

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR OAKBANK AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education
and Child Development

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 Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Katherine Holman, 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 Oakbank Area 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 policies:

Part 2 Learning Improvement: Item 2.9

The school is currently in the process of employing an Aboriginal Community Education Officer. To date, the development of Aboriginal Learning Plans has not been systematic. Cultural Competency training has also been ad hoc.

Part 6 Site Procedures: Items 6.1 and 6.2

The Safety Data Sheets are available on Chemwatch through Learnlink. Risk assessments are conducted in relation to camps and excursions, however, risk assessment processes need to be developed and enacted for ongoing activities.

The online Safety, Task and Action Reporting system has been the subject of considerable attention over the past 12 months. The school has improved from a level of 8% to 80% compliance. The school is working to ensure 100% of the documentation and assurance is current.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

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 87%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Oakbank Area School caters for students from Reception to Year 12 from the Onkaparinga Valley and Hills district. It is situated 31kms from the Adelaide CBD and is in the DECD local Partnership of Heysen. The school is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage, and has an ICSEA score of 987.

The enrolment in 2016 is 269 students and has stabilised after a significant decline from 425 in 2010. The school population includes 7 Aboriginal students, 8% Students with Disabilities, 8% students of English as an Additional Language and Dialect background, and 6 children and young people in care.

The school runs 3 sub-schools: Primary School - Reception to Year 6, Middle School - Years 7 to 9, and Senior School - Years 10 to 12. The school receives enrolments into the Secondary section of the school at Years 7 and 8.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal, appointed in May 2015, a Deputy Principal, 1 Senior Leader, 2 Coordinators, and a School Counsellor. This is a newly formed team, but is temporary, as there will be a new configuration in 2017. There is also a Positive Education Manager. Of the 25 teaching staff, 15 were new to the school in January 2015. There is a significant percentage of part-time teaching staff.

School Performance Overview

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

In the 2015 NAPLAN test, the percentage of students in Years 5, 7 and 9 who did not participate in the test was 23% (3 students), 22% (5 students) and 13% (4 students) respectively.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 50% of Year 1 and 42% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 88% of Year 3 students, 46% of Year 5 students, 65% of Year 7 students and 53% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For Year 3, this result represents an improvement, whereas for Years 5, 7 and 9, this result represents a decline, from the historic baseline average. There is a trend downwards in Year 5, from 88% in 2012 to 46% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the range of results of similar students across DECD schools. There was a 3-year downward trend in Year 5, from 82% in 2012 to 46% in 2015.

In 2015, 4 of 8 (50%) Year 3 students, 1 of 13 (8%) Year 5 students, 3 of 23 (13%) Year 7 students, and 1 of 30 (3%) Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represented an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 1 of 3 Year 3 students remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 1 of 3 Year 3 students remained in the upper bands at Year 7, whereas there was 1 of 5 students who remained in the upper bands in Year 9.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 88% of Year 3 students, 54% of Year 5 students, 43% of Year 7 students and 63% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 9, this result represents an improvement, whereas for Years 5 and 7 it was a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, there has been a 3-year upward trend, from 63% in 2013 to 88% in 2015 for Year 3. For Year 5, there has been a 3-year downward trend, from 73% in 2013 to 54% in 2015, and from 76% to 43% for Year 7.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 9 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the range of results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. For Year 7 the result is below.

In 2015, 1 of 8 (13%) Year 3, 1 of 13 (8%) Year 5, 1 of 23 (4%) Year 7, and 2 of 30 (7%) Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards, from 19% in 2013 to 4% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 1 of 1 (100%) student from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, 1 of 2 (50%) Year 3 students remained in the upper bands at Year 7, and 1 of 7 (14%) Year 3 students remained in the upper bands in Year 9 in 2015.

SACE

In 2015, 16 of the 20 students (80%) who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This was an improvement compared with the historic average.

In 2015, 88% of grades at SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher, which was also an improvement compared with

the historic average. In 2012, 75% of grades were C- or higher. There was also less achievement at the higher end (that is, As). In 2012, 55 (29%) of grades allocated were in the A and B range, compared with 29 (26%) in 2015. In 2015, the most successful achievement occurred in health and PE, business, enterprise and technology, English and cross-disciplinary subjects. Achievement in the sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) were the lowest.

In Stage 1 SACE, 86% of the grades were at C grade or higher. In 2015, 5 students completed their SACE through the use of VET.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on four key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Educational Leadership:	<p>To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?</p> <p>To what extent is leadership capacity evident across the school?</p>
Improvement Agenda:	<p>To what extent do teachers use data and information to inform their planning and instruction?</p>
Student Learning:	<p>To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?</p>

To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

In the past 18 months Oakbank Area School has revised its vision. They aim to achieve a *holistic school of continual improvement where students, staff and the community work and learn together to help everyone flourish and achieve*. Staff talked about a significant change in focus during this period of time, onto teaching, learning and the curriculum, and many described this change as timely. The pace of change has been well-managed and is evolving.

The Principal has worked to establish and document policies, timelines and procedures. This process has involved policy development and review to ensure the school is compliant with DECD policy expectations. The induction folder has been revised to ensure new staff members are informed of the school's organisational procedures and expectations. There has been significant work related to SACE to ensure the Year 10 to 12 curriculum is mapped to support students in making informed subject choices, and to ensure the VET processes and costs are well-documented and clear to all stakeholders.

The Principal has documented the school's 'Self-Review and Planning Guide', which sets-out the responsibilities, tasks and events expected to occur weekly, in each term of the school year. This guide promotes the understanding that self-review, planning and reporting is regular and cyclical. It is an important part of establishing a culture of improvement, which is essential for the school to achieve its vision.

Students and parents on the School Council spoke about the 'community feel' at the school, and that the school engenders a sense of belonging. The Leadership Team is trying to develop a Reception to Year 12 culture, a holistic approach, in which there is consistency and congruence to support students as they progress through their schooling. Students in the Senior School described the transition through middle to senior school as 'gradual' and supportive. The transition from Year 6 to 7 still appears to be a 'jump', although the deployment of some secondary-based teachers into the primary section of the school is helping to break down these barriers. There is still, however, a need to work together across the sub-schools, to ensure that the curriculum progression is planned and mapped to provide congruence and coherence for learners.

Some teachers said it feels like the school is "on the rise again". They described the students as great

ambassadors for the school, and that student behaviour had improved in recent times. Teachers talked about promoting the school to the community and feeder Primary and Preschools. Apparently, the school had previously developed a 'negative' reputation and potential enrolments bypassed the school.

At the same time, the Review Panel heard discounting of students by some members of the staff, including members of the Leadership Team: "some parents don't value education", "kids don't try their best", and "kids don't have high expectations of themselves, and are happy with mediocrity". Some senior students and parents recalled being told in 2015 that achieving a C was 'good enough' to get SACE. They thought this was the 'wrong' message to give as it encouraged students to aim for the minimum.

It seemed to the Review Panel that a number of staff members view the level of expectations as the students' responsibility, and not theirs as professional adults. This sentiment was a concern, as high expectations for their students by staff, and especially leaders, is one of the defining characteristics of school improvement, and reflects a moral purpose at the core of every teacher's thinking and actions. When teachers have high expectations for students and provide instructional support, high interest, and engaging tasks, students build their self-confidence and improve their academic performance. Moreover, it is highly motivating for teachers when they know and believe in their strengths and passions, and work to see these replicated by their students. Assisting students to improve academically and to be challenged and engaged with their learning requires all staff to have high expectations and to provide the appropriate targeted and tailored support.

Direction 1

All staff members need to actively support the focus on learning, engage in continual improvement and maintain high expectations for their students to enable the school to achieve its vision.

To what extent is leadership capacity evident across the school?

The Site Improvement Plan has been revised following a Pupil Free day at the end of 2015. It was developed from an analysis of student achievement data, and includes strategies and targets. At this point in time, most teachers supported the direction the Principal has established, although there was less understanding of what impact the School Improvement Plan (SIP) will have on their work in the classroom. There was still a sense that the SIP is a managerial document, rather than the vehicle for articulating the school's improvement agenda. The enactment of the SIP has implications for everyone, as doing the same things will achieve the same results, rather than creating improvement.

The Principal agreed that the 2016 SIP is an ambitious improvement agenda, and that future plans need to be narrower, achievable and allow time for development and consolidation. There is a need to develop the staff members' ownership of the improvement strategies, as their work is critical to student achievement, growth and engagement.

Each member of the Leadership Team now has documented roles and responsibilities. The team meets weekly, considers and solves day-to-day issues, and makes some connections to the SIP in their discussions. While the Leadership Team seemed to be 'on-board' with the renewed focus on learning, the follow-through with some decisions by all members was not evident. This lack of follow-through raises questions about the nature of collaboration or collective responsibility that exists within the Leadership Team and beyond into the sub-schools.

There will be a new team ready for 2017, as there are a number of positions in the process of being filled. It is an opportunity for the Leadership Team to develop an open ethos, to be active in their learning, and willing and able to build genuine ownership of the school's vision at all levels of the school.

Leadership in a school context, however, is much broader than the Leadership Team. Teachers new to the school, or new to the teaching profession, look to their colleagues for support and advice. These people exercise influence, positively or negatively, and are leaders in their own right. As one teacher interviewed by the Review Panel said: "We need a star team, rather than a team of stars". The Review Panel adds to this sentiment: the school needs a 'star team', committed to continual improvement, to achieve the school's vision.

As well as a positive, collaborative culture, schools need to have structures and processes that enable

teachers to learn and work together. It takes time, persistence and opportunity to trial, critique and strengthen individual practices. For example, the school has embarked on Positive Education as a school priority. They are using a framework to develop positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments to build students' wellbeing. Most teachers saw it as a strategy with potential to support the diverse and complex needs of their students. At this stage, positive mindsets are being developed through home group activities. While teachers acknowledged this time is more productive than in previous years, it is a long way from being a mindset that is actively and intentionally integrated into subject areas throughout the school day.

To avoid this strategy becoming a 'fad', the school needs to ensure that processes and resources, including time, together with agreed expectations, are in place to support teachers to develop and consolidate their thinking and practices. Teachers also have responsibility to engage with school-wide initiatives, and to develop themselves, individually and collectively, so that students experience a cohesive approach to learning as they progress through school.

Direction 2

Build the capacity of leaders and teachers, and provide structures, processes and time, to enable staff to improve their practices and collectively implement whole-school agreed approaches.

To what extent do teachers use data and information to inform their planning and instruction?

The analysis and use of reliable, quality data enables teachers and leaders to make informed choices about their teaching plans and programs. Teachers need to use data regularly, to track students' progress and to take necessary and timely actions to provide targeted and tailored support.

The Review Panel heard examples of the school becoming more data-literate. Timelines and processes for conducting assessments and collecting data are outlined in the self-review guide. There were two classes in the Primary sub-school that use the students' reading levels to group the students and to plan their instructional focus. The Primary School Coordinator is helping other teachers to interpret the PAT results, and is providing ideas for them to use for their planning. The Secondary Senior Leader is keen for the senior school to adopt a system across all subjects to regularly track students' progress on their assignments, and to report to parents. This process has been used by most other schools. It needs to be rigorous to enable students to receive useful and timely feedback on their drafts. The Review Panel was surprised that several students from the senior school did not seem to know how they were progressing, because it is "only halfway through the 2nd semester".

There has been an increased awareness amongst many teachers that data is important, however, the level that it is used for planning, tracking, and to provide targeted specific support, varies. One member of the Leadership Team said: "I would like data explained and then be told what to do and how to use it, because I want to improve, but I don't see the connection to the data".

In response to a survey, 4 teachers rated themselves low, 9 as medium, and 5 as high, in response to the question: *How well do you differentiate to cater for the range of interests and learning skills?* Students stated that whole-class teaching was common; however, the older students noted teaching styles had changed over recent years with less copying from the board, better explanation and greater effort by teachers to make the topics relevant to their interests.

As teachers know, the student groups attending Oakbank Area School have changed over time, as they have in society in general, representing a greater diversity of ability, knowledge, interests and readiness. Teachers need to plan for 'diversity'. One teacher talked about the way she provides whole-class instruction, and then tutorials within the class setting, to target the group who are struggling. Targeted teaching (that is, differentiation) requires teachers to use formative assessment strategies and, on the basis of the feedback they gather about the students' understandings, make instructional changes. It is supported by 'break-out' time involving explicit modelling, grouping, tutorials, peer support, and independent practice. It is a fluid process.

The assessment results using the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards suggest there is inconsistency in the marking and grading of students' work, particularly between the Primary and Middle

schools. This is particularly stark as students move to Year 7, where many more are allocated an A, compared with the Year 6 results in the previous year. At the staff meeting, it was clear that many staff were not conversant with the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). All teachers are expected to be able to put faces to the data, and know which students are below, at, or above the SEA, and to scaffold and tailor their support accordingly.

When staff members are on the same page, they use the assessment information gathered by colleagues, so that teachers can provide the appropriate instruction from day one of the school year. More importantly, support for students should be a collective endeavour, and data is a critical part of the information that needs to be used.

Direction 3

Build teachers' capacity to collectively analyse and use data to regularly track students' progress within classes and across the school, and for classroom planning, to provide more targeted and tailored instruction and support.

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

Parents on the School Council talked positively about how teachers support their children, particularly those who are struggling and have learning difficulties. They were less sure about the extent their children are stretched and intellectually challenged. Many students also talked about 'cruising' in some subjects.

The 2015 NAPLAN results, as described in the Performance Overview section of this report, show that the number of students achieving in the high proficiency bands is low. There is a significant improvement in the 2016 NAPLAN, which needs to be acknowledged and strengthened.

Teachers design activities and tasks to facilitate students to learn the intended skills or understandings. The learning intention should emphasise what the students will *learn*, rather than what they will *do*. While teachers know why they have engaged students in a particular activity, students are not always able to differentiate between the activity and the learning that it is meant to promote.

Assessment rubrics, outlining the task and criteria for assessment, are common in the Middle School, and set down as Performance Standards in SACE. Students told the Review Panel they find them useful, especially when teachers 'unpack' the descriptors into student-friendly language and provide exemplars to illustrate the different levels of work. However, they did not seem so clear on the connection between the intended learning outcomes and the tasks teachers set for them.

In response to the survey question: *How effectively did you enable students to apply their skills/understanding in different contexts?*, 4 teachers rated themselves to a low, 11 to a medium and 3 to a high extent. They rated themselves similarly in response to the question: *How effectively did you create opportunities to stretch students, to enable them to think deeper about the topic?* The tasks that teachers set for students are an indicator of the way students are stretched in their thinking, and the expectations that teachers have for students.

Through their responses, teachers indicated they are aware that task and assessment criteria are aspects of their practice they could improve. In interviews, several teachers indicated this was a goal on their personal professional plan. The Principal noted that many of the tasks required students' level of thinking to be in the 'recall' domain, rather than to 'explain', 'compare or contrast' or 'justify'. She offered to provide advice and feedback on teachers' tasks, as a voluntary process. Teachers indicated they are appreciative of the time she has put into their work. The Principal now needs to develop the capacity of other leaders and teachers, in order for them to provide critique and feedback for each other, so that this aspect of school improvement is shared and sustainable.

Direction 4

Develop and embed emerging pedagogies that activate prior knowledge, provide clear learning intentions and design quality tasks and assessment criteria, enabling students to be stretched and challenged in their thinking.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Oakbank Area School needs to develop and extend their improvement and learning-focused culture, characterised by high expectations, data-informed planning and a commitment to provide coherence and consistency for students as they progress through school. The school is working to improve task design and transparency of assessment criteria to provide greater intellectual challenge and rigour.

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

1. All staff members need to actively support the focus on learning, engage in continual improvement and maintain high expectations for their students to enable the school to achieve its vision.
2. Build the capacity of leaders and teachers, and provide structures, processes and time, to enable staff to improve their practices and collectively implement whole-school agreed approaches.
3. Build teachers' capacity to collectively analyse and use data to regularly track students' progress within classes and across the school, and for classroom planning, to provide more targeted and tailored instruction and support.
4. Develop and embed emerging pedagogies that activate prior knowledge, provide clear learning intentions and design quality tasks and assessment criteria, enabling students to be stretched and challenged in their thinking.

Based on the school's current performance, Oakbank Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2017.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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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.

Kylie Eggers
PRINCIPAL
OAKBANK AREA SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson