

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR BLACKWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016



**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.

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Schneyder, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Jim Michalanney, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Blackwood 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 2015 was 90%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Blackwood High School caters for students from Years 8 to 12. It is situated 14kms south of the Adelaide CBD in the suburb of Eden Hills. The enrolment in 2015 was 877, and in 2016 is 933 students. The school has an ICSEA score of 1067, and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The local ECD Partnership is Mitcham Hills.

The school population includes 1.5% Aboriginal students, 5% Students with Disabilities, 17% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1% young people in care, and 10% of families eligible for School Card assistance. In 2016, there are 61 international students.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her first tenure, a Deputy Principal, and three Assistant Principals, also in their first tenure.

The school is authorised to deliver the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP) from Year 8-10.

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 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. The school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Reading, 19.5% of students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 43%, or 29 of 67 Year 3 students, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015, and 50%, or 24 of 48 Year 7 students, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been downwards in retention of Year 7 students, from 72% in 2013 to 50% in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. There is an improvement trend, from 65% in 2013 to 74% in 2015. The school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy, 15% of students achieved in the top two bands. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been slightly downwards, from 21% in 2013 to 15% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 43%, or 22 of 51

Year 3 students, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015, and 62%, or 22 of 35 Year 7 students, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion, 96% of students who had the potential to complete did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been upwards, from 87% to 96%.

In terms of SACE achievement, 97% of grades achieved in the 2015 SACE were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In terms of the compulsory SACE subjects, 88% of students achieved a C or better in the PLP, 99% of students achieved a C or higher in literacy, 92% of students achieved a C or higher in numeracy, and 100% of students achieved a C- or better in the Research Project.

There was a slight increase in the achievement of 'A' grades in SACE Stage 1 in 2015, from 20% in 2013 to 23% in 2015. There was improvement in student achievement at SACE Stage 2 in every curriculum area, with 100% of students achieving a C- or higher in Humanities and Social Sciences, cross-disciplinary studies, and 98% achieving a C- or higher in English.

Lines of Inquiry

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

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

Effective Teaching: How does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Effective Leadership: How does the school foster innovation and change for improvement?

Improvement Agenda: How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

How are students challenged to aspire and achieve?

Blackwood High School is a high-performing school, which is particularly evident in its PAT and SACE data, and in the 1-7 scores in the IBMYP in Years 8 to 10. There has been steady improvement in SACE completion, and strategies are in place to improve literacy and numeracy results, including standardization/moderation across the school. Snapshot data and traffic lights for monitoring student achievement will be implemented in 2017 once the full capacity of DayMap is introduced later this year. Two students received Apprentice of the Year awards in 2014 and 2016, and 12 students successfully completed their school-based apprenticeships in 2015.

The students talked enthusiastically about the characteristics of their good teachers who “know their stuff and understand that each student has different abilities”. A parent on the Governing Council stated that “the school is helping him (her son), but is also expecting him to help himself”.

The Review Panel interviewed over 50 students and 50 teachers, and was consistently told about the range of opportunities provided for all students. There is a broad range of subjects, including a range of Vocational Education and Training courses, access to student leadership programs, quality facilities and equipment, and a full range of extra-curricular activities, including the World Challenge, buddying of international students, quiz nights, sporting carnivals, the ski trip, and Science and Engineering Challenges. Students access personal support and career advice through the Pastoral Care program.

The students believe most teachers want them to be successful, and senior students appreciate the extra work done by most teachers to ensure they achieve their potential. Drafting and resubmission of work is

encouraged. Teachers talked about students in their classes who are easy to engage in their learning. This was evident when the Review Panel observed classes. It was also evident that the predominant teaching practice observed had a reliance on the use of textbooks and workbooks. All students have a laptop that is mostly used to access the internet, and other ICT applications.

The Review Panel heard about the use of QuickSmart for students struggling with their literacy and numeracy, 'Education Perfect', 'Language Perfect' and 'Coach's Eye', and data provided by Shine SA. There are six 3-D printers and a laser cutter that are accessed by a number of teachers and students from various curriculum areas. The use of 'Audacity' and 'Kahoot' in classes was observed. The mathematics teachers talked about the DECD Year 8 Maths Enrichment Project, and an increased focus on application of concepts, project-based learning, and multiple entry and exit points for student learning. They are beginning to share these pedagogies with their colleagues.

The school has been strongly committed to the IBMYP for many years, and regards it as a point of difference for parents selecting a secondary school for their children. Apart from providing an assessment framework that complements the Australian Curriculum (AC), the IBMYP also includes skills, such as referencing in Year 8, which students find useful in completion of their PLP, their IBMYP Personal Project and their SACE Stage 2 Research Project. A number of teachers and students commented on the competing demands on Year 10 students because of the IBMYP Personal Project and SACE PLP, and other extra-curricular activities. There was also a perception that Year 9 students are looking for identity and motivation, which might be impacting on their commitment to NAPLAN and PAT testing.

There have been some successful STEM activities in collaboration with the primary schools within the Mitcham Hills ECD Partnership. Planning of significant upgrades to facilities as part of the STEM Works program is well-progressed. STEM is seen by the school leadership as a potential vehicle to challenge and engage students in the future. Delivery of some coding and robotics has already been introduced.

Students and parents identified inconsistency in teacher expectations of students, the capacity of all teachers to engage students in their learning, and the use of technology to make lessons more interesting and the learning more relevant, as areas for further development. The Executive is aware of these inconsistencies and are engaged in hard conversations with some teachers about their performance.

Direction 1

Continue to develop a consistent approach to the implementation of a wide range of pedagogical practices, including the use of student inquiry and digital technologies, to further improve student engagement and achievement.

How does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

The school leadership provided the Review Panel with large amounts of documentation, mainly about school processes. Teachers new to the school appreciate the school's organization and thorough induction processes.

Teachers are encouraged to participate in a wide range of Professional Learning programs, some through the ECD Partnership, with a focus on task design, differentiation, the IBMYP and assessment. All leaders in the Wellbeing Team have participated in Positive Education training at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria.

The Review Panel focused its questions for teachers on the effectiveness of both the documentation and Professional Learning Programs on making a difference for students and their learning.

All students were able to talk about rubrics provided by all teachers, and documentation of the IBMYP curriculum, including Learning Assessment Plans, which was exemplary.

Teachers talked about the wide range of capabilities in many of their Middle School classes, and were able to share some strategies being used to differentiate in their classes. Year 9 and 10 mathematics classes are ability grouped, and students in Years 11 and 12 select from a broad range of subjects to suit their capacity and informed pathways through and post-school. There were several examples provided of highly aspiring and capable students, particularly in mathematics, being accelerated across a number of year levels, and

fifteen Year 12 students are involved in early entry courses at Adelaide University. A Year 5 student from a local Primary School attends a Year 9 mathematics and science class.

Students needing support, particularly in completion of assessment tasks, are referred to the Teaching and Learning Centre. Students identified as eligible for additional support are withdrawn for literacy and numeracy intervention using QuickSmart, and are also supported by School Services Officers in their lessons. Year 9 and 10 students requiring additional literacy and numeracy support attend a class for two lessons a week.

Students and parents identified inconsistencies in teachers' use of DayMap to upload their lesson plans, assessment tasks and resources, application of deadlines, provision of feedback, and in adherence to SACE timelines.

The school introduced a Performance Development Program in 2015, which teachers complete with their line managers. Teachers identified the inconsistent support they receive from some of their leaders through this process. They are looking for greater clarity from their leaders about expectations of them, about completion of tasks, uploading onto DayMap, the use of data, and the use of innovative and creative pedagogies. Several teachers admitted to finding the display and analysis of data, as a basis for a performance conversation, new and, at times, difficult.

Teachers and students provided varied opinions about the receipt and provision of feedback to teachers. Students are not clear about how their feedback to teachers is being used to make changes to teacher practice. Teachers are able to use a variety of methods to gather feedback from students, including multiple surveys and the TfEL compass. Students indicated that they were more interested in a one-to-one conversation with their teachers, rather than accessing feedback about their achievements on DayMap or the limited feedback in their workbooks. Drafting and resubmission of work is encouraged.

Direction 2

Continue to progress the implementation of effective and consistent Performance Development processes to improve the quality of teaching and learning practices, including the sharing of good practice and increased accountability for effective differentiation practices that meet the needs of all students.

How does the school foster innovation and change for improvement?

The Review Panel met with the Executive and all other school leaders. It is evident that there is a commitment to the agreed directions articulated in the Site Improvement Plan and the IBMYP, and that leaders are supportive of each other. The leadership structure is clearly documented. However, the delineation of responsibilities between roles is not so clear, which was mentioned by teachers.

Some middle-level leaders are struggling with their responsibilities, particularly in ensuring the accountability of teachers within their teams for assessment and learning plans, leading meetings and ensuring their teams are meeting school targets. The Executive is aware of this and is providing support. Leadership training to include a number of aspiring leaders is planned for the future.

All teachers commented on the collegiality and support provided within curriculum teams. While cross-curriculum discussion, facilitated through the STEM agenda, is yet to begin, teachers are looking for more time to focus on the sharing of good pedagogical practice.

There are competing demands for professional learning time, with a current focus on Assessment Training, the IBMYP, and 'Positive Education' for implementing PERMA+, and data literacy. A new plan for addressing NAPLAN and PAT data is about to be implemented. Teachers and leaders are pleased with their work on the integration of the SACE and Australian Curriculum, and standardization of assessment tasks. Teachers are aware of the need to continue to focus on an increase in As, while maintaining low or nil Ds and Es. Improvement in attendance remains a whole-school focus. Ongoing links with primary schools in the ECD Partnership is also important and ongoing work.

All leadership positions include leading innovation. It was evident that leaders and teachers need more professional learning about what cutting edge contemporary pedagogical practices looks like and how they

will be implemented. Ongoing robust partnerships with all three South Australian universities, and other organizations, including Haigh's Chocolates, will support further work in this area, particularly related to Problem-Based Learning.

Direction 3

Continue to build leadership capacity by clarifying leadership roles and expected outcomes, providing targeted professional learning, and consolidating whole-school priorities, their explicit outcomes, targets and timelines.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

The school is using the attendance module in DayMap and opened the Parent Portal in 2014. While attendance processes are of a high quality, teachers' use of DayMap to inform parents is inconsistent, particularly about students meeting deadlines. Parents did, however, appreciate their ready communication with teachers and school leaders, and believed any issues they had were immediately addressed, and timely feedback provided.

Tracking of students' achievement and wellbeing, and intervention strategies, are managed using a range of spreadsheets, devised by individual teachers and leaders.

All leaders have been trained in the analysis of the range of datasets available, about individual student capacity and their achievement. However, several middle-level leaders, and some teachers, shared their lack of confidence in using the data to inform their teaching and learning decisions.

The Review Panel was particularly impressed with the work done by the Senior School team in monitoring moderation shifts, student performance in examinations and investigations, and the subsequent impact on final SACE grades. Effective monitoring of course changes and a quality course selection process has contributed to accuracy of the school's SACE data. Leadership were able to articulate students who had left school in Year 12, many of whom were involved in some university work or had gained apprenticeships.

Direction 4

Develop the data literacy of all staff so that teachers and leaders can use achievement data to identify strategies to support the progress and growth of all students, and measure the effectiveness of programs.

Direction 5

Further develop and embed the full capabilities of the current Learner Management system (DayMap) and ensure its consistent use across the school.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Blackwood High School is a high-performing school with exemplary curriculum documentation and a coherent and engaging curriculum, including the IBMYP, Australian Curriculum and SACE. There has been consistent growth in enrolments and improvement in student achievement over the past three years, particularly in SACE completion and literacy.

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

1. Continue to develop a consistent approach to the implementation of a wide range of pedagogical practices, including the use of student inquiry and digital technologies to further improve student engagement and achievement.
2. Continue to progress the implementation of effective and consistent Performance Development processes to improve the quality of teaching and learning practices, including the sharing of good practice and increased accountability for effective differentiation practices that meet the needs of all students.
3. Continue to build leadership capacity by clarifying leadership roles and expected outcomes, providing targeted professional learning, and consolidating whole-school priorities, their explicit outcomes, targets and timelines.
4. Develop the data literacy of all staff so that teachers and leaders can use achievement data to identify strategies to support the progress and growth of all students, and measure the effectiveness of programs.
5. Further develop and embed the full capabilities of the current Learner Management system (DayMap) and ensure its consistent use across the school.

Based on the school's current performance, Blackwood High School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

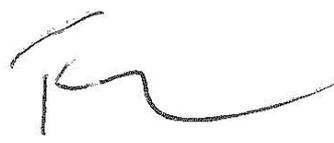


Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Marion Coady
PRINCIPAL
BLACKWOOD HIGH SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson