EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR VICTOR HARBOR R-7 SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016
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 June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Marlene Henschke, 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 Victor Harbor R-7 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 86.7%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Victor Harbor R-7 School is located 82kms south of Adelaide, with an enrolment of 563 students, and is part of the Fleurieu Partnership. Enrolment shows an increase from 544 students in 2013 to 563 students in 2015. The school has an ICSEA score of 964, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7.5% Aboriginal students, 14% students with disabilities, 2% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 3% children in care, and approximately 40% of families eligible for School Card assistance. The Disability Unit is co-located on the school site and caters for approximately 21 students.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his third tenure, a Deputy Principal, a School Counsellor, a Coordinator in Australian Curriculum, a Focus Teacher in Literacy and Numeracy, and a Coordinator of the Disability Unit.

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 the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 45% of Year 1 and 58% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 3 students, 57% of Year 5 students and 65% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school is within the results of similar students across DECD schools. For Year 7, the school is on the borderline of being within the results of similar students.

In 2015, 39% of Year 3, 15% of Year 5 and 15% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 39% of Year 3 students remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 33% of Year 3 students remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 5, this represents a decline, and for Year 7, little change from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years, the trend for Years 3 to 5 upper band retention is downwards from 65% to 39%.
Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of Year 3, 49% of Year 5 and 67% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 7, this result indicates a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Years 3 and 7 has been upwards, from 60% in 2013 to 76% in 2015 for Year 3, and 59% in 2013 to 67% in 2015 for Year 7.

For 2015, in Year 3, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. For Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. For Year 7, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 22% of Year 3, 9% of Year 5 and 10% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 2% in 2013 to 9% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 63% of Year 3 students remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 43% of Year 3 students remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. These results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years, the trend for Years 3 to 5 is upwards, from 0% to 63% (5 students).

Lines of Inquiry

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

**Effective Teaching:** How effectively do teachers engage collegially with colleagues on curriculum design, understanding, implementation and moderation?

**Improvement Agenda:** To what extent do teachers use data and information to extend students and inform practice?

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident to support and extend student learning and growth?

How effectively do teachers engage collegially with colleagues on curriculum design, understanding, implementation and moderation?

Throughout the review, staff outlined the factors that have contributed to the collegial work being undertaken to improve student learning and growth at Victor Harbor R-7 School. These relate to high expectations, a culture of improvement through the strategic operational plans, team meetings, capacity building, common purpose, and the ongoing partnership with parents and the wider community.

The Review Panel was able to verify, through documentation of Learning Plans and discussions with staff, the level of collegial work being done. The uptake across the school with numeracy and, in particular, Big Ideas in Number, was clearly evident through discussions with student representatives in Years 3 to 7, who confidently articulated a “typical” maths lesson. Walkthroughs and informal conversations with students at all year levels added additional evidence of the consistent approach with common language being heard.

Whilst the evidence from the documentation and during conversations with staff and students verified the consistency in curriculum design and implementation, the Review Panel could not validate the level of
consistency to moderation.

An opportunity now exists to provide time for staff to design learning tasks that enhance the level of engagement and challenge through collaborative planning, implementation and assessment using differentiated approaches. Determining success criteria, A-E, for the units of work, and aligning this with student pre- and post-work samples, should result in development of consistency in moderation across the school.

The Review Panel heard comments from students that suggested the use of class rubrics was evident in some classes. Examples seen by the Review Panel indicated there was a focus on assessment criteria. Students spoke of the occasions when teachers implemented rubrics and their belief that they “helped, because I knew what I had to do”, “I knew what was needed to get a higher level, I could do enough and get a C but I wanted to challenge myself”, and “I normally get a D, but I used it (rubric) and got a C”. When asked if they believed using rubrics makes a difference, students’ comments included: “It would be good if we had a say”, “I would include things like time management and even attitude”, “that way, it’s not just about what you are learning but how you are learning”, and “the help, because you feel in control of your learning”. Students further commented that they would like to have a say in creating rubrics and also to determine the criteria: “you know, if we had a say, we would probably work harder”.

In conversations, both formal and informally, many students indicated they enjoyed being challenged: “setting a goal and working to achieve it”. Student leaders and Middle Primary students clearly understood that intellectual challenge requires effort, thinking and ‘having a go’. They gave examples of when this has occurred and clearly enjoyed the learning experience. One such example witnessed by the Review Panel was the high level of engagement in technology for identified students enabling stretch and challenge: “I’m learning and having fun”; “it’s taught me never to give up, as at first, I didn’t know what to do and now you should see what I can do”, and “I like the challenge of new learning”.

During conversations with staff and students, reference was constantly being made to the support received from the leaders, school counsellor and pastoral care workers. The impetus on reducing student anxiety, enabling students to engage in learning, was witnessed in targeted programs and intervention, as was the impact and proactive involvement of staff to support learning and wellbeing for all students.

Victor Harbor R-7 School has many effective pedagogical practices in place; these could be further enhanced by the shared practice of involving students with learning intentions and co-designing success criteria. The next lift to improve student achievement could be for staff to share in both learning teams and across sites, and critically analyse assessment tasks, ensuring opportunities for higher-order thinking and multiple entry points for all students.

Direction 1
Increase the number of students at and above SEA standards through a focused whole-school approach to assessment and moderation that supports and challenges all students.

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**To what extent do teachers use data and information to extend students and inform practice?**

The Review Panel was interested in exploring how effectively the collected data and evidence of student learning is being translated into classroom practice and cascading down to students.

The Review Panel can verify the extent of whole-school data being collected and analysed, including the focus on student growth over time, and targeting students in the higher bands. Evidence, through documentation and conversations with leadership, staff and students, verifies the impact of student intervention processes in place, through the analysis of achievement, wellbeing and engagement data.

The Review Panel sought evidence from staff at the staff meeting about the impact data was having on planning, programing and cascading down to student involvement. Staff who attended rated the impact from a whole-site level at 7 out of 10; class-level at 6 out of 10; and student-level at 5.5 out of 10. Staff, through their written responses, indicated they were “fed a lot of data.”

It became apparent through the conversations with both staff and students that, whilst data is being collected, the actual impact of its usage to inform practice varies across the site. A strategy to increase the
level of ownership will be to increase the level of staff involvement in data analysis to identify and acknowledge the growth being achieved, trends and areas for future opportunities. The next conversation should be “what” to do with the evidence at year and class level, cascading to student level.

Students, when asked about their understanding or involvement with class data, could not verify their involvement. However, some students commented that “if we asked, our teacher would share this with us”. An opportunity to involve students in the setting of class targets aligned to the SIP should provide a shared level of responsibility and ownership of student learning and improvement.

The Review Panel heard staff explain differentiation; however, they were unable to verify the level and consistency of this within the school. A future opportunity for staff would be to explore, challenge and engage in professional conversations as to what differentiation looks like and what it isn’t: to deepen the level of understanding, including the development of goal-setting, the complexity of tasks to involve higher-order thinking, and opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills in diverse and meaningful ways, which stretch and challenge all students, not just high achievers.

This, along with reflecting on the purpose for data analysis and monitoring, should provide the connectedness to whole-school approaches and improvement.

Direction 2
Increase the percentage of students achieving and retained in the high proficiency bands by further building the capacity of teachers to effectively track, monitor and respond to student learning growth.

To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident to support and extend student learning and growth?

The school uses a distributed leadership model as the process for achieving collective responsibility for improvement. The focus on improving student learning and growth through collegial support was verified consistently in documentation and conversations with staff. The Review Panel can confirm the uptake and ownership of the Operational Plans with the strategic application and implementation of these witnessed throughout the review.

The Review Panel acknowledges the high degree of collegiality and trust within the school culture. Throughout the review, the panel constantly saw and heard evidence of the collective responsibility for all students and their families. Front Office administration and class-based student support School Services Officers reported on the support and work being done to engage students in varying learning opportunities. There is a genuine sense and belief of ‘family’ at Victor Harbor R-7 School. The Principal evokes to both staff and students, “we are the same wave”, and this is reflected in the culture of the school. Embracing this to create the opportunity to strengthen deprivatisation through peer-to-peer feedback on agreed criteria should enhance teacher capacity, whilst developing consistency and accountability to whole-school approaches.

The mentoring and sharing of practice in the Disability Unit was highly visible during the visit. The impact that staff are having in developing relationships and learning opportunities for students is commended. Evidence was provided of the connectedness to the mainstream school with students actively involved in programs and committees. The level of deprivatisation and support within the Unit was genuinely present.

Students throughout the review expressed a high level of belonging and pride in their school, they explained the varying levels of student voice and the opportunities to extend their individual skills. The meeting with the Governing Council provided the Review Panel evidence of the level of student and parent voice that exists within the school, including the initiative of the Governing Council, and the connectedness of the student voice to whole-school operations. Students shared their responsibility and involvement in the Reading Army, which aims to improve reading levels of targeted students in Reception to Year 4. The initiative and success of the program was evident when the Review Panel spoke to students involved about increased reading levels and pride in their achievements. The collective responsibility to improve student learning through a range of opportunities is to be commended.

The Review Panel consistently heard of the many opportunities staff have to attend professional development together with the expectation to share new learning with colleagues. However, the issue
raised by a number of staff is the feeling of “yet another thing”.

Staff commented that they have an in-depth knowledge of the ‘what’ (content) of the Australian Curriculum. The next lift should be focussed on the ‘how’. Staff shared the desire to go “narrow and deep”, and “to focus on less and do it well”. Doing this should lead to closing the gap to develop consistent approaches, common language and a shared accountability through Performance and Development processes, which are aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Direction 3
Develop and enact systematic whole-school Professional Development to ensure accountability and consistency across the site to the Site and Partnership Improvement and Operational Plans.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Victor Harbor R-7 School has developed shared ownership of the Site Improvement and Operational Plans. A culture of shared responsibility and trust exists, which is characterised by capacity building and high expectations. The school uses data strategically to track progress and provide targeted and successful intervention support.

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

1. Increase the number of students at and above SEA standards through a focused whole-school approach to assessment and moderation that supports and challenges all students.

2. Increase the percentage of students achieving and retained in the high proficiency bands by further building the capacity of teachers to effectively track, monitor and respond to student learning growth.

3. Develop and enact systematic whole-school Professional Development to ensure accountability and consistency across the site to the Site and Partnership Improvement and Operational Plans.

Based on the school’s current performance, Victor Harbor R-7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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.

Brenton Robins
PRINCIPAL
VICTOR HARBOR R-7 SCHOOL

Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

Governing Council Chairperson