

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Parafield Gardens High School**

Conducted in November 2018



## Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Cez Green and Kirsten Masters, Review Principals.

## School context

Parafield Gardens High School caters for children from year 8 to year 12. It is situated 16kms north of the Adelaide CBD. In 2018 enrolments sit at 949, the highest in five years.

The school is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Advantage. The school's ICSEA score is 935. The local EDC Partnership is Hollywood Lakes and Gardens.

The school population includes 4.6% of Aboriginal students, 11.3% of students with disabilities, 40% of families eligible for school card assistance, 28.4% of students of EALD background and 18 students in care.

The school principal is in the third year of his tenure at the school. The school has two deputy principals, 4 Band 3 senior leaders: (Daily Organisation, Middle School, Student engagement and Wellbeing and Pedagogy and Student Voice) and 19 co-ordinators, including 2 student wellbeing coordinators.

There are 75 FTE teaching staff, including 2.2 EALD, 3.7 Special Education and 0.5 AET. There are 483 SSO hours allocated to the school.

## 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?**

**Improvement Agenda:**                **How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?**

**Effective Leadership:**                 **To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?**

### How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

When considering this line of inquiry, the panel notes the recent establishment of the PLUS (personalised learning, understanding and support) and PACE (partnerships advancing careers and employment) programs, introduced to support students at risk through disengagement or chronic non- attendance. Students in the PACE program attend school 3 days per week and concentrate on literacy and numeracy learning as well as work-ready skills, spending the other 2 days in VET courses off campus. Year 8-9 PLUS students are in a small class led by a select group of teachers who convene learning opportunities designed to scaffold at-risk learners. Students in this program report the close relationship with their teachers who focus on their wellbeing and offer them varied opportunities to re-engage with the learning

agenda. Both these school- initiated interventions exemplify the school's readiness to creatively and strategically support students in their learning.

Students in SACE stages 1 and 2 report the diverse ways their teachers support them to maximise learning outcomes. An out-of-hours learning hub, holiday sessions and one-on-one feedback in person or via Google classroom are some of the opportunities year 11 and 12 students are provided with to ensure they achieve the highest grade possible. Students were effusive in describing the support their teachers offer and the commitment they bring to their work. (Please see page 7 of this report for more information regarding the culture of aspiration at the school.)

The school's site improvement plan (SIP) and the leaders' presentation made clear that an understanding of contemporary teaching and learning has been introduced at the school. Data driven differentiation, task design, provision of feedback and student agency are priorities within the school and almost all staff with whom the panel spoke referred to these concepts. A comprehensive document 'Pedagogical Innovations' cites research and identifies key messages regarding pedagogical reform at the school, and a 5 phase plan determines how this has been, and continues to be, implemented.

Teachers describe the in-house professional learning they are offered as valuable in accessing and exploring contemporary approaches to planning and practice. Experts in the field have presented to the staff, focusing on feedback and task design. Pupil free day and partnership events were also reportedly of value in further developing teacher practice. Evidence of practice respondent to professional learning provided, and aligned with the school's reform, varied across the school and between faculties.

The work of faculties is scaffolded by a common planning document that encourages leaders to conduct and record meetings consistently across the school. Through these forums, a variety of pedagogical implementations have been explored. The determination of which pedagogical approach or teaching strategy will be researched and trialled is at the discretion of the faculty, and in some instances, described as at individual teachers' preference.

Teachers in the STEM learning team discussed and displayed a deep understanding about how students learn best and described their philosophy and approach to learning through pedagogy that is rigorous, engaging, inquiry-based and provoking curiosity. When students describe engaging learning they invariably refer to the work of this team. Discussion also made evident that in some areas of the curriculum, students complete 'assignment after assignment' or access extended teacher talk.

The concept of renewed and effective pedagogy is broadly understood and committed to by teachers across the school. Both teachers and students describe practice as varied from teacher to teacher and learning area to learning area. The panel acknowledges the professional respect afforded teachers to develop practice at their discretion, whilst agreeing that to bring about coherent pedagogical reform, the identification of, and commitment to, a few, high yield approaches is essential. Once these have been determined, the work of faculties and focus of professional learning forums can be aligned accordingly, and greater pedagogical certainty enabled.

## **Direction 1**

**Deepen pedagogical reform by identifying imperative high yield teaching approaches and making expectations regarding the implementation of these clearly understood and consistently applied.**

## **How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?**

The concept of self-review was described as currently operating at 3 levels. Senior leaders engage in whole school review processes and refer to data at the meta-level. At the faculty level, leaders use cohort data to inform plans and teachers are now expected to refer to and utilise student achievement data to review and evaluate learners' needs and plan for improvement. A fourth level of self-review, student-led self-reflection, including reference to data, is in the early stages of development.

The concept of data and its place in informing improvement is widely understood across the school. Teachers discuss SACE, NAPLAN, PAT and attendance data and value the information these sets provide. Almost all staff reported that data is vital in informing a differentiated approach. As well as identifying a student's achievement level and the next teaching point, some staff discussed the value of data analysis in determining students' miscues and strengths.

When discussing how to respond to students' literacy data an element of uncertainty was apparent. A tendency to redesign questioning techniques or task design to accommodate the student's miscue was more apparent than actually teaching the skill or strategy that the student needed to develop. The literacy committee has reportedly identified reading and comprehension as priorities within the school. In order for teachers to effectively respond to student data and contribute to improvement, an understanding of how to teach students to decode, draw inference, visualise and summarise information is essential. The school's priority to differentiate practice can be further achieved through intentional teaching designed in response to the review of student achievement data.

School priorities are widely understood and articulated. Staff are committed to continuous improvement and raising student achievement. Faculties conduct self-review against data and plan for improvement relevant to their cohort, and school-wide meeting documents guide a more consistent approach to the agenda. The focus on literacy improvement is widely acknowledged as the business of all faculties and plans refer to this concept. Improvement plans developed in the learning areas vary in potential impact and sophistication. Some plans include strategies designed to target improvement and clear and measurable outcomes, whilst others document broad statements of intent that lack specificity.

Leaders at the school have designed a model of self-review that is strategically structured to bring about collective responsibility and action. The concept of coherence is apparent through the consistently utilised agenda. The panel acknowledges this example of a well-structured approach to self-evaluation and sees an opportunity to further build on this concept. Faculties operate with collective intent and commitment, and an opportunity to further strengthen coherence regarding intentional planning and strategic action is now evident.

### **Direction 2**

**Further progress the achievement of school priorities by developing greater coherence and intentionality in strategic planning across faculties and cohorts.**

### **Direction 3**

**Improve all students' literacy skills by deepening teachers' capacity to respond to data analysis and implementing a specific approach to the teaching of literacy strategies across the school.**

## **To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?**

In 2018, teachers select their line manager and reports that this cross-faculty approach contributes to school unity were sourced. Performance and development processes (PDP) operate within a structured model that sees three dedicated meeting times convened and regular informal 'catch-ups' held throughout the year. Teachers reported that PDP processes align with school priorities and documents the panel reviewed confirm this. Whilst the strategies within the documents varied in intentionality, teachers discuss the process as valuable in supporting them to implement changes in practice and trialling new teaching strategies.

Leaders with line management responsibility and new to the role of leadership engage in regular meetings with senior leaders. It is reported that these forums allow leaders to ask questions and make mistakes within a culture of support and optimism. Almost all line managers have developed a one year plan to support their professional growth and this is referred to at PDP meetings and throughout the year. The panel heard that in 2017, some leaders with line management responsibility took part in a professional learning (PL) session designed to scaffold them to conduct PDP with teachers. Leaders new to line management in 2018 express an interest in a similar opportunity and the panel agrees this will further contribute to coherence in the school's improvement agenda.

Discussions with ancillary staff provided evidence that promoting and progressing the school's priorities through PL was not limited to teaching staff. All non-teaching staff report that there is a clear and consistent message coming from the leaders that students and their learning are at the centre of everyone's work. Discussion regarding finance, facilities and resourcing being aligned to the school's priorities was evident.

The school has introduced and recently adjusted Professional Learning Community (PLC) forums. Time during the school day has been allocated for groups of staff to meet and participate in professional dialogue. Initially placed in pre-determined groups, teachers now select their teams, based on the concept they wish to explore.

The work undertaken in the PLCs is diverse and varies in impact on teachers' learning. Some PLCs engage in action research regarding evidence-based practice; the identification of which is at their discretion. Other PLCs work more as an organisational body, developing or creating a program or event and other, quite common reports, indicated that the time is often used to table and discuss problems with students or issues teachers are struggling with.

The panel acknowledges the intent to resource dedicated time for teachers to meet and engage in forums committed to professional learning. Some valued outcomes, including the initiation of the PLUS program have come from this. Given the directions generated from this report, the panel suggests that a highly strategic use of the PLC time may be to focus on building teacher capacity regarding the school's agreed pedagogical approach and the teaching of literacy.

### **Direction 4**

**Build teachers' capacity to implement the school's pedagogical agreements through a more intentional and scaffolded approach to professional learning communities.**

## **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 Parafield Gardens High School.

Effective practice in the effective teaching aspect of the ESR Framework was evident at the school. The school culture and students' dispositions to learning have been positively influenced by the high expectations staff at the school have of their learning and potential. A common theme throughout the review was characterised by the concepts of aspiration and achievement. Students reported regular conversations with teachers regarding their grade point average and evidence of significant improvement for some students was apparent. Many students discussed using exemplars, performance standards and rubrics provided by teachers to identify the criteria needed to achieve 'A' grades. Staff who work with Aboriginal learners have clear expectations and processes in place to maximise attendance and promote deadline achievement. When measured as a cohort, the percentage of ATSI students' attendance and achievement in PAT assessments exceed those of non- ATSI learners.

In 2019 two specialist Maths classes will be offered at year 11 and an increase in students studying high-level science subjects is evident. Students discuss a disposition to learning that has been influenced by the culture of encouragement and belief that teachers have of their potential, discussing trying new ways to solve problems that "make me want to push myself and study to a high level".

Throughout the review, the sense of pride that exists at the school was highly apparent. Teachers are rightly proud of their students and students in turn, of themselves and their school. A culture of respect and excellence contributes to this.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Parafield Gardens High School a culture of improvement is characterised by high expectations for students and effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

1. Deepen pedagogical reform by identifying imperative high yield teaching approaches and making expectations regarding the implementation of these clearly understood and consistently applied.
2. Further progress the achievement of school priorities by developing greater coherence and intentionality in strategic planning across faculties and cohorts.
3. Improve all students' literacy skills by deepening teachers' capacity to respond to data analysis and implementing a specific approach to the teaching of literacy strategies across the school.
4. Build teachers' capacity to implement the school's pedagogical agreements through a more intentional and scaffolded approach to professional learning communities.

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



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PARAFIELD GARDENS HIGH SCHOOL



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Governing Council Chairperson

## Appendix 1

### Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 87.2%

## Appendix 2

### 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 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 55% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 5.2% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 16% or 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 45.5% or 5 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

#### Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 53% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving below the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 6.7% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 47% or 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 67%, or 12 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

#### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2017, 61% of students enrolled in February and 96% 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 2017; 94% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 87% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 77%

successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 97% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety three percent of grades achieved in the 2017 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Thirty nine percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 42 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2017.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2017, 9% of students achieved an 'A' grade, and 37% achieved a 'B' grade. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' grade and 'B' grade respectively.

In terms of 2017 tertiary entrance, 61% or 67 of 110 potential students achieved a TAFE SA selection score and 48% or 53 of 110 students achieved an ATAR. There were also 2 students who were successful in achieving a merit.