

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Victor Harbor R-7 School

Conducted in February 2021



# Review details

Our education system aspires to become the best in Australia by seeking growth for every student, in every class and in every school.

The purpose of the External School Review (ESR) 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 is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

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 here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Karen Knox and Thomas Harvey, Review Principals.

## Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers.

## School context

Victor Harbor R-7 School caters for 558 reception to year 7 students. It is situated 85kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 558. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 563. The local partnership is Fleurieu.

The school has an ICSEA score of 980, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 14% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 45% of students eligible for School Card assistance. The school has a disability unit with 19 students.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 20th year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, a Teaching and Learning Coordinator, a Student Wellbeing Leader and a Coordinator of the Disability Unit.

There are 38 Teachers including 7 in the early years of their careers and 11 Step 9 Teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

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

#### **What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?**

The previous ESR directions guided school improvement planning but has had little impact with most areas still current and pertinent to the school. Support from department personnel has helped sharpen the schools improvement work by providing clarity and refining actions.

Staff collect a range of data but how this is used to inform their practice but is not consistent across the school. Staff have accessed a range of professional learning aligned to the site improvement plan (SIP) but some struggle to articulate the impact on student achievement.

Staff work hard and all expressed a desire to improve outcomes for students and are open to new learning and the concept of continually refining their practice.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

The SIP has a narrow focus which is appreciated by staff. Targeted professional learning has been aligned to the SIP and time has been allocated for teachers to meet in PLCs. The analysis of data and feedback has led to a significant focus on intervention which is allocated significant resourcing. Leaders have accessed department personnel to help sharpen the SIP and assist teachers to deliver planned outcomes.

The leadership team has recently changed with new leaders from within the school forming the new team. To be an effective, cohesive team it is critical that each member knows their responsibilities and where and how they will drive the improvement agenda. Collective understanding and big picture overview will assist all leaders with clarity over their role in improving outcomes for students.

A review cycle exists at a leadership level which provides opportunity to extend the process and be inclusive of all staff. There is currently a disconnect between some staff and the reading focus of the SIP. It is imperative for all staff to connect to the SIP and see it as their guiding document. Some teachers do not have a clear 'line of sight' with the SIP and are unclear of their actions and how they going to achieve the outcomes. Providing clarity and enabling all staff to see their role within the SIP will explicitly connect staff to the improvement agenda.

Some teachers indicate they would like support to enhance their data literacy skills to fully analyse data and assess the impact of their practice. Whilst the re-vamped PLCs are still in their infancy, there is opportunity to structure formal opportunities to review data in this collaborative context. Monitoring student progress is largely done by leaders but teachers expressed a desire to look at whole-school data to identify trends and patterns. Involving staff in regular, comprehensive self-review processes would enable teachers to explicitly connect their work with the SIP. Providing the opportunity to analyse data as a whole school, identify trends and patterns and collectively enhance improvement strategies will impact on student learning.

**Direction 1      Develop clear structures and processes which strategically and explicitly connect, drive and support the improvement agenda and provide opportunities for continuous monitoring, evaluation and review.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

The embedded focus on wellbeing provides safe conditions for learning. Professional learning and input from the local education team supports teachers to use evidence-based pedagogical practices. A strong focus on learning intentions, success criteria and formative assessment is visible in most classes but is not consistent across the school.

Teachers use pre-tests and post-testing to track student progress but there is variance on how this data is used to inform learning. Students access a variety of individual, paired and group work but discussions found that whilst some teachers provided opportunity for authentic student voice in learning, this was in the minority. The SIP focus on reading is evident in junior primary classes but is not highly visible across the school or known by most of the students. Most younger students had learning goals and all students knew their reading or lexile level.

Data is used to access intervention with several evidence-based programs running across the school. From conversations with teachers, it was apparent that some view intervention as providing differentiated learning and there is a disconnect between interventions and classroom practice. In its optimum, intervention is short term and supports and complements class learning. Refocusing PLCs into a critical conversation space, with teachers holding each other to account, will support a deeper focus on differentiated learning within the classroom. Collaboratively analysing data will support teachers and provide stretch and challenge for all learners. Some students talked of wanting to be challenged and stretched in their learning and teachers indicated that they would like support in this area.

An over reliance on programs, both within the classroom and during intervention, limits opportunity for teachers to refine their pedagogy and hone their craft of teaching. Most intervention is through withdrawal with opportunity to further strengthen feedback processes to teachers. Involving all staff in a comprehensive review of intervention will assist decision making and identify whether the current model will deliver expected outcomes given the current allocated resourcing. Supporting teachers to refocus on their whole-class practice to enable differentiated learning within the class will better support student learning.

**Direction 2**    **Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity to incorporate individual student data in learning design.**

**Direction 3**    **Refocus on wave 1 teaching and learning to refine targeted intervention strategies for individual students and cohorts.**

## Effective leadership

How effectively does the school leadership ensure a clear focus on improving teaching and learning?

Leaders set the tone of positive culture and model respectful relationships. The new leadership team has been established to support the SIP and intervention and has the support of staff and community.

It is clear new leaders are dedicated and invested in providing the best learning outcomes for students. This provides an opportunity to map out and strategically connect their individual roles and responsibilities to the SIP. Teachers are currently unclear of leaders' roles and some leaders are unclear of who they are line managing. Having clarity around the explicit focus of individual roles and how they strategically dovetail together will provide leaders with comprehensive and collective understanding and promote 'big picture' thinking.

Although PDPs are linked to the SIP, staff report that they do not all receive formal observations. Most of the feedback following observations was 'friendly' and 'positive'. Some teachers felt PDPs had little connection to their practice and they were used largely as a compliance activity. Providing professional learning opportunities has the potential to support leaders to confidently provide high level accountability and professionally challenge teacher practice.

Using focused observations to improve teacher pedagogy is a critical driver for the school improvement and helps build a sense of urgency. Leaders have the opportunity to lead the learning and ensure consistency across the school by being visible in classes and providing explicit feedback to teachers to further improve their practice. Having regular and formalised leadership observations and walkthroughs, linked to PDP and SIP focus, will provide targeted and timely feedback to further strengthen teacher pedagogy and embed consistent practice.

**Direction 4**     **Provide a cycle of regular focused observations with explicit feedback on pedagogy to build consistency and further improve teaching and learning.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Students report a strong sense of pride in their school and value the strong relationship with the adults who support them. A strong focus on wellbeing flows across Victor Harbor R-7 School and students are confident and happy. Parents find staff approachable and express satisfaction with student support and learning, while both governing council and parents are supportive of the school.

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

- Direction 1** Develop clear structures and processes which strategically and explicitly connect, drive and support the improvement agenda and provide opportunities for continuous monitoring, evaluation and review.
- Direction 2** Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity to incorporate individual student data in learning design.
- Direction 3** Refocus on wave 1 teaching and learning to refine targeted intervention strategies for individual students and cohorts.
- Direction 4** Provide a cycle of regular focused observations with explicit feedback on pedagogy to build consistency and further improve teaching and learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Victor Harbor R-7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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# Appendix 1

## 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 the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019 46% of year 1 and 49% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 68% of year 5 students and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools. For year 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving below the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 39% of year 3, 23% of year 5 and 13% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 48% or 12 out of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 24% or 5 out of 21 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 68% of year 3 students, 61% of year 5 students and 81% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 5 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools. For year 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving below the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 20% of year 3, 17% of year 5 and 17% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 56% or 9 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 40% or 4 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.