

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ABERFOYLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Conducted in August 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Sue George-Duif, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Lia Tedesco and Ann Prime, Review Principals.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Aberfoyle Park High School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 92.4%, which is marginally below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Aberfoyle Park High School is a large secondary school of approximately 1003 enrolments in 2014, and is a member of the South Valley Precinct. Aberfoyle Park High School is one of three government schools in South Australia that offers a specialist program for gifted students called the Ignite Program. The school has an ICSEA score of 1021, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 6% Students with Disabilities, 15% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 15% of families eligible for School Card assistance. In 2014, there was one student enrolled at the school under the Guardianship of the Minister.

The school's Principal Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her 6th year of a 7-year tenure at the school, and the following leaders:

Deputy Principal

Director, Middle School/Ignite

Director, Senior School/International

Assistant Principal, Pathways

Assistant Principal, Science, Maths, Advanced Research & Technology

Assistant Principal, Timetable, Daily Operations & Data.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning:	How well are the students achieving over time?
Effective Leadership:	How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?
Effective Teaching:	How well are teachers supporting students in their learning and to what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction? To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

How well are the students achieving over time?

In 2014, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

- *Between 2011 and 2014, the average percentage of students who achieved the SEA was 73%.*

There were 28% of Year 9 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN bands in reading.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in Year 3, 49% or 37 students, remained in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2014.

In relation to numeracy, 77% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA in Year 9 NAPLAN.

- *Between 2011 and 2014, the percentage of students at SEA was 62%, 67%, 66% and 77% respectively.*
- *Between 2011 and 2014, the average percentage of students who achieved the SEA was 68%.*

The percentage of Year 9 students achieving the top two proficiency bands in Numeracy is 21%. 26 of the 62 students, or 41% of students, who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Numeracy in Year 3, were retained in the higher proficiency bands in Year 9 2014 NAPLAN testing. The school's PAT-M data indicates that there is a general improvement in the PAT-M scores from Semester 1 to Semester 2 in 2015.

In 2014, the percentage of students completing the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) as a percentage of potential completers was 94%.

- *Between 2011 and 2014, there was a trend upwards from 83% to 94%.*

The percentage of grades, which were at or above the SEA standard of C- for attempted Stage 2 subjects, was 94%.

- *Between 2012 and 2014, there was also a trend upwards with 81% of students achieving a C- or above grade in 2012, and 88% and 94% of students receiving a C- or higher in 2013 and 2014.*

Across semesters 1 and 2, 93.4% of students completed their SACE Literacy Requirement, which means a C or better. This was a minor improvement of 0.4% from 2013. All but one student gained their literacy component by the end of Stage 2.

Across semesters 1 and 2, 86.6% of students completed their SACE Numeracy Requirement. This is a decline of 1.6% from 2013. It is worth noting however that 100% of students gained their Numeracy component by the end of Stage 2. No student failed to gain his or her SACE due to the lack of the Numeracy requirement.

The school-collected destination data indicates that students from Aberfoyle Park High School pursue a range of post-school pathways, including 87% of students who applied for university being offered a placement.

The school's Site Improvement Plan is detailed and uses data and evidence as a basis for improvement. The leadership structure aligns with the school's strategic directions of a guaranteed and agreed curriculum, teaching for effective learning, and teaching and learning in the 21st Century.

The school's Leadership Team spoke frankly and openly about the school's challenges and successes, and demonstrated commitment to finding ways to further improve student outcomes, particularly improving the B grades to A grades.

The Review Panel saw evidence of a positive, reflective and evidence-based culture towards student achievement and wellbeing and believes that the school is doing a great deal to support students to achieve. Parents commented that they considered the school to be one that continually enhances their practices to meet the needs of all learners. This accords with the considered opinions of the Leadership Team, the Governing Council, staff members and students interviewed during the course of the External Review.

How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?

Aberfoyle Park High School has utilised Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as the main vehicle for improvement. The Leadership Team, in their opening presentation, outlined the collaborative implementation process used to communicate both the intent and proposed structure of the PLCs to staff and the Governing Council. The PLCs seek to develop consistency of implementation of whole-school efforts to achieving the three priorities in the school's Site Improvement Plan; namely, a guaranteed and agreed curriculum, teaching for effective learning, and teaching and learning in the 21st Century. They provided evidence of an extensive consultation process and amendments made to the PLCs over a three-year period.

The work of the PLCs is supported through ongoing professional learning for leaders and staff. This has been underpinned by the TfEL and the DuFours' big questions for improved student learning outcomes, namely:

- What do we want students to learn?*
- How will we know if students have learnt it?*
- What will we do if students don't learn?*
- What will we do if they already know it?*

The PLC model is now embedded into the school structure with clearly articulated whole-school agreements regarding membership, expectations and outcomes. The leadership team and curriculum coordinators were able to outline these expectations and operational norms. The PLCs for 2015 include: English, Health and Personal Development, HASS, Technology Studies and cross-curricula areas such as SSO, STEM, SACE Improvement and Child Protection. The work of the PLCs is supported by coaches, such as literacy coaches.

The PLCs' decisions are based on student achievement in that the majority of the work of the Learning Area PLCs has been based on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the development of common tasks.

When interviewed, staff, without exception, cited the Professional Learning Communities as an effective way to build their capacity as educators and learn from each other. They value the time afforded to the

PLCs which includes after-school meeting time and staff learning days. They provided examples of co-planning, task development and moderation of student work. They believe the culture of the PLCs is supported by a strong and cohesive Executive Leadership Team, and they are encouraged to trial innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Staff can access additional professional learning opportunities through the completion of a request form where they need to demonstrate a link to the school's strategic directions and explain how the students will benefit. Where possible, a member of the school's Executive Team accompanies the staff member on professional learning sessions, so that they can provide the necessary leadership and support, to fully utilise the new learning. Examples of such learning include: Dylan Wiliam, EDUtech and clarifying forums.

Aberfoyle Park High School has clearly articulated Performance Development and Management processes for teachers, with links to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL) with the expectation that their plans address a minimum of one standard. Each staff member develops a plan for development and receives feedback from their designated line manager, and can include student and staff feedback.

The Review Panel found that the use of PLCs is successfully implemented, although more work is needed to ensure greater coherence between whole-staff professional development, the work of the PLCs and individual Performance Management processes.

Direction 1

Improve student achievement by the strategic linking of the Site Improvement Plan, whole-staff learning, Professional Learning Communities and Performance Development Processes.

How well are teachers supporting students in their learning and to what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The PLCs have essentially concentrated on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum through the development of a culture of collaboration and improvement. Faculty teams (PLCs) have developed overviews (learning continuum), unit plans and common tasks that align with the Australian Curriculum using a common template. Learning programs are planned, structured and sequenced, and stored on the school's network for easy access by staff.

Through interviews with teachers and leaders, the Review Panel discovered that the work of the various PLCs and their level of maturity differ, as does the extent to which teachers are supporting students in their learning. For example, some staff described the work of their PLCs as an ongoing process of reviewing and refining curriculum assessment tasks and rubrics to ensure that they meet the performance standards of the Australian Curriculum, whilst others described the process of examination of the quantity and quality of assessment. Outcomes of the PLC have also varied and include a reduction of tasks, the introduction of different tasks types, curriculum mapping processes to ensure that students are prepared for the demands of Stage 2, and a requirement that all practical subjects are to have a 30% investigation component.

The Review Panel was interested in exploring how well formative and summative assessments were used to inform teaching and planning. Teachers described the processes used in some PLCs where Year Level cohort data was used to plan for future task design for the next cohort of students. The Review Team observed teachers' use of exemplary practices by the use of extensive formative assessment and students' self-assessment. The panel noted the potential of these approaches to impact positively on all students' learning if implemented consistently and widely.

When asked to describe how they knew their learning progress, students commented that teachers were willing to provide extra help, if asked, in class and out of class, and that some teachers provided ongoing verbal feedback. Students thought feedback could be enhanced if teachers could be more forthcoming with feedback rather than waiting for the students to ask for it.

The use of ICT to enhance learning is a change identified by students as having a significant impact on feedback. The panel heard how students communicate with their teachers out of school hours to seek assistance with homework and editing of their work, particularly in English and HASS. Students were unclear of weightings of assessment tasks and their ongoing 'grade' unless the teacher posted ongoing assessments on Daymap or communicated their grade. Senior students believed that the use of ICT assisted their learning, however, expressed concern with the amount of time students in the middle years were spending on technology.

Students believed that the use of rubrics was the most common feedback tool, with many teachers highlighting the standard of work achieved by the students, and others providing detailed feedback to them. Students believed that they would benefit from understanding the learning intention, the rubric and how it linked with the task, and what they would need to do to improve the standard of their work. Students generally liked the use of exemplars to assist in their understanding of "A" standard work, however, cautioned that care must be taken to keep student identity confidential to avoid allegations of favouritism or making some students feel inferior by the use of comparisons.

Members of the Governing Council believed the school provided sufficient opportunities for parents to receive feedback regarding students' progress via parent interview nights, the course counselling process and by interview requests. They outlined examples of leadership and teachers actively supporting children to achieve their full potential, and were appreciative of the efforts made by staff.

The panel noted that in the 2014 Annual Report, the school's analysis of the perception surveys indicated a discrepancy between parent, teacher and student perceptions and the need to seek further clarification on student feedback.

The school's plan to publish ongoing assessment on Daymap, and greater consistency in its use by all staff, has been received positively by students and parents alike.

Direction 2

Improve student achievement by consistent use of feedback, including peer and self-assessment, by all staff.

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

Aberfoyle Park High School offers a wealth of subject choice and extra-curricula activities to meet students' needs and aspirations. These range from the Ignite Program for gifted students, and the LIFT program for those students requiring extra support, to the STEM program for those students interested in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields.

The quality of the programs offered was evident in the Music Showcase evening and its use, by the teachers, as a strategy to enhance the quality of Ensemble Performance grades in Stage Two, with three students out of the seven studying this subject in 2014 receiving A grades.

The school finances an Extension Studies Program at Flinders University for a selected number of students to accelerate their learning by studying first-year University subjects. One hundred percent of students participating in this program (2012 to 2014) have successfully transitioned into a university pathway.

Other notable programs include The Science Club, Drones, The Tennis Academy, Ice Factor, and Debating. Students who participated in these programs were keen to share their experiences and learning with the panel. The panel observed that the students and staff who participated in these programs were deeply engaged and committed to these programs, and that these programs provided practical and inquiry-based learning opportunities for students.

Both the Principal Leadership Team and the Mathematics teachers commented positively on the work they had been doing in their Partnership with the Numeracy and Literacy Plus Strategy. They described how

their research and the use of the PAT-M diagnostic testing have impacted on their practice, both in and out of their own school. They had identified the strengths and weaknesses of the Year 8 cohort and then engaged in capacity-building activities to build their own skills in these identified areas. The PAT-M testing was used by teachers to monitor progress of students and to design learning activities to meet their numeracy needs. Similarly, the English language staff talked extensively about the use of PAT-R data to inform explicit teaching strategies for students. Although both groups of staff acknowledged that most of their time has been spent learning how to analyse the data, they spoke positively about plans to use it more comprehensively in the future.

The Middle School, Senior School and Student Services Teams provided evidence of tracking and monitoring of students. They were able to identify students who needed additional support with their learning and ensure that mechanisms were in place to provide this support. Examples included subject selection, the delivery of multiple subjects within one class, and the LINKS program for students requiring more intensive learning support. Staff, students and parents interviewed spoke positively about the support of students with additional needs.

Student goal-setting occurs primarily through the Year 10 subject, the Personal Learning Plan, and through an extensive course counselling process. The primary aim for all students is 'SACE plus Pathways' to university and Vocational studies. Interestingly, both students and parents commented that it is parents or friends, who provide advice regarding subjects and careers, despite the extensive course counselling information provided to them.

The school's focus on ensuring that all students reach the SEA of C grades or above has resulted in this subsequent shift in both school-collected data across all year levels, and a subsequent improvement in the number of students completing their SACE. The school believes that the implementation of a more team-based intervention approach in the Middle Years, and the deadline policy in the Senior Years, have assisted in this improvement. The focus for tracking and monitoring has been on the students below standard and the school now has identified a need to focus on improving the achievement of those at standard or above. At a school-level, there are ways to track the progress of students and to refine and modify the structure of their learning with a focus on the underperforming students, however, not necessarily the accompanying pedagogies and assessment practices for high-achieving students (with the exception of IGNITE students).

Comments from Senior students interviewed echoed the focus on ensuring all students 'pass'. They commented that the primary focus was on completion of work and completion of SACE, more than a focus on the quality of their work. Students did not believe that many teachers knew about their goals or aspirations nor did they know if teachers believed that they had potential. Students would like to see a more structured goal-setting and learning reflection practice implemented.

Direction 3

Increase the proportion of students who achieve at the higher levels, as measured by NAPLAN, the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and the South Australian Certificate of Education Performance Standards by:

- tracking and monitoring all students
- building the capacity of students and staff in growth mindsets.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Aberfoyle Park High School is tracking well. The Review Panel saw evidence of a positive, reflective and evidence-based culture towards student achievement and wellbeing and believe that the school is doing a lot to support students to achieve. The implementation of the Professional Learning Community, as a model to build teacher and leadership capacity across the school, has been positively received by staff and is significant in the school's improvement journey.

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

1. Improve student achievement by the strategic linking of the Site Improvement Plan, whole-staff learning, Professional Learning Communities and Performance Development Processes.
2. Improve student achievement by consistent use of feedback, including peer and self-assessment, by all staff.
3. Increase the proportion of students who achieve at the higher levels, as measured by NAPLAN, the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and the South Australian Certificate of Education Performance Standards by:
 - tracking and monitoring all students
 - building the capacity of students and staff in growth mindsets.

Based on the school's current performance, Aberfoyle Park High School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

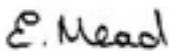


Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
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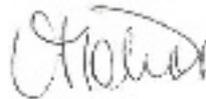


Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.



Liz Mead
PRINCIPAL
ABERFOYLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson