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.

This External School Review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sharron Ward, Review Principal.
Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Colonel Light Gardens Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 2015 was 94.2%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Colonel Light Gardens Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 7 kilometres south of the Adelaide CBD and is part of the Mitcham Plains Local Partnership. The enrolment is 650 students. There are 3 full-fee paying students from Japan at the school. There are enrolment pressures and a zone of entitlement is in place. Enrolment has increased over the last 5 years, from 603 in 2010 to 650 in 2016.

The school is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school’s ICSEA score is 1102.

The school population includes 1.7% (11 students) Aboriginal students, 3.2% (20 students) Students with a Disability, 10% of students eligible for School Card assistance, and 25.2% (159 students) of students with an English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background (19 cultural backgrounds). In 2015, 34% (20 students) of Reception students were identified as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains in the Australian Early Development Index. In the 2015 Middle Years Developmental Index (Years 6 and 7), students scored very low on persistence, and lower on absence of sadness and absence of worries.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the final year of her 4-year tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal, an Assistant Principal with an ICT focus, and an Assistant Principal with a focus on science and maths. A numeracy coach is to be appointed soon to work with staff on enhancing their pedagogy with a particular focus on differentiation and inquiry.

There are 35 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career. Forty-nine percent of teachers are accredited with Step 9 proficiency, and 20% are aspiring school leaders, as evidenced by career planning. The school has 224 SSO hours per week and a Pastoral Support Worker.

The school values are care, respect, and safety.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 85% of Year 1 and 84% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average in both Year 1 and 2.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 86% of Year 3 students, 88% of Year 5 students and 94% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.
In 2015 Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In Year 7, there is an improvement trend from 88% in 2013 to 94% in 2015.

In 2015, 48% of Year 3, 45% of Year 5 and 32% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 70%, or 28 of 40 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 52%, or 12 of 23 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years, the trend for Year 3 to 5 upper band reading retention is downwards, from 78% to 70%.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of Year 3 students, 86% of Year 5 students and 85% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2015 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved higher than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 30% of Year 3, 36% of Year 5 and 29% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the baseline average. There is a trend upwards in Year 5 numeracy, from 22% in 2013 to 36% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 75%, or 18 of 24 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015; and 58%, or 11 of 19 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In the last 3 years, the trend for Year 3 upper band numeracy retention is upwards, from 48% to 75%.

During the Principal’s presentation to the Review Panel, the Leadership Team reflected on the improvement efforts undertaken with staff at Colonel Light Gardens Primary School over recent years. The school has been united in moral purpose around nine expert learner qualities, which were developed consultatively with staff, students and parents. These qualities provide a language for the continuous development of student social and emotional self-management for learning. Resourcing of staff teaming, in order to collaboratively design learning that is differentiated and stretches students intellectually, has been successful. Staff access to student learning data has been facilitated so that teachers can target their teaching for literacy and numeracy growth. Intervention has been strengthened and systematised across the school.

As a result of the above data and the presentation by the Leadership Team, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry.

Lines of Inquiry

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

At Colonel Light Gardens Primary School, within the strong and valued team structure, every teacher reported collaboratively engaging with an 'inquiry' methodology that seeks to foster inquiry behaviours in learners. Further, this methodology offers multiple entry points for students, and opportunities for students to connect the learning to self in a variety of ways. The Review Panel spoke to every teacher at the school and, without exception, they all spoke about their 'inquiry unit', and how valuable it was to work in a team. This collaborative development and implementation of inquiry-based units of work is giving teachers evidence of higher levels of learning in a wider range of students. Most teachers extend high achievers some of the time, in particular, through these 'inquiry units' that they are developing.

Teachers interviewed by the Review Panel reported that working in teams is enabling teacher professional dialogue around moderation. In addition, each team interviewed stressed that the cross-partnership teacher collaboration being facilitated by the Partnership is valued. Some teachers in each team reported that they sometimes use goal-setting with students to motivate and engage them, and several teachers talked about using assessment rubrics to provide explicit information about, and feedback to, students about the quality of their learning. There was evidence, during the class walk-throughs, that a few teachers are making the learning intentions of the lesson clear to students.

Students agreed that most teachers give feedback on how they have gone with their learning and several stated that they find the quality of that feedback is constructible because “it’s not too harsh, not too soft”. Students talked about understanding the impact of effort on learning outcomes: “Teachers offer more help but kids don’t always take it.” Some students said that their teacher sometimes discusses success criteria with the class.

During the parent interviews, there was consensus that teachers at Colonel Light Gardens Primary School work hard in providing future-oriented learning opportunities for students. Comments included: “Teachers are happy to take on new ideas; they are not lazy in taking on new ideas”, “It is a school for the future, a forward-looking school.” Parents and students value the extended learning opportunities that are offered through the quality of the STEM links with Unley High School. Parents and students agreed that there is good breadth of coverage of the Australian Curriculum.

During discussions with teacher teams, it was apparent to the Review Panel that the significance of the discrepancy between high student reading and numeracy achievement and the numbers of A and B grades is not yet recognised as an issue by teachers. When asked about it, teachers expressed a reluctance to assign A and B grades. They don’t consider it significant that highly literate and numerate students are getting C grades in the Australian Curriculum. Teachers agreed that the possible parent criticism if they get it ‘wrong’ was their primary consideration. One teacher commented: “Even though I can see higher level work, I tend to be cautious and not give anyone an A”.

There is opportunity for the school to proactively extend all students in their learning and to use the Inquiry Units to enhance learning and report higher grades of achievement. Together with using student feedback to improve the quality of student learning, the school will be able to transition from using just a C grade, to higher grades that acknowledge higher levels of achievement.

At Colonel Light Gardens Primary School students are literate and numerate from an early age, as evidenced by student achievement data. Comments made to the Review Panel by students in student group interviews showed that students have a high work ethic. Parent comments to the panel showed that families, as well as students, value academic learning. Parents also spoke about how hard teachers at the school work to provide quality schooling experiences for all students.

Direction 1

Challenge students to aspire and achieve across the curriculum through provision of effective feedback about their learning, regular and rigorous identification of learning success criteria and learning intentions, as well as personal goal-setting.
How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

At Colonel Light Gardens Primary School all teachers are independently accessing and using the data tracking system, MARKIT. It was widely reported to the Review Panel that teachers value the time and support they are given to access and analyse their student learning data, and it was evident from their comments to the panel that all teachers are on a journey of developing data literacy.

Teachers in teams reported regularly using PAT and other data diagnostically. The value of last year’s student learning data was widely recognised, inclusive of data provided by preschool teachers. The school has a literacy agreement about the use of common resources for spelling and reading, the application of which was reported by some teachers in each teaching team.

Whole-school analysis of data that is done by leaders and presented to teachers influences teacher decisions in learning design. The team structure is strong and valued, evidenced by the way teachers also meet regularly at their own discretion, and are willing to give up individual time to do this in order to collaboratively work with data to design learning. The provision of staff meeting time for teaming by leaders is highly valued by teachers. Some teachers in each team expressed an understanding of the value of whole-school agreements, and some stated a need now to develop a numeracy agreement.

Governing Council members stated to the Review Panel that they feel positive about Governing Council’s involvement in strategic planning. Governing Councillors agreed that the current team of leaders has the ability to develop and support teachers.

The SIP has been operationalised by school leaders and there is deliberate attention paid to ensuring good coherence between site improvement, staff training and development, and the work of teams.

During the Leadership Team presentation, the Principal stated that the school had explicitly worked to ensure, in the interests of implementation, coherence for teachers between the four elements of self-review/strategic planning, training and development, the work of teams, and performance and development. Teachers and Governing Council members confirmed the coherence they witnessed and experienced between planning, training and teaming. One teacher stated: “Training and Development is not bitty. It’s coordinated, consistent and more intelligently paced”.

Notwithstanding this, there is some evidence that staff would value opportunities to use data and information to verify student learning and to use meetings to share, support and challenge teacher practices.

**Direction 2**
Build individual teacher capacity through consistent, evaluated staff performance and development processes that are directly linked to the school’s intentional, continuously improving student achievement targets.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

During the review, it was apparent that the expert student-learner qualities, developed by staff, students and parents, are evident at the school. Students, staff and parents confirmed the value and impact of these qualities in multiple forums during the Review. A mentor program (which matches the individual need of a student with an hour of 1:1 time each week with a support mentor), in liaison with the Mitcham Council and Kick Start for Kids, is very successful and adds value to the wellbeing for learning of individual students. This was verified by students, staff and parents.

Teachers, leaders, students and parents widely reported to the review Panel that achievement data is used to identify students for intervention. It was evident in meetings with teachers that specialist support teachers have a high level of intervention expertise, they collaborate well and their expertise was widely acknowledged and valued by mainstream classroom teachers and parents. Class teachers stated that there is connectedness and coherence between the work that students do in intervention and in their mainstream programmes. The types of intervention offered at the school are viewed as effective by staff,
students and families. *Quick Smart*, as a numeracy intervention, will soon be implemented.

The buddy class system (in which classes are paired) supports teachers as well as students with induction, transitions, and social and emotional wellbeing. Student cohesiveness is strong and students value the quality of the relationships that they have with teachers.

The workshops run for parents by specialist intervention teachers are valued by parents and classroom teachers. Parents value the strong community feel at the school, and the way parent involvement and parents’ ideas are being taken on board by the school. The way the classes are grouped into same year level ‘communities’ is highly regarded by students and families. Parents stated that there are good leadership opportunities for senior students.

During the Leadership Team presentation, the Review Panel was told about the way that intervention has been reviewed and restructured in recent years in order to make it more equitable and effective. However, during the review, parents and teachers expressed views to the panel, which indicate that there remain perceptions that there is a lack of transparency about, and inconsistencies in the way intervention is allocated at Colonel Light Gardens Primary School, including how long students have access to it and the rationale for this. For this reason, it is important that the school makes clear the rationale and principles of intervention support.

**Direction 3**  
Collaboratively develop, articulate and continuously re-visit a shared vision of the rationale and protocols for intervention, so that they are clear to parents and teachers.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Colonel Light Gardens Primary School consistently demonstrates growth in student achievement that is at or above what would reasonably be expected of a school in a similar context. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and intervention, and teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning.

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

1. Challenge students to aspire and achieve across the curriculum through provision of effective feedback about their learning, regular and rigorous identification of learning success criteria and learning intentions, as well as personal goal-setting.

2. Build individual teacher capacity through consistent, evaluated staff performance and development processes that are directly linked to the school’s intentional, continuously improving student achievement targets.

3. Collaboratively develop, articulate and continuously re-visit a shared vision of the rationale and protocols for intervention, so that they are clear to parents and teachers.

Based on the school’s current performance, Colonel Light Gardens Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

Rick Bennallack
PRINCIPAL
COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Anna Lee
Governing Council Chairperson

External School Review 2016 – Colonel Light Gardens Primary School | Version: FINAL