

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for South Australian School for Vision Impaired

Conducted in August 2018



Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lorna Fenech, Review Principal.

School context

The SA School for Vision Impaired (SASVI) is a unique learning centre offering educational expertise to students living with significant vision impairment in all schooling sectors in South Australia. The school is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The local Partnership is Marion Inland.

It is a specialist reception to year 7 school for children with a vision impairment, and the only government-funded one of its kind in Australia. In 2018, there are 20 full-time students enrolled in the school and 12 others who are dual-enrolled at another school site.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2nd year of his tenure at the school, a deputy principal, a manager of the Statewide Support Service (SSS), and an early intervention coordinator. The school delivers 3 targeted and essential services, and the principal has performance management responsibilities for staff in all 3 services. There are 5.6FTE teachers in the school, 10.3FTE in the SSS, and 2.2FTE in the secondary vision support program. These teachers include 3 in the early years of their career and 10 Step 9 teachers. There are 405.5 school services officer hours per week.

Students access the Australian Curriculum at age-appropriate levels. Students also access the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for students with vision impairment:

- Concept and literacy development using alternative formats (Braille and tactile graphics, large print, and/or electronic)
- Sensory efficiency (including visual perceptual skills and maximising use of remaining vision)
- Assistive technology
- Orientation and Mobility
- Independent living
- Social interaction
- Recreation and leisure
- Career education, and
- Self-determination.

Thirty-eight percent of the student population (12 of 32 students) are shared enrolments. The majority of these part-time students access the ECC. With almost 40% of students accessing the curriculum at alternate locations, building positive collaborative partnerships, promoting clear communication, and endeavouring to align learning design with other educational centres is of utmost importance.

Through the SSS, advisory teachers provide support for children with vision impairment who are enrolled in various school settings, both government and non-government. The SSS support enables students to access curriculum in the mainstream setting. Over the past 4 years there has been a 20% increase in students, taking the 2018 number to 228. The complexity of student needs is increasing, as is the number of country clients.

In 2018, a trial early intervention program is being developed and trialled. This program supports children who are legally blind from birth to 5 years. This support is delivered in homes or in mainstream childcare and preschool settings.

Secondary Vision Support Programs (VI Programs): These programs assist secondary students with an 'H' level of support in 1 of 2 units at Seaview High School and Charles Campbell College.

Students participate in all aspects of the school curriculum whilst they are also explicitly taught the ECC via specialist 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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Effective Teaching: **To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**

Effective Leadership: **To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?**

School Community Partnerships: **How effective are the transition processes and practices to, from and within the school?**

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

There is strong use of data within the school, including whole-school data display using spreadsheets to inform individual student progress. These data practices also include the triangulation of data to identify patterns and associations in order to inform intervention actions. School teachers hand over student data to next year's teacher, and there are clearly individualised programs for every student. Access for SASVI students to PE and the arts curriculum is exceptional. Teachers work in their own time to extend this learning into community opportunities such as Blind Sports, Choir and the Art Gallery program.

Each student has many negotiated education plan (NEP) goals. Student reports are highly detailed against both the Australian Curriculum and the Extended Core Curriculum. However, student reports are very long and 'wordy', and not connected to NEP goals. The panel noted that the NEP report in the SSS working folder of mainstream VI students was not current.

In the small classes a very strong use of formative assessment is possible and well-utilised. Classroom school services officers (SSOs) contribute to formative assessment. They told the panel that the school collaborates in the best interests of the students, and how well students are learning, which they saw as a result of teamwork around each child. SSOs talked about being given training to facilitate learning for specific students. This need is sometimes identified through the performance development plans.

There is strong collaborative planning for dual enrolment students between the mainstream class teacher and SASVI teacher, which also includes the SSS teacher.

SSS teachers and the secondary unit teachers from Seaview High School and Charles Campbell College provide strong and effective support regarding:

- Training and information about the impact of vision impairment (VI)
- Accommodations to use for students with VI
- Provision of resources to schools to use for students with VI
- Advocacy and service access, and
- Student and family wellbeing.

Individualised Braille programs are planned by SSS teachers for each mainstream student and data is collected in order to monitor student growth in Braille skills. Braille secondary learners require a more intensive level of support from SSS teachers. Both the school and SSS teachers are developing links between Braille literacy assessment, and print literacy assessment such as Jolly Phonics and the Neale Reading analysis. Teachers facilitate the access to NAPLAN through Braille and large print for appropriate students.

Parents and students reported learning progress. Governing council said the individualisation was helping each child reach their potential. The panel was provided with an example of how very high-level accommodations and differentiation have been provided for 2 students with VI and complex additional needs. All parents agreed about the strong support from all school staff for wellbeing matters associated with grief and trauma about the disability.

Observed student levels of engagement in classrooms were high, and students were confident and articulate about being a learner with the panel. They have a strong feeling that teachers know them very well, care for them, listen to them and are very open to them.

The panel noted a distinction in evidence-based planning between the SASVI school and the other services. The only learning data that was referred to by SSS and VI programs was Braille data, and a mention of Running Records. SSS teachers reported that they rarely have access to a student's learning data and requesting such data is not part of the advisory teacher service culture. SSS teachers hoped that by providing curriculum access, the vision-impaired child will be further supported in their learning.

The school is making exemplary and successful provision for the varied learning needs of the 32 students who attend. However, historically, the SSS and secondary units have not focused on the impact of service provision on student learning outcomes. The effectiveness of provisions for all VI students could be strengthened if SSS and VI programs bring a similar amount of rigour to monitoring the impact of their work on student learning outcomes as is now evident in the SASVI school.

Direction 1

The SSS and VI programs introduce into their planning the regular monitoring, with mainstream teachers, of student learning outcomes.

To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?

The school has become more collegiate in the last 12-18 months, and increased collaboration is supporting school improvement. The principal has brought staff together around a core moral purpose, and has a narrow and deep focus in a few SIP priorities that have been identified through data. The principal has aligned these SIP priorities, professional learning teams, performance and development and continuous improvement in pedagogy for staff. This has led to the development of a rigorous self-review and monitoring culture in the school. The panel found evidence from school staff that they understand and value this improvement culture. However, the panel was not clear how site self-improvement and increased collaboration is impacting on SSS. These teachers stated: "the SIP doesn't impact our day-to-day work. We do what we have always done", and they rarely meet as a team to discuss student learning, while communication is predominantly incidental and informal.

All staff are part of a professional learning team with a specific focus on a SIP aspect of improvement. Each staff member is working on an individualised project linked to the SIP. A teacher said: "collaborating has meant we share the vision".

Teachers talked about the value of mentoring for beginning teachers and how working collaboratively supports them in their development. This level of collaboration has improved significantly in the last 12 months, and is invaluable in learning design and improving practice. STEM 500 learning is being shared well with all teachers. School staff talked about open classrooms and peer observations and how that is helping them work collectively; they value the expertise of SSS about accommodations for VI.

The governing council said staff have good working relationships and take responsibility for all students. The leadership team has trust in and respect for the staff, which benefits children's education, as staff are supported and encouraged to continually "change things up" in learning for each child. Staff continue to build connections for students with community sport and recreation opportunities. Parents referred to respect and positive relationships between staff and students, and how it supports their children.

Collaboration and collective responsibility was evident in many stakeholder discussions about the work of the school in supporting student learning. However, the SSS and secondary unit staff continue to see their role and work as separate from the work of the school, which has become sharply centred on continuous student learning improvement. The school has an opportunity to explore and define a reinvigorated role for the SSS and secondary units, which is more connected to and embedded in improved student academic learning.

Direction 2

'Re-culture' the SSS and secondary units by redefining their purpose and practices through explicit consideration of the actual intent of the service.

How effective are the transition processes and practices to, from and within the school?

SSS teachers provide continuity for students as they transition between levels of schooling in the mainstream. The principal identified that year 7-8 transition from the school needs improving, reinforced by feedback from the staff meeting. Parents expressed concern about having to transition their child out of the school at year 8. Many parents and staff expressed concerns about the transition to high school, and post-school opportunities. A year 7-8 transition resource has been written by a SSS teacher. Early intervention SSS staff are documenting processes for the preschool to transition processes being developed through the trial of the EI program.

Transitions into and within the school are managed well, with some overlap time provided to facilitate seamless transition for students between teachers.

The dual enrolment of students is a model that supports students to have optimal schooling experiences. The school is considering dual enrolment of all year 6/7 students to improve transition to high school for those students. Parents note the improving interactions and connections with mainstream schools.

Under the current model there is no provision for secondary schooling within the school, and by 2022, all year 7 students will have been transitioned into high schools. The school is well-placed to better prepare students for mainstream school environments by including in their work the explicit development of independent study skills, growth mindsets and building the capacity of students to cope in an environment that requires higher levels of social and emotional self-management in learning.

Direction 3

Incorporate the explicit teaching of self-management, self-determination and independence within a mainstream classroom into the Expanded Core Curriculum for students.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at the South Australian School for Vision Impaired.

Since 2016, the school has been deepening its links with some local primary schools, particularly Ascot Park Primary School, with whom it is co-located. The value to all students of VI students regularly learning and socialising in mainstream settings cannot be overstated. Mainstream settings become normalised for VI students, and sighted students, their teachers and families become disability aware and literate.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

The South Australian School for Vision Impaired professional learning and performance and development is translated into effective teaching across the school. There are highly effective regular and strategic self-review processes and standards-driven findings which are acted upon. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

1. The SSS and VI programs introduce into their planning the regular monitoring, with mainstream teachers, of student learning outcomes.
2. 'Re-culture' the SSS and secondary units by redefining their purpose and practices through explicit consideration of the actual intent of the service.
3. Incorporate the explicit teaching of self-management, self-determination and independence within a mainstream classroom into the Expanded Core Curriculum for students.

Based on the school's current performance, the South Australian School for Vision Impaired will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



Peter Haskell
PRINCIPAL
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL FOR
VISION IMPAIRED



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 87.2%

Appendix 2

School performance overview

The external school review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). In considering the data below (which is only the data of those students who are fully enrolled in the school), there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for SASVI over the years 2014 to 2017. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

Reading

Between 2014 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% (8 of 13) of year 3 students, 72% (8 of 11) of year 5 students, and 44% (4 of 9) of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 23% (3 of 13) of year 3, 27% (3 of 11) of year 5, and 9% (1 of 11) of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

Between 2014 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students (9 of 13), 73% of year 5 students (8 of 11), and 67% of year 7 students (6 of 9) demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 23% (3 of 13) of year 3, 18% (2 of 11) of year 5, and 18% (2 of 11) of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.