

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Gawler and District B-12 College

Conducted in May 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Schneyder, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Richard Abell and Grant Small, Review Principal.

School context

Gawler and District B-12 College is situated in the suburb of Evanston, north of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Greater Gawler Partnership. The enrolment in 2017 is 1273, which represents a consistent increase from 1225 in 2016 and 1111 in 2013. The school has an ICSEA score of 945, and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 8% Aboriginal students, 12% students with disabilities, 3.5% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 3.7% children/young people in care, and 19% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school is a South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA) hub and there are 2 Aboriginal Community Education Officers (ACEOs), a 1.0FTE Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET), and a B1 leader supporting the 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students. The school also hosts three Special Classes on behalf of the region. A regional Disability Unit is expected to be in place from 2018.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 4th year of his first tenure, a Deputy Principal in a 6-month position, 3 Heads of School (B5 and 2 B4s), 3 B2 Coordinators and 22 B1 Coordinators. There are 92 teachers, including 12 in the early years of their career. There are 50 School Services Officers (SSOs).

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 three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching:	How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?
Effective Leadership:	How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching in a B-12 school?
Improvement Agenda:	How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning and use data to inform planning and instruction?

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Gawler and District B-12 College is a large and complex school that has evolved from the amalgamation of Gawler High School and Evanston Primary School, 5 years ago. While the school has experienced challenges because of the amalgamation, most teachers and leaders are now positive about the school's future and direction. The Principal believes the school can become a school of choice in the community by focusing on priorities that are documented in the Site Improvement Plan, including improvement in literacy and numeracy, 21st Century learning and positive education.

The Review Panel interviewed many students, teachers and leaders, as well as parents, participated in classes in the Junior School, and observed a range of lessons across the whole school. What was evident is that many students are compliant, appreciate their teachers, and understand the expectations of their teachers. However, there are also many students who are disengaged from schooling. It was evident to the panel that there is a strong level of passion and professionalism amongst many of the teachers who were interviewed. Most teachers are collegial and committed to improving the engagement and achievement of all students, and are appreciative of the support of colleagues in their teams and their curriculum and wellbeing leaders.

In the Junior School, strategies have been documented to address each priority in the Site Improvement Plan and the declining Running Records and NAPLAN data. Targets have been identified, including improvement in attendance. There has been increased testing and more focus on oral language and

reading through the 'Big 6 in Reading' and 'Daily 5' programs. The leaders are developing a literacy agreement that includes the use of Jolly Phonics and Mini and MacQLit in all classes. 'Numeracy Mathematical Mindset' and 'Big Ideas in Number' are used as part of a new focus on numeracy.

Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) have been in place now for 3 years and teachers value the opportunities to share strategies and learn about new programs. However, any impact on data and student engagement has been very limited. A number of teachers were not aware of the range of data available, and the leaders were unable to clarify why past targets for improvement had not been achieved.

There are pockets of high-quality pedagogical practice in some classes in the Junior School, with evidence of some collaborative learning, scaffolding for success and differentiated practice. The introduction of coding, some good play programs, team-teaching and open-ended questioning of students was observed by the panel in some classrooms during walkthroughs. However, these practices were not observed in all classes, often because of the challenging behaviour of some students, who are testing the resolve of teachers and their leaders to focus on learning and improvement.

Documentation of strategies and targets is yet to be consolidated in the Middle and Senior Schools. Most Learning and Assessment Plans (LAPs), unit plans, rubrics and resources are stored on a network drive, and are gradually being loaded onto the school's Learner Management System, DayMap, so that parents will shortly be able to access this information through a parent portal. Teachers and leaders are looking for more time in after-school meetings and on Student Free Days to work collaboratively to complete this documentation.

A few middle school and senior school teachers talked about rubrics, the use of A-E grades, internal moderation and common assessment tasks. There is some integrated work and Project-Based Learning happening, which students enjoy, while the school wetlands are popular amongst the students and used by some teachers to stretch students with higher-order thinking tasks. However, the newly appointed Head of Middle School indicated gaining agreement and cohesion amongst teachers of middle school students is a work-in-progress.

Some senior students have been involved in Engineering Challenges organized by UniSA. However, a number of high-achieving students are looking forward to more and varied opportunities to attempt work at a higher level. Generally, pedagogical practices in the Senior School are traditional, with students talking about worksheets, teacher-directed learning, teachers talking too much and copying off the board. Access to and use of ICT for contemporary teaching and learning is seen by many students and teachers across the school as challenging and a cause for concern. Although an impressive long-term ICT plan, including significant financial investment, is in place to address these concerns, there was no clear connectedness between this plan and the achievement of targets in the SIP related to 21st Century learning and contemporary teaching.

The school has invested significantly in improving the results of SACE students. This investment was confirmed by leaders and teachers and endorsed by students and parents. Students can select from a broad range of courses, classes are generally small, and there is a focus on increasing the number of A and B grades.

There is intensive monitoring of students, with key data accessed every 5 weeks. The senior school team support teachers and leaders to use the SACE flexibilities such as Community Studies B, Workplace Practices, Community Studies and Integrated Learning. Increasing numbers of students are now accessing Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, including Doorways to Construction, and SAASTA opportunities, to complete their SACE. Many students continue to struggle with exams, and teachers are hoping a renewed focus on literacy across the whole school will reduce the impact of performance in exams on the students' final grade in their Stage 2 SACE.

The inconsistencies in documentation and teaching practice, and unclear priorities across the three 'schools', was a concern for many teachers and leaders. It was apparent in the Principal's presentation that SACE achievement is regarded as the major priority and the school deserves to be proud of its achievements in this area. There are annual whole-school assemblies that recognise achievement and performance of all students in the school, as well as year level and sub-school assemblies recognising student success. However, apart from this improvement in the SACE, there was little evidence provided during the review of any whole-school and cohesive approach to improvement in literacy and numeracy, or whole-school strategies to address the declining achievement and ongoing disengagement of a number of

students.

Direction 1

Ensure learning for all students is enhanced through a whole-school, cohesive approach to the documentation of curriculum, improving literacy and numeracy and using contemporary pedagogical practices.

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching in a B-12 school?

The current Principal has encountered many challengers in amalgamating the two schools and responding to a changing demographic in the community and complex school zoning regulations. He has had three Deputy Principals during this time, but is now feeling supported by his newly appointed Leadership Team. In meetings with members of his new team, the panel was impressed with their enthusiasm and obvious passion for students, quality teaching and learning.

However, the challenges they face are significant, including leading the establishment of a B-12 culture.

The Principal produced a comprehensive continuum of learning across B-12 that was only referred to in interviews with junior school leaders. There was limited discussion about a continuum of learning being required or available in either the Middle School or Senior School. There was no evidence of any quality teaching framework having been used in the past or part of planning for the future.

Many staff referred to the 'invisible wall' between the Junior School and the Middle/Senior Schools. The Principal asked the Review Panel to meet with all leaders to determine what opportunities for students they are providing or intend to provide, in a B-12 school. The team is large with wide-ranging experience in leadership, and it was evident that a B-12 culture is not yet a priority for most of these leaders, some of whom have recently been appointed and are in their first leadership position.

The Middle School Head of School admitted to struggling with establishing a middle school culture within a whole-school context. This has become even more difficult because of the recent placement of a group of Year 6 students in a Year 7 class.

Heads of Campus believe leadership of learning is included in their portfolios, but have found much of their time has been spent on management of behaviour and supporting teachers. The Principal has been proactive in recently appointing a number of new curriculum leaders who are expected to drive a collegial and cohesive approach to teaching and learning across the whole school, which builds on the current positive culture that exists between most students and teachers. The curriculum leaders are enthusiastic, but are looking for a more comprehensive induction program, access to a staff handbook, professional learning opportunities related to leadership and increased mentoring and line management. The Principal is enrolling all new leaders in a leadership course run through a network of senior schools. It was evident to the panel that there are also aspiring leaders amongst the teaching group who are looking for encouragement and mentoring and professional learning opportunities.

Many teachers talked about the inconsistencies between leaders in the management of behaviour, monitoring of teacher effectiveness, transparency in the communication of decisions and provision of directions. Students and teachers particularly expressed dissatisfaction with the current Student Behaviour Management strategy of placing disruptive students in senior classes, with experienced teachers. The students, in particular, found the intrusion difficult due to the subsequent distraction of their teachers.

There is a Performance Development Program (PDP) in the school that has included line management and peer-to-peer classroom observation and feedback in the past. The staff psychological health survey shows a steady increase in the sense of cohesion. The current PDPs of staff were sighted and many were regarded by the Review Panel to be of a low level, with limited data included, few targets and little feedback provided. The Principal was also disappointed that there was such an inconsistent inclusion of data. This has led to a new system in 2017 that ensures PDP records are collated centrally and effectively monitored. Few staff referred to the positive behaviour/education initiative raised in the Principal's presentation and which is a priority of the ECD Partnership, or their role in addressing student attendance or improved

pedagogical practice that engages all students. A number of staff indicated they had not yet experienced a line management meeting.

There is a small group of teachers who require support, and many staff and some parents indicated in interviews that action is needed to address the impact these colleagues are having on student learning and their own wellbeing.

Direction 2

By using learning as the focus, develop and implement a strategic plan that creates a cohesive B-12 culture.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning and use data to inform planning and instruction?

While it was evident that there are some literacy and numeracy programs in the school, and there is an emerging literacy and numeracy agreement across B-12, most teachers and leaders were unable to articulate strategies they have put in place to specifically address the continued decline in student achievement in Running Records and NAPLAN. This is also the case in relation to the underperformance of students compared to those in like schools. It was evident that many teachers are not yet using data to inform their practice, even though it is now displayed on a data wall in the junior school, available for middle school teachers via School Link and for senior school staff through DayMap, and a school based system called StudentMatters.

The student wellbeing team, Aboriginal Education Team and Learning Centre leader could provide extensive data about the progress of their students, much of which is cause for celebration and promotion.

The school has not yet developed a process for regular self-review and the advantages of a cycle of improvement and strategic planning based on data was not yet understood by most leaders. Dealing with the many complexities, including the appointment of a progressive and committed Leadership Team, has taken priority and there is agreement amongst the executive group that a focus on improvement, informed by data, is now required. There is also a need for clearly documented, agreed and monitored expectations of students and teachers, to enable further improvement in the school.

There also needs to be a whole-school commitment to addressing the attendance rate, which has been at 85% for a number of years. Leaders in the wellbeing team could account for much of this data, and could provide details of strategies they are currently using to track students. They presented as cohesive and committed to improving outcomes for their students who face challenges at home and with their mental health. However, all agreed that more needs to be done across the whole school to engage students in relevant learning, if there is to be any sustained improvement in the school's attendance data.

The Executive Leadership Team is to be commended for their enthusiasm and interest in accessing guidance about strategies to improve their school. Each member was receptive to the need for individual mentoring, training in guiding other leaders and teachers through an improvement process, including strategic planning, transparent and effective decision-making, dealing with underperforming staff and monitoring the use of data to ensure growth in student achievement. There also needs to be a focus on learning across the whole school and in all documentation.

Direction 3

Ensure a cycle of self-review and strategic planning is developed and implemented that involves all members of the school community, is informed by data and addresses concerns about coherence in expectations and practice across the whole school.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Gawler and District B-12 College has recently appointed a new Leadership Team to drive improvement. However, there is currently an absence of an improvement-focused culture across the school that will provide a coherent whole-school approach to learning and teaching. The achievement and growth of student learning was significantly less than expected.

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

1. Ensure learning for all students is enhanced through a whole-school, cohesive approach to the documentation of curriculum, improving literacy and numeracy and using contemporary pedagogical practices.
2. By using learning as the focus, develop and implement a strategic plan that creates a cohesive B-12 culture.
3. Ensure a cycle of self-review and strategic planning is developed and implemented that involves all members of the school community, is informed by data and addresses concerns about coherence in expectations and practice across the whole school.

Based on the school's current performance, Gawler and District B-12 College will be externally reviewed again in 2018.



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 three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

Andrew Dickinson
PRINCIPAL
GAWLER AND DISTRICT B-12
COLLEGE

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Gawler and District B-12 College 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 policy:

- Part 2: Accessing T&D before Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC).

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 working towards being compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 84.8%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, 64% of Year 1 and 58% 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 at both Year 1 and Year 2.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 37% of Year 3 students, 55% of Year 5 students, 53% of Year 7 students and 43% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2016 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar schools across the DECD system in Years 3, 7 and 9, and within, for Year 5.

In 2016 NAPLAN Reading, 15% of Year 3 students, 16% of Year 5 students, 12% of Year 7 students, and 7% of Year 9 students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 38%, or 3 of 8 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, 54%, or 6 of 11 students remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016, and 33%, or 9 of 27 students remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016. Fifty-three percent, or 9 of 17 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average from Year 3 to 5, and an improvement from the historic baseline average from Year 3 to 7.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 52% of Year 3 students, 50% of Year 5 students, 43% of Year 7 students and 42% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 9, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2016 NAPLAN Numeracy, 7% of Year 3 students, nil percent of Year 5 students, 12% of Year 7 students, and nil percent of Year 9 students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, nil percent, or no students of 1 from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, 56%, or 5 of 9 students remain in the upper bands in Year 7, and nil percent, or no students remain in the upper bands in Year 9. Nil percent, or none of the 15 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average from Year 3 to 5, and little or no change from the historic baseline average from Year 3 to 7.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2016, 39% of students in February and 100% in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In terms of successful completion of compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2016, 80% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 95% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Literacy units, 79% successfully completed their Stage 1 Numeracy units and 99% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-three percent of grades achieved in the 2016 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2013 and 2016, the trend has been upwards, from 76% in 2013 to 93% in 2016. Thirty-eight percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 118 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2016.

In terms of the number of grades for attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2016, 4% of students achieved and 'A' Grade, and 33% achieved a 'B' Grade. This result represents little or no change in 'A' Grades and an improvement in 'B' Grades from the historic baseline average.

In terms of 2016 tertiary entrance, 63%, or 44 of 70 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.