

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Whyalla Special Education Centre

Conducted in November 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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lynette Simons, 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
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Teachers.

School context

Whyalla Special Education Centre caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated approximately 384kms from Adelaide. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 65. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 57. The local partnership is Whyalla.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 949 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 26% Aboriginal students, 100% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 62% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of an Acting Principal and a Coordinator of Student Wellbeing who has been appointed to the Deputy Principal position from 2022.

There are 10 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 teacher.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Streamline learning design, assessment, recording and reporting student learning against individualised student learning plans.
- Direction 2** Simplify the improvement agenda through the lens of the school's aspirational statement.
- Direction 3** Continue to deepen the efficacy and professionalism of all staff through the provision of leadership that reflects and supported the significant role of both teaching and non-teaching staff in the learning of students.

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

Direction 1 Teachers use Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) for most student programming and assessing. Australian Curriculum is implemented to design learning for those students who are able to access this. The One Plan goals are written using ABLES or Australian Curriculum achievement standards. Student reports reflect the emphasis on subjects taught with an extra page for reporting on the school wide positive behaviour implementation system.

Direction 2 The school's aspirational statement states:

Students will strive to achieve their full potential and succeed in all aspects of life by becoming:

- independent learners who use their curiosity, imagination, initiative and develop their problem-solving skills
- motivated and determined individuals who engage in a variety of learning opportunities
- adults who apply self-control and confidently communicate
- independent in daily routines, duties, and interacting with the social world (society) around them.

The school improvement plan (SIP) has been simplified and now better reflects the aspirational statement.

The goals have been modified over the last three years along with the challenge of practice and targets.

The SIP is now an achievable, useful guide for the school community.

Direction 3 Leadership have completed the professional development plan (PDP) process with all staff in accordance with Department for Education policy.

The leadership team have met with staff to set goals for the year and observed teacher practice. In 2021 the Acting Principal observed the class team as well as the individual and were able to comment on their work as a team member. Each staff member received written feedback and the offer to meet personally.

All contract school services officer (SSO) positions were advertised at the end of 2021, requiring interested staff to read the job and person specifications and consider Department for Education SSO classifications as well as work with their teacher to provide referee statements and evidence of work.

SSOs attend class team meetings each week where individual student needs are presented along with reports, assessments and collected data. From here staff collaboratively determine next steps for teaching and learning and which data will best inform progress. All staff are expected to attend Professional learning opportunities provided. Staff work as class teams to build capacity and provide support for students and families. All SSOs are encouraged to complete further education, including Certificate III in Individual Support/Disabled, or Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

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?

Staff identified that the review and evaluation of progress in school improvement planning (SIP) was the collective responsibility of leadership and all staff. Most staff reported that the leadership team, in conjunction with professional learning communities (PLCs), were responsible for the review and evaluation of the SIP each term, with goals reviewed and updated as appropriate.

PLCs view the SIP as a working document throughout the year.

Professional learning for staff in relation to SIP priorities was identified as an area for further development.

When reflecting on what strategies have had the most impact, staff identified the following:

- the introduction and implementation of the communication matrix
- the use of a communication tool Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display
- literacy assessments that are framed via the following parameters of emergent, transitional, and conventional
- updating goals regularly and having set PLC groups

Involvement of staff, students and families in the improvement planning cycle includes but is not limited to the following: staff are consulted throughout the process, governing council see and discuss the SIP, families are consulted via a survey and students are consulted about aspects of the SIP.

Staff identified the following as next steps when considering the involvement of staff, students, and families in the improvement planning process.

- enact planned mini reviews each term and a whole staff engagement to strengthen the collective responsibility for tracking and monitoring the progress of the SIP
- provide planned opportunities for SSOs to become active contributors in the review and evaluation of the SIP goals
- ensure the new SIP is collaboratively reviewed and shared with all stakeholders
- strengthen student perspectives in the review, evaluation, and development of the SIP where possible
- encourage more family involvement through governing council and newsletters

A review of the SIP success criteria identified that all aspects are on track.

Direction 1 Strengthen the review and evaluation of the SIP via cyclic termly review with staff, teachers and school services officers.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Staff identified that formative assessment is used extensively to inform and refine planning across the site. Teachers reported that they develop a plan each term focused on formative assessment, which is subsequently adapted in a responsive manner to meet the learning needs of students as it occurs.

School services officers (SSOs) work with teachers in the observations of student learning. Annotation slips are used to support next steps, which includes levels of differentiation that are routinely shared. Teachers provide a diverse range of feedback to motivate, inform and track student learning where visual cues are used to record learning. The communication matrix assessment ensures that the language the teacher uses is at an accessible level for each student.

A diverse range of data sources, including ABLES and collective moderation with teachers and SSOs, was apparent across the site. The panel noted extensive evidence where staff reflected on their pedagogical practice and task design.

It was reported that students will let staff know if they require support, which can be identified via behavior. The use of facial cues and body language is also used to track progress at an individual level. Consistent tasks are revisited multiple times with minor alterations to ensure responsiveness to the learner. The consistent use of One Plans is valued and routinely implemented across all classes and year levels.

Effective differentiation is required for the 30% of students who were reported to be currently operating above ABLES. The school is well placed to identify, trial, and review relevant math assessments for these students.

Significant work in the analysis of assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction has been undertaken. The school is well placed to establish consistent processes across the site to track and monitor student progress in mathematics, including students who are operating beyond ABLES.

Direction 2 To analyse assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated planning and instruction.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Whyalla Special Education Centre is to be commended for their commitment to ongoing improvement for all students. The panel noted high levels of care and commitment to ensure that every student is provided with on-going opportunities to participate and succeed in learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Strengthen the review and evaluation of the SIP via cyclic termly review with staff, teachers and school services officers.**
- Direction 2** **To analyse assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated planning and instruction.**

Based on the school's current performance, Whyalla Special Education Centre will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



Kerry Dollman
Director
Review, Improvement and Accountability



Anne Millard
Executive Director
Partnerships, Schools and Preschools



Karryn Greenbank
Acting Principal
Whyalla Special Education Centre



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

School performance overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance.

The school uses a range of formative and summative assessment and data collection strategies to inform progress and growth against student learning goals. ABLES curriculum assessment and reporting suite has been implemented across the school to provide additional data to evaluate students' academic skills and understandings. Student progress is monitored throughout each day and across the term to assess achievement. Goals are regularly adjusted in response to this.