

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Oakbank Area School

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 Tanya Oshinsky, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Julie James, 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 groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Oakbank Area School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 25kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 309. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 274. The local partnership is Heysen.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 996 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 5% Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, less than 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 34% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 5th year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, a Senior School leader, a Senior Leader of Middle School and Learning Needs, a Senior Leader of Primary and Effective Learning and Teaching, a Coordinator of Learning Needs, a Coordinator of Pathways and Community Engagement and a Coordinator of Student Wellbeing.

There are 26 Teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Ensure that any improvement work undertaken by the school is informed by the ESR directions and that all improvement initiatives are underpinned by these directions.**
- Direction 2** **Improve communication and decision-making: ensure full attendance at staff meetings, and implement best-practice, individualised performance and development processes to ensure every teacher is continuously improving their practice in line with agreed whole-school priorities.**
- Direction 3** **Develop the capacity of teachers to collaboratively design learning tasks using student achievement data, and to use feedback strategies as evidence to continuously monitor and improve the efficacy of their teaching practice.**
- Direction 4** **Narrow and deepen school improvement priorities to ensure each teacher has enough time and individualised support to 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.**

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

Response to the previous External School Review directions is in progress at Oakbank Area School. While there is still work to be continued and refined, there has been clear attention to developing structures and practices. Many changes in staff and leaders, as well as an improved culture for learning and connections to the community, have been significant.

Decision making processes are documented and there is a greater understanding from staff about when whole-school, team or individual decisions need to be made. Staff report that communication and having their opinions sought has greatly improved. To enable maximum attendance of part-time staff at staff meetings, timetables have been reviewed and term schedules, agendas and minutes of staff meetings are published on Microsoft Teams for easy access. Performance development processes and professional

learning are more aligned with the improvement agenda.

Teachers and leaders analyse NAPLAN and progressive achievement test (PAT) data to determine needs of students. A greater focus on deprivatising and sharing practice has been fostered with some opportunity for teachers to collaboratively plan together. Teachers upload learning overviews and unit plans via online collaborative platforms.

Guidance from the learning improvement division and literacy guarantee unit, and participation in professional development opportunities, has supported the improvement journey. Through a visible learning focus, there has been intention to use learning intentions, success criteria and feedback as part of everyday learning. As many of the current staff were not at the school at the time of this professional learning, leaders are aware of the need to revisit these strategies. Narrowing and deepening improvement practices is continuing.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of its improvement planning processes and impact on student learning to inform next steps?

Systems to build teacher capacity and increase engagement in the improvement journey include teacher release for peer observations, sharing of practice and implementing impact cycles to determine effective teaching strategies. Intention to have a continuous term focus for professional learning will enable staff to deepen their learning for implementing best practice. Recently introduced professional learning communities (PLCs) are convened by leaders with the aim they become led by the collective expertise of staff. Involvement in PLCs is highly encouraged. Focus on pedagogical practice or an area of learning, in response to student achievement data, should be maintained by PLCs. Then recurring cycles of student needs-based planning, implementation, and further evaluation of student outcomes, will lead to continuous refinement of effective practice that becomes embedded.

Greater connection to the school improvement plan (SIP) is intended through teachers linking one or more of their personal goals in their professional development plans (PDPs) to the SIP. Whilst there is still some variability in PDP processes, teachers who discuss their observations, impact cycles and PDP goals with line managers, feel that these conversations support them to reflect on and improve their practice. Ensuring teachers formally reflect on their journey and providing teachers with written feedback is an important part of the PDP process. Having regular and formalised leadership walkthroughs and observations, linked to the PDP and SIP focus, will provide targeted and timely feedback to further strengthen teacher practice.

An extensive process analysing NAPLAN and PAT data is informing SIP goals. Drilling down to identify gaps in learning has provided teachers with clear information about their students for next year. Teachers have varying degrees of understanding and ownership of the SIP and self-review processes. School services officers, students and parents have little clarity of the school improvement agenda. To successfully deliver SIP expectations, leaders need to implement a robust improvement cycle with regular opportunities for review to sharpen whole-school attention on core learning priorities. Self-review must be intentional and planned, at regular intervals throughout the year. Ensuring a line of sight between the SIP, meeting structures that drive the improvement agenda, PDP processes and classroom practice, is essential. Deeper use of the Department for Education's 'Quality school improvement planning handbook 3' will better inform this process and will ensure the development and monitoring of a SIP that will guide the school effectively on its improvement journey.

Direction 1 **Develop robust structures and processes in which staff regularly monitor, critically evaluate, and review the SIP, with a clear line of sight to teacher practice and student learning.**

Effective leadership

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

The school's documented organisational structure provides clarity of roles and responsibilities amongst leaders. There is clear line management for sectors of schooling and school priorities. Leaders meet regularly and focus their discussions on the learning. Leaders can articulate their thinking for moving the school forward however many of these are yet to be implemented or are in their infancy. A range of documentation and templates have been designed to build clarity and consistency in practice, with some implemented more effectively than others. Unit plans and overviews make purposeful links with curriculum.

Consistent practice is developing in primary classes through documented agreements, collaborative working relationships and uniformity in language. Reading has a detailed scope and sequence of skills to be taught each week at each year level and there is focus on building greater coherence in writing and maths. Leader guidance and observations of classroom practice provide clarity of expectations for teachers. Little consistency of pedagogical practice is evident in the secondary sector of the school. Systems to maintain expected pedagogical practice need to be considered to address varied implementation of agreed strategies, such as learning intentions, success criteria and providing continuous feedback. Current foci include building a reading culture and implementing trauma informed practice for education across the school.

Secondary students report that the improved culture for learning can be dependent on the skills of teachers or certain cohorts of students. Disengagement and lack of ownership of learning can be problematic, with some teachers reporting that the wellbeing of students may outweigh learning opportunities. Teachers are mindful of trialling any strategy that will engage students. Although staff want successful outcomes for students, a culture of high expectations is not obvious. Secondary classroom environments could be enriched through multiple and changing displays of student work, which include exemplar pieces, to provide aspirational targets and let students see what they are aiming for.

Building leader and teacher capacity through rigorous processes and discussions to embed effective practice at all levels of schooling is essential. A significant lever for school improvement will be to ensure all staff forums focus narrowly and deeply on core school priorities and that professional discussions critically evaluate teacher practice based on student outcomes.

Direction 2 **Build leader and teacher capacity to embed consistent, coherent, and sustainable high-quality curriculum and effective pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners.**

Direction 3 **Develop a culture of high expectations of teacher practice and student outcomes through structured classroom environments which prioritise learning as part of wellbeing.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

A primary assessment schedule outlines what data is to be collected and when. Regular assessments in reading and spelling track student progress and enable teachers to be more intentional in their teaching. SACE performance standards provide teachers and students with clear assessment expectations. Outside of these examples, teachers do not report using data to analyse and target students' learning needs in daily teaching. Many teachers refer to PAT and NAPLAN data as informing their teaching and identify that developing a consistent approach to diagnostic testing is needed. Building teachers' capacity to effectively use ongoing data to inform their daily practice is an important next step in meeting students' needs. Identifying assessment tools that regularly measure student progress throughout the year, curriculum and across their schooling is essential.

Despite attention to developing growth mindsets, all stakeholders identify that further stretch and challenge in learning is an area for growth. Some teachers report that there is low expectation of student achievement and some parents want more guidance for students in their pathways. When success criteria are used effectively and scaffolded to stretch all learners, students say this helps them to improve their outcomes. Senior secondary students report that drafting their work and using performance standards supports them to work towards higher grades. Having planned times for collaborative task design and robust moderation processes will enhance task design that challenges students and provides more opportunities to display higher level learning. Unpacking assessments with students for them to understand their next steps and providing scaffolds that show them what higher outcomes look like will enable students to take more responsibility for their learning.

Teachers are mindful of providing feedback, particularly on summative tasks. Students confirm that feedback is important to improve their learning and that the quality of feedback can vary amongst teachers. Many students would like more constructive and more regular feedback. Teachers acknowledge that seeking feedback from students, which informs their teaching, is also an area for further growth. Teacher and student responses about the use of formative assessment, feedback and differentiation in learning vary. Deepening teachers' skills in providing explicit feedback, as part of formative assessment during learning, and differentiating learning to better meet individual student needs, will help students become more engaged in their own improvement.

Direction 4 Differentiate and stretch learning through regular formative assessment and feedback practices that ensure responsive teaching and timely, constructive feedback to students.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Staff, students, and parents at Oakbank Area School value the improved learning culture and connections with the community. Staff are collegiate and committed to improving the learning for their students. High value is placed on addressing student wellbeing to engage them in educational opportunities.

Building further rigour in systems and processes that provide a strong focus on embedding high-quality curriculum and agreed effective pedagogical practice will well place the school for the next phase in school improvement.

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

- Direction 1** **Develop robust structures and processes in which staff regularly monitor, critically evaluate, and review the SIP, with a clear line of sight to teacher practice and student learning.**
- Direction 2** **Build leader and teacher capacity to embed consistent, coherent, and sustainable high-quality curriculum and effective pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners.**
- Direction 3** **Develop a culture of high expectations of teacher practice and student outcomes through structured classroom environments which prioritise learning as part of wellbeing.**
- Direction 4** **Differentiate and stretch learning through regular formative assessment and feedback practices that ensure responsive teaching and timely, constructive feedback to students.**

Based on the school's current performance, Oakbank Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

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).

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2020 67% of year 1 and 57% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2021 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 71% of year 3 students, 89% of year 5 students, 71% of year 7 students and 70% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 9 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2018 and 2021 the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 59% to 89%. Between 2018 and 2021 the trend for year 7 has been downwards from 89% to 71%.

For 2021 year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2021 29% of year 3, 22% of year 5, 13% of year 7 and 16% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 67% or 4 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 25% or 2 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 36% or 5 out of 14 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2021 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 86% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, 67% of year 7 students and 58% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For years 5, 7 and 9 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2018 and 2021 the trend for years 3 and 9 has been upwards from 73% to 86% and 53% to 59% respectively. Between 2018 and 2021 the trend for year 5 has been downwards from 76% to 67%.

For 2021 years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools. For 2021 year 9 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2021 14% of year 3, 22% of year 5, 13% of year 7 and 5% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 100% or 2 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 100% or 3 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 33% or 2 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020 66% of students enrolled in February and 95% of those enrolled in October who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020 91% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 92% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 71% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020 93% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 12% of grades were at an 'A' level and 42% of grades were at a 'B' level.

Sixty three percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance 71% or 5 out of 7 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.