



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Loxton High School

Conducted in August 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 Warren Symonds, Review Principal.

School context

Loxton High School caters for students from Year 8 to 12, and is located in Loxton, South Australia. The enrolment is 548 students in 2017, decreasing from 607 in 2013. In 2017, there are 24 FLO enrolments. The school has an ICSEA score of 992 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 5.5% students with disabilities, 1.5% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 5 children/young people in care, and 16% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of an acting Principal and 3 Assistant Principals. There are 43 teachers and 15 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:

Student Learning: How are students supported and challenged to aspire and achieve?

Effective Teaching: To what extent does the school's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) environment support student learning?

Effective Leadership: To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action of leaders evident?

How are students supported and challenged to aspire and achieve?

Loxton High School has a long-standing tradition of high student achievement and the enthusiastic and committed support of parents. The community is proud of its school. There are strong relationships between students and their teachers; there is also an evident collegiality between staff. The many datasets indicate ongoing growth in student performance which is, in part, a result of the high expectations that the community has for its students.

Students were observed to be engaged in their learning in a wide range of subjects and at all year levels. They talked about the commitment of their teachers, particularly at Year 12, and especially if they seek their support. They appreciate the feedback provided by staff on their drafts, as part of their formative assessment, and specifically commented on the positive impact of the online feedback provided by some of their teachers. All of the SACE documentation is readily available, including learning assessment plans, resources and rubrics, and recent Professional Learning for staff has focused on improving the design of assessment tasks.

Much of the pedagogy observed and discussed with the Review Panel is traditional with teacher-directed lessons, textbooks and worksheets evident. A small number of teachers are trialling the use of 'flipped classrooms' to promote independent learning, and all Year 8 students are involved in an 'ICT Bootcamp' to develop their digital skills. There has been a focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy, and this was apparent in faculty action plans. However, there was limited evidence of subject literacies being effective in the senior school, where performance in exams continues to be a concern. There was also limited evidence of any focus on the other capabilities such as Critical and Creative Thinking, which could challenge some of the aspirational students, while Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) pedagogies, including inquiry-based learning, are yet to be introduced. Leaders expect these capabilities will become far more of a focus once the new STEM facility is completed in 2018.

Many of the highly capable and aspirational students indicated that they are not being challenged as much as they would like. Teachers and leaders know who these students are, and leaders indicated that accelerating students has been a practice in the past. The Review Panel recommended that this practice could be

reviewed as part of a cohesive approach to challenging students.

A number of teachers and leaders talked about the low resilience of many of their students and the need for them to become less reliant on the high level of support provided by their teachers, particularly in the senior years. In an effort to increase the independence of learners, students are now expected to set their learning goals, discuss these with peers and parents during their 'Round Tables', and record them in their diaries. They are now expected to provide feedback to many of their teachers, which most thought did make a difference to the quality of the teaching they receive. Some teachers, especially in the practical subjects, are now expecting students to participate in discussions, and make decisions, about what they learn and the mode of assessment.

The Wellbeing Team is well-established, provides consolidated intervention programs and carefully tracks student progress. There is a strong culture within the team to develop student independence in preparation for transition to employment or other post-school options, and for their students to achieve at least a partial SACE. A team of SSOs provides in-class support, while an on-campus Learning Centre (TLC) facilitates additional 1:1 support outside of the mainstream classes, particularly in improving students' literacy and numeracy, and preparation of students for the world of work. FLO programs are well-organized, with student attendance and progress monitored by the Wellbeing Team. Partial SACE completion is also a target for these students.

Direction 1

Develop and implement whole-school strategies that encourage all students to take greater responsibility for their learning and become independent learners.

Direction 2

Focus future Professional Learning programs on building the capacity of all teachers to embed the capabilities of critical and creative thinking into their teaching so that all students are being effectively supported and challenged.

To what extent does the school's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) environment support student learning?

The capacity of the school's ICT environment was a concern raised as part of the External Review. A newly appointed B3 leader is working with a team to improve the school's infrastructure, in particular, the reliability and speed of the internet, while the senior Leadership Team is working with the community to determine the best strategy for ensuring all students have an appropriate ICT device.

Teachers also talked about wanting more Professional Learning opportunities to build their skills in the use of the full range of ICT tools to better engage and challenge students. Some teachers recently attended training in the preparation and use of 'Flipped Classrooms', while the Wellbeing Team is liaising with other schools to determine the best ICT programs to purchase to support individualised programs that improve in the literacy and numeracy skills of students below the Standard of Educational Achievement. As part of the STEMworks development, a team is investigating what ICT devices and tools will be needed to facilitate the development of critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and risk-taking skills.

The school has a Learner Management System, DayMap, which is used to manage the collection, reporting and monitoring of attendance. A range of locally designed spreadsheets are used by leaders to monitor student achievement in the NAPLAN and PAT tests, determine Grade Point Averages for year-level awards, and track student progression in SACE through the 'Traffic Light' data. Sharing of this data amongst staff is currently difficult to manage, while the A-E grades for assessment of individual student achievement in the Australian Curriculum is not yet available, and is yet to be included in line management discussions. The Review Panel recommended that the school investigate the additional capacity of DayMap to improve the sharing of data amongst teachers, and increase the ease with which teachers can access and use data about their students to inform their teaching practices.

Direction 3

Consolidate a whole-school approach to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to monitor student achievement and provide ready access of staff to data that is shared and analysed, to support the use of contemporary pedagogies by all teachers.

To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action of leaders evident?

Staff agreed that the school has a culture of self-review, and this was evident in the high-quality documentation of action plans. All leaders document priorities, strategies and targets relevant to their portfolios and aligned to the Site Improvement Plan. Teachers also document their priorities in their Performance Development Plans. Time for individuals and teams to address their strategies and targets is planned for Monday afternoon staff meetings, or on Student Free Days, with an expectation that any 'administrivia' will be shared via an online newsletter. It will be important to ensure these times are focused, and allow for in-depth collaboration and consolidation.

The senior Leadership Team has provided release time to some aspiring leaders and removed some teaching commitments of leaders. However, lack of clarity of new roles and expectations, and minimal mentoring, has resulted in limited effectiveness of these strategies at this stage. Many leaders are looking for opportunities for collaboration and sharing of good practice, including access to relevant Professional Learning, while further work on 'managing difficult conversations' would be helpful.

The Review Panel recommended that a review of the Leadership Structure would be useful once the new Principal has been appointed and the Directions of the External Review are confirmed. The panel also recommended that the Senior Leadership Team finds time to participate in the strategic planning of the school's progress over the next 4 years, including an alignment of Professional Development programs and review of the effectiveness of the current line management and Professional Development processes.

Direction 4

Build a cohesive Leadership Team that collaborates in determining major school priorities, and strategically plans the alignment of resources, professional learning opportunities and Performance Development.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Loxton High School.

Effective practice in school community partnerships was evident at the school. In all interviews conducted by the Review Panel, comments were made about the effectiveness and positive impact of the parent/school partnership. Examples of School Community Partnerships include:

- The school provides significant extra-curricular opportunities for all students ranging from the Pedal Prix, debating, STEM challenges, a range of sports competitions, including Volleyball in Victoria, and the Led Steer competition at the Royal Adelaide show. Parents were enthusiastic about their involvement in these activities and appreciative of the long-term commitment of the participating parents. There was consensus amongst the students, staff and parents that involvement of the whole community in these varied opportunities has been a highlight of the school's enduring culture for many years, and is a major reason for the school's successes over time.
- Thirty percent of students include some Vocational Education and Training (VET) in their SACE. The contribution of the local council, local businesses and enterprises has been significant and appreciated in supporting the successful work experience and work placement programs. Students talked about the importance of these programs in supporting their decision-making about their post-school options.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Loxton High School has a strong community culture where the school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders, and there are high expectations of students.

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

1. Develop and implement whole-school strategies that encourage all students to take greater responsibility for their learning and become independent learners.
2. Focus future Professional Learning programs on building the capacity of all teachers to embed the capabilities of critical and creative thinking into their teaching so that all students are being effectively supported and challenged.
3. Consolidate a whole-school approach to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to monitor student achievement and provide ready access of staff to data that is shared and analysed, to support the use of contemporary pedagogies by all teachers.
4. Build a cohesive Leadership Team that collaborates in determining major school priorities, and strategically plans the alignment of resources, professional learning opportunities and Performance Development.

Based on the school's current performance, Loxton High School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

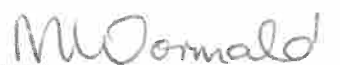


Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.



Lorraine Damberg
PRINCIPAL
LOXTON HIGH SCHOOL



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 Loxton 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 documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 89.7%.

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 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend has been upwards from 67% to 75%. The school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across the DECD system.

Between 2014 and 2016, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 9 NAPLAN Reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across the DECD system.

In 2016 NAPLAN Reading, 17% of students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 33%, or 10 of 30 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016, and 44%, or 8 of 18 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 78% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2012 and 2016, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 9 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across the DECD system.

In 2016 NAPLAN Numeracy, 15% of students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 58%, or 11 of 19 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016, and 79%, or 11 of 14 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2016, 80% of students enrolled in February and 99% of those enrolled 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.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2016, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 98% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Literacy units, 89% successfully completed their Stage 1 Numeracy units, and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-eight percent of grades achieved in the 2016 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Thirty-two percent of students completed SACE using VET,



and there were 30 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2016.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2016, 24% of students achieved an 'A' Grade, and 49% achieved a 'B' Grade. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' Grade and 'B' Grade.

In terms of 2016 tertiary entrance, 88%, or 87 of 99 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 7 students who were successful at achieving a merit.

In 2016 the school had a moderation adjustment of -1 in music and English Studies, and +1 in English Communications.