

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Waikerie High School

Conducted in February 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 Meredith Edwards, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Tobias O'Connor, 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

Waikerie High School caters for students in years 8 to 12. It is situated 183kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 272. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 311. The local partnership is the Waikerie Partnership.

The school has an ICSEA score of 964, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, 4% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 3% children/young people in care and 43% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school has 6 feeder primary schools and 75% travel to school by bus.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 3rd year of tenure, a Middle School and Senior School Leader and 5 Coordinators.

There are 23 Teachers including 4 in the early years of their careers and 2 Step 9 Teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1**     **Develop an agreed and consistent understanding of what constitutes quality teaching and visible learning, and deepen the pedagogical practices identified through the Visible Learning 3-year project and school's Action Plan.**
- Direction 2**     **Work in partnership with students, parents and the broader community to develop a growth mindset to learning, and deepen the opportunities, with scaffolding and support, for greater student voice in the learning and assessment process.**
- Direction 3**     **Build the capacity of the broader Leadership Team to utilise coaching and facilitating processes that enable teachers to learn from each other to make cultural and pedagogical shifts in their practices.**

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

In 2021 there is widespread evidence of a high level of commitment to the site improvement planning process at all levels of the school community. In response to a need for a shared framework for effective teaching, the school has established a partnership with *Visible Learning* as a program of evidence-based strategies for improving student learning and achievement. There has been an initial focus on:

- improving students' readiness to learn through the introduction of collaboratively developed dispositions for learning
- clarity of learning intentions and success criteria for all tasks.

The school has indicated its commitment to widening its professional learning focus to include other aspects of the program. Students will benefit from further work in the spheres of differentiated task design, explicit teaching of the skills of metacognition and formative feedback to support progress in learning.

A growth mindset is evident in all aspects of the school, including the way in which students and their

Teachers talk about both achievement and learning progress, posters reinforcing agreed dispositions for successful learning and the inclusion of rubrics into assessment tasks. This growth mindset is reinforced by all areas of leadership which, itself has benefitted from building leadership density. All see their role as educational leaders and opportunities to take on coaching roles have built the capacity of Coordinators.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

There is a high level of commitment to the site improvement planning processes at all levels of the school community - Leaders, Middle Managers, Teachers and classroom support SSOs and parents. The executive team have developed capacity to delve deeper into the data to identify strategies which lever improved learning outcomes. A comprehensive range of data is analysed in many forums in the school, demonstrating that the review of improvement strategies is data-informed.

Interventions in the middle school are informed by data from the primary schools and student progress is tracked. Home Group Teachers and subject teachers share achievement data with families at Parent/Teacher interviews. Parents interviewed were aware of the achievement levels of their children.

Monitoring the impact of agreed pedagogies is influenced by the Site Improvement Planning (SIP) processes and the school's partnership with the Visible Learning (VL) program. The VL program emphasises the role of data in "knowing your student" and then supporting growth in learning. The annual review of the implementation of high impact teaching strategies, through this program, augments the department's three-year External School Review. There is an opportunity though, for the school to more rigorously evaluate the impact of agreed pedagogies. Without the forum of data-led Professional Learning Communities there is a need to consider how faculties can better provide a forum for data-led monitoring of the effectiveness of agreed strategies to improve reading and numeracy.

Similarly, the consistent implementation of these agreed evidence-based pedagogies is key to the school moving from 'good to great'. It was observed by some middle managers that more structured and lengthier classroom observations might be more effective than 'walkthroughs' in monitoring the impact of agreements in all classes. The use of more formal classroom observation processes, aligned to both the SIP and teachers' Professional Development Plans, would provide a mechanism to monitor consistency of classroom practice more comprehensively.

**Direction 1     Refine and implement performance observation processes to monitor consistent implementation of agreed pedagogies that support and stretch all learners.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Waikerie High School is committed to building teacher capacity to implement evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners. This commitment was reinforced in conversations with Leaders, teachers, students and the parents and members of the governing council. Consistent use of agreements around the explicit teaching of Tier 3 Vocabulary and the use of TEEL to improve writing, in a secondary school context, were observed in most of the middle and senior school classes. These evidence-based pedagogical practices were based on the school's use of the department's Literacy Guidebooks and professional learning through an external consultant. Students were able to explain the difference between the vocabulary they would use in conversation compared to the more academic and subject-based vocabulary required for success in a secondary school context. Posters reminding students to use the TEEL model to develop extended writing were evident in all classrooms. These are examples of whole-school implementation of agreed teaching strategies.

Less evident were pedagogies that challenge and engage all learners or assessment tasks which provided for differentiation. These observations were reinforced in conversations with middle school student leaders and classroom observations. In a similar vein, the leadership team expressed a sense of urgency to raise the achievements of both those students who are below the SEA and those students who were previously in the Higher Bands but have not been retained after they entered the high school. They see this as the next steps in moving from 'good to great'.

There is currently no common agreement about a definition of differentiation or examples of high impact evidence-based differentiation strategies that would both support and stretch the diversity of learning abilities. Some teachers regarded setting of ability classes as an example of differentiation. The concept of what constitutes differentiated practices and the monitoring of their impact on learning achievement for all students, including those seeking more challenge, remains an area for further work by the school.

**Direction 2      Build teacher capacity to design and deliver differentiated teaching which engages and challenges students of all ability levels.**

## Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

Widespread pride in the school with its ambition to move from 'good to great' is clearly evident. The collaborative identification of the dispositions of 'Grit, Resilience and Self-motivated', as the hallmarks of success in learning, nurtures the conditions for a positive culture of learning. There is strong evidence of interventions to support students who have learning difficulties, ranging from modification of tasks, classroom SSO support and intervention programs such as Quick Smart.

Students appreciate the introduction of clear learning intentions and success criteria. In some tasks, the inclusion of achievement rubrics had the potential for them to aim for higher levels of achievement. In the senior school, most commented on the need for teachers to explain the language use in the SACE rubrics. They also expressed the desire for more consistent approaches to the provision of formative feedback, referenced to the rubrics. There is an opportunity for the school to develop rubrics in more student friendly language to develop greater student agency through formative feedback.

The school has identified in the SIP the need to extend and challenge all learners, including those who are more academically able. Students consistently reported their perception that they are not extended in their learning until they reach the senior school. They expressed the desire for teachers to provide opportunities for extension when they had completed their work before other students and to cater more for their learning styles.

Having laid strong foundations for a culture of learning, the school is poised to work on pedagogies such as formative feedback and the explicit teaching of metacognitive skills to further develop a culture of high expectations and higher levels of student achievement. These are components of the *Visible Learning* program which could be a focus in the future.

**Direction 3    Develop consistent formative feedback strategies and explicit teaching of metacognition to increase agency for all learners, including those in or near higher bands achievement.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The Waikerie High School community is committed to site improvement planning processes as a vehicle to move from good outcomes for most students to great outcomes for the diversity of learners in the school. Far from avoiding disconfirming data which shows students with academic ability not being retained in the higher bands of achievement, the school discusses the data in a range of forums and collaboratively plans for improvement. This is reflected in the goals and targets in the Site Improvement Plan. The school is currently tracking a group of students who were identified as high achieving in primary school, monitoring the impact of interventions on their progress from their enrolment as year 8s in 2020 and into year 9 in 2021.

Data informs all collective decisions about the focus for school improvement. There are many forums in which data is considered, from the Aboriginal support team, the wellbeing team and the executive and middle management leadership teams to the governing council. Home Group Teachers work alongside individual students to look at achievement data and collaboratively document improvement goals and strategies. Importantly, the school considers both achievement and progress data so that all students can celebrate progress. This supports the school's commitment to a growth mindset.

The school has focused to good effect on key evidence-based pedagogies highlighted in the Visible Learning program. They have concentrated initially on embedding dispositions for learning and clarity of learning intentions and success criteria. The identification of the dispositions for successful learning was led by students and parents. This has resulted in high levels of support for their implementation. Staff and students regularly reference the 3 dispositions of 'Grit, Resilience and Self-motivated' in discussions about teaching and learning.

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

- Direction 1     Refine and implement performance observation processes to monitor consistent implementation of agreed pedagogies that support and stretch all learners.**
- Direction 2     Build teacher capacity to design and deliver differentiated teaching which engages and challenges students of all ability levels.**
- Direction 3     Develop consistent formative feedback strategies and explicit teaching of metacognition to increase agency for all learners, including those in or near higher bands achievement.**

Based on the school's current performance, Waikerie High School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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# 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 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 9 has been upwards, from 63% to 75%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

Between 2017 and 2019 the school has consistently achieved higher in year 9 NAPLAN reading, relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 12% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 9 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 33%, or 4 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 84% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 9 has been upwards, from 61% to 84%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 10% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 9 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 25%, or 2 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020 65% of students enrolled in February and 94% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019, 93% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 91% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2019, 95% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 27.47% of grades were at an 'A' level and 33.54% of grades were at an 'B' level which is above the state average. This result represents little or no change for the 'C-' level or higher grade, little or no change for the 'A' level grade and a decline for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages. Between 2018 and 2020 the trend for 'C-' or higher has been downwards, from 93% in 2018 to 87% in 2020.

Seventy-three percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 11 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance 64% or 25 out of 29 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were no students successful in achieving a merit.

In 2020 the school had a moderation adjustment of B- to C+ in one subject.