging, parents express a high degree of satisfaction with the teachers and SSOs. Students are proud of their surroundings and believe that teachers support both their learning and wellbeing.

Improvement focuses are widely communicated and staff have ownership of the school's improvement plan, allowing for the development of new practices. Staff describe a 'team approach' to changes in their practice aided by planning meetings, professional development, and professional learning communities. Development of a whole school understanding of high expectations and cognitive challenge will lift the quality of pedagogy to a higher level.

School leaders model the values and pedagogy they want teachers to implement. They have developed systems to monitor practice and to provide feedback throughout the school year, thus building teacher capability. Data analysis, research, and program development have been a priority in the areas of reading and number and a range of datasets are used. Input from the Literacy Guarantee Unit and Local Education Team has added to the knowledge of the leaders and staff.

Students said the school is a great place to learn and that they have opportunities to participate in leadership roles. There is an opportunity for increased stretch and challenge and students would appreciate the chance to be more involved in the design of their learning.

The school support officers are highly valued by staff and parents and are an important part of improving student learning.

The Governing Council is energetic, committed and highly engaged in the development and future of the school.

The Opportunities for improvement provided by the ESR process are intended to provide practical next steps that inform future decisions in expert teaching, school leadership, and conditions for optimal learning.

Opportunity for improvement 1 Co-construct and make visible student success criteria and learning goals that empower students to be an active part of the learning cycle.

Opportunity for improvement 2 Develop processes for teacher feedback from leaders and students about teaching and learning.

Opportunity for improvement 3 Provide opportunities for authentic learner agency and student leadership in classrooms and across the school.

John Burns

Review Officer

Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate

2024

