The Department for Education
External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Salisbury High School

Conducted in September 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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Peter Mader, Review Principal.
School context

Salisbury High School caters for children from year 8 to 12. It is situated 26kms north of the Adelaide CBD in the council of Salisbury, and is part of the Orion Partnership. The enrolment in 2017 was 794 students and is 898 students in 2018. Enrolment has been increasing each year from 796 in 2014. The school is classified as Category 2 on the department’s Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school’s ICSEA score is 929.

The school population includes 9% of Aboriginal students, 18% of students with disabilities, 37% of families eligible for School Card assistance (4% awaiting assessment), 22% of students of non-English speaking background, and 8 young people in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in her 1st year of tenure at the school, a deputy principal, 7 senior leaders and 12 coordinators. There are 47 teachers, including 6 in the early years of their career and 44 school services officers.

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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Student Learning:  To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Effective Teaching:  To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

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

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Salisbury High School is a Category 2 school, with a student cohort having diverse learning and wellbeing needs. Ten years ago, system and school data showed poor performance in SACE and NAPLAN and low SACE completion rates. Success in learning was not a key feature of the school.

The principal and leadership presentation conveyed to the panel the context of how a culture of success was developed over many years. Introduction of positive behaviour for learning and the continued priority on positive education has seen a move from ‘behaviour to pedagogy’. Priorities in the school have shifted from achievement of the minimum standard to students achieving their best. A number of initiatives have further supported this cultural shift. Data clearly showed that poor student literacy and numeracy skills were inhibiting the ability of students to be successful. External feedback to the school in 2010 recommended a focused development in student inquiry skills, whole-school approach and leadership support in literacy, common expectations of teachers differentiating the curriculum, and tracking and monitoring student progress. This was further supported in 2013, with recommendations
from instructional rounds to develop students as learners, executive functions to support higher-order thinking and the use of learning intentions, levels of questioning and activation of student voice in learning. These recommendations have provided the focus of work for professional learning teams (PLTs), pedagogical action research, professional learning and support from external groups.

There has been a strategic development and teacher capacity building of literacy over a period of time within the school to enable better student access to the curriculum. Each teacher took part in a focused professional learning program to develop reading using PAT data and resources. This enabled planning in PLT time for explicit teaching of reading skills to be developed, to support students who were below SEA in higher bands. Additional support for all students has been implemented through literacy and numeracy blocks, which have a data focus using NAPLAN, PAT and Running Records data to inform practice. Class grouping is determined by the use of these datasets. Through conversations with teachers, the panel cited learning and assessment tasks that were aligned to the needs of different groups, and observed within the class differentiated teaching practices supporting engagement and challenge. This approach has expanded to all learning areas across years 8 to 10. Unit and learning plans provided show the provision of learning intentions and subject-specific literacies and differentiation for individual groups of students. A number of strategies, including Quick Writes, class books, and word walls, were also used to collect and capture data of student growth with reference to literacy.

Leaders described these developments as empowering students to take an increased responsibility for their learning outcomes. Teachers commented that a student taking greater control of their learning was a goal; however, the way in which teachers developed engagement and challenge varied. Many spoke of students being challenged by choosing learning and assessment activities, some used learning intentions and success criteria as a way of making the learning clearer, while the use of higher-order and open-ended questioning challenged students. Student conversations, when asked about challenge in classrooms, differed in their responses: they explained that challenges were in many assessment tasks, but it depended on the teacher. Challenge was a big part of the senior years, but not consistent in the middle years.

The panel was provided with evidence from leadership and teaching teams of processes which monitor the progress of students’ learning and wellbeing. Data sources include 5 weekly snapshot data, A-E grades, attendance data, wellbeing surveys, and NEP/ILP agreements used to inform students, teachers and parents about progress, but also provide these teams the necessary information for evidence-based decisions on intervention and support practices. Data was also supplied with evidence of improved student outcomes as a result of these initiatives.

Students are supported in their learning in the middle years through class structures to meet learner needs. A very accommodating senior years environment enhances this success further, through special provisions if necessary, hybrid courses, tutors, past student mentors and wellbeing support. From observations of classroom practice, discussion with staff, students and leaders, the panel was provided with evidence of common language and past agreements around Powerful Learners. Outstanding teacher practice was observed in classes, as well as support for students in the development of literacy, in particular, the literacy and numeracy blocks. Students said these lessons were engaging and challenging, and targeted to their strengths and weaknesses. Student groupings were based around data and students understood this. However, when the panel questioned the broader teaching staff about the characteristics of the learner being developed and how they would do this, answers provided were variable in their clarity and consistency.
There is an opportunity to consolidate and develop further ‘whole-school agreements’ on learner dispositions and capabilities and the processes to monitor and evaluate learner growth. This would provide clarity of the learner characteristics needed to be developed, a common language to enhance further development of teacher practice, measures of learner growth and support for strategies used to challenge and stretch student learning.

Direction 1
Develop whole-school agreements on the learner dispositions, capabilities and the processes to monitor and evaluate learner growth.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

From the initial principal/leadership presentation, the panel was made aware of the school’s investment in building teacher capacity and resources over a sustained period of time. Data presented to the panel highlighted the diverse learning needs of the student cohort. Professional learning and support to teachers focused on differentiation, programming and planning, literacy and numeracy development, thinking skills and wellbeing for learning through positive education. This learning has enabled teachers to better meet these varied student needs.

Student data and teacher notes are readily available to all staff on DayMap to support the planning of learning. Agreements exist in which teachers are expected to plan at least 1 class unit plan articulating how they would differentiate the learning for all learners, including the support for literacy and numeracy. Examples of unit plans and assessment tasks varied in their stages of development, but many clearly showed elements of differentiation and scaffolding of learning around literacy and numeracy. Assessment tasks showed how learners were provided with choices, as well as challenge in open-ended and higher-order thinking questions. This became more prevalent in the senior classes. Datasets were also provided to the panel in which various forums interrogate and discuss student learning growth and wellbeing. Teaching groups meet each term to monitor performance and stretch, in particular, those students in high bands and below SEA.

A number of initiatives highlight how the school caters for the various needs of learners. In the middle school, students are organised into classes which are determined by students’ literacy and numeracy capabilities. Within these class groups, targeted, intentional and explicit teaching takes place through the use of PAT data and resources. Weekly one-hour literacy and numeracy blocks provide focused support to develop student learning further.

The Literacy Levels Intervention (LLI) team provides literacy support and intervention for all students below SEA at years 8 and 9. Testing of these students for phonetic awareness and decoding skills provides evidence for intervention. Running Records for all year 8 students, year 9 Aboriginal, low SEA and EALD students, provides further direction for ongoing support.

Some exemplary pedagogical practices, differentiated to meet the needs of students, were observed by the panel and discussed with teachers in classes, particularly, the numeracy and literacy blocks and Special Education. The above was referred to in the leadership presentation, and supported the belief by many staff that ‘we never give up’ in relation to student success. However, there exists variance across the school in understanding and ability to communicate ‘the how’ in which staff can effectively develop learning. Teachers are supplied with datasets for planning, and have expectations to show evidence of differentiated practices in their programming and planning, as well as discussions in performance development.
From conversations with teachers and leaders, there is evidence of willingness by many to clarify and further consolidate a whole-school understanding and agreement of common pedagogical approaches and professional language (based around an evidence-based pedagogical framework) to enable ongoing teaching and learning improvement.

**Direction 2**
Develop whole-school agreements on high-impact pedagogical approaches that would support the further development of teacher practice and enable learning for all students.

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

A major feature of the Salisbury High School Teaching and Learning plan is the reference to ‘evidence-based approaches in ensuring all learners achieve excellence’. The panel was provided with clear evidence that data-informed self-review processes were in place to support and guide the school’s improvement agenda. A breadth of datasets were referred to, including NAPLAN, PAT, Running Records, year 8 to 10 AC data and snapshot data.

NAPLAN and PAT data were used when constructing class groups in the middle school. The panel observed cases within these classes where teachers effectively used PAT data to group students to provide targeted and explicit teaching of concepts. Teachers and leaders commented on the ready access to datasets provided on DayMap, and school-constructed reports that enabled staff to intentionally plan units of work to meet the need of groups within their classes.

Literacy and numeracy support and intervention are guided by the collection and interrogation of datasets. The LLI team utilises a range of datasets to identify students needing support, as well as tracking and monitoring learning growth. Evidence from teaching teams focusing on support for targeted groups showed the use of data around identifying issues, guiding decisions on intervention, while tracking and monitoring the progress.

Students and parents are given regular termly reports on learning progress, including termly week 5 snapshot grades. These progress reports are a valuable resource for students to reflect and set goals, and offer various teams data for monitoring and decision-making about support and intervention. Specifically at senior school, this data guides tutoring, and subject support, while providing information to inform subject choices for the future.

The principal and leaders’ presentation highlighted that “data provides the clues to uncover the important relationships between teaching and learning”. Leaders and teachers commented positively about the well-articulated and supportive performance development processes of the school and how they were influencing improvement in practice. The process was evidence-based, where staff could negotiate goals for improvement and provided a variety of tools and strategies, including walkthroughs, class observations, use of a pedagogical coach utilising personalised survey techniques and video analysis, and teacher reflection. Staff described how this was enabling them to collect data from a variety of sources, bring this to meetings and discuss evidence-based improvement.

An ideal opportunity exists with a new leadership team, and the completion of the 2019 SIP, to collaboratively review, further develop and consolidate the site’s future priorities and self-review and improvement processes.
Direction 3
Collaboratively review, develop and align the site priorities, leadership roles and responsibilities, self-review and performance development processes to enable and quality assure their enactment.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Salisbury High School.

Effective practice in the strategic planning and resourcing aspect of the External School Review framework was evident in relation to literacy development at the school. The strategic planning and implementation of a number of key initiatives around literacy learning improvement has been influenced by issues identified in student performance data, in which low literacy levels were inhibiting student success. This had led to improved processes of identification, intervention and development of support programs, which track and monitor student progress in literacy. Staff, students and parents have commented positively on this focused approach to support learning. This was further enhanced by focused professional learning to build teacher capacity in literacy for learning.
Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Salisbury High School has provided evidence of a culture of improvement characterised by high expectations of students. Student achievement data and other evidence is used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels.

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

1. Develop whole-school agreements on the learner dispositions, capabilities and the processes to monitor and evaluate learner growth.

2. Develop whole-school agreements on high-impact pedagogical approaches that would support the further development of teacher practice and enable learning for all students.

3. Collaboratively review, develop and align the site priorities, leadership roles and responsibilities, self-review and performance development processes to enable and quality assure their enactment.

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

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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 88.5%.

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 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 49% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 3% 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, 21%, or 3 of 14 year 3 students, remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 30%, or 3 of 10 year 7 students, remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 51% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 1.2% 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, 9%, or 1 of 11 year 3 students, remain in the upper bands at year 9, and no students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2017.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2017, 81% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE, did go on to successfully achieve their SACE.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2017; 93% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 97% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 95%
successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-nine percent of grades achieved in the 2017 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Forty-three 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, 19% 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 respectively.

In terms of 2017 tertiary entrance, 42%, or 46 out of 109 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 2 students who were successful at achieving a merit.