

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Findon High School

Conducted in August 2019



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

This review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Tim Kloeden, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at Professional Learning Teams (PLTs)
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy Implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parents
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Students
 - Teachers

School context

Findon High School caters for students from year 8 to year 12. It is situated 8kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 248 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review in 2015 was 328.

The school is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 955. The local partnership is Inner West.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 13% students with a verified disability, 47% families eligible for School Card assistance, 25% students of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 2 young people in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the second year of their first tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal, 2 assistant principals with responsibility for student centred learning and VET, six coordinators, a wellbeing leader and business manager. There are 27 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 8 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** While continuing to acknowledge the importance of wellbeing, shift the focus of all members of the school community onto engagement in learning and improved learning outcomes for all students.
- Direction 2** Provide greater consistency and coherence for learners, and achieve improvement in student outcomes, by focusing on curriculum scope and sequence, and consistent documentation, assessment and delivery in all subjects.
- Direction 3** Develop leadership capacity and density in all areas of the school, in particular, teaching and learning and ICT, so that all priorities in the SIP are realised.

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

Evidence demonstrated that in 2019 there is a deliberate focus on learning, characterised through a student centred learning (SCL) approach. This was introduced approximately 12 months ago in response to processes of self-review and input provided by an external agency. Whilst student achievement in 2018 cannot be directly attributed to the recent introduction of SCL, data confirms that improved learning outcomes were apparent. This is evident through SACE completion, merit data and year 9 numeracy results. It is suggested that the school's focus on student leadership may also have contributed to improved achievement for senior students.

In 2017, leaders introduced an approach to curriculum planning that saw a more targeted and consistent model developed. The school labelled the approach the 'Dream Tasksheet' whereby plans are designed to provide students with a more engaging and stimulating approach to curriculum. This planning tool has now developed into Learning Area Plans that more closely align with the SCL approach.

Since the previous ESR, there has been a highly strategic and deliberate leadership model established at the school. Each of the executive leaders' roles align closely with school priorities and both assistant principals lead the school's professional learning team conversations. The panel also heard that all leaders with line management responsibility have engaged in forums that enabled them to explore and develop strategies to support them, when conducting performance and development processes.

The panel confirms responses to the previous direction have been implemented and commends the leadership model that supports a strong and focused approach to improvement planning and pedagogical renewal.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The clear intent to raise the school's profile within the community and to plan for improvement in student learning is apparent. Reports from families and future enrolment figures confirm that the direction the school is undertaking is well received by the community.

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is informed by data and is quite specific regarding which aspects of literacy and numeracy require development. In their initial presentation, the leadership team made reference to the need for students to develop their reading comprehension skills, in particular the ability to draw inference. Teachers consistently report student centred learning as the school's priority and most staff also articulate an improvement in literacy and numeracy as school goals. However, there was limited evidence to confirm teachers are aware of which aspects of literacy or numeracy the school has identified for improvement.

Evidence was presented to confirm that the school has implemented a process of self-review. Staff have engaged in a collective forum where their perception of the implementation of SCL was sought. Leaders discuss the need to continue to develop ongoing forums where data and evidence will inform them of progress towards SIP targets.

PLTs have been initiated to align with site goals and with the intent to progress the teaching of literacy and numeracy. A five week cycle of trial and review is implemented as teachers engage with strategies designed to bring about improvement in practice and student learning outcomes. The panel heard varied reports regarding the specificity of these strategies, with only one or two teachers discussing comprehension as a skill they are working towards with students.

Performance and development processes are formally structured including observations and providing feedback to teachers. Goals developed through these processes vary regarding alignment to the SIP, with minimal examples of Professional Development program (PDP) goals or strategies related to the teaching of reading or numeracy.

It is evident that there is an opportunity to respond to the school's improvement actions with greater intentionality, by ensuring systems that build teacher capacity are clearly focused on implementation of agreed practice in literacy and numeracy.

Direction 1 Ensure improvement in students' learning through targeted systems of professional learning and performance and development that build teachers' capacity to understand and teach reading strategies and numerical reasoning, as identified in the school improvement plan.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Leaders have a clear understanding of the role of data in shaping improvement plans, with data used diagnostically to determine areas for improvement in student learning at the whole-school level.

A significant strategy initiated to progress the SCL approach is the introduction of learning plans, which are generated for all students in years 8 to 10. These plans are consistently designed to include goals and strategies and are developed each semester. Some students referred to their goals and a few discussed strategies they will undertake to achieve these. The goals are expressed as general statements of intent and aspiration and few are quantifiable. The panel commends the commitment to connect students with processes that make learning more purposeful. An opportunity to deepen the impact of this process on learning outcomes is now apparent.

Teachers understand the value of data and many refer to differentiating practice through the formation of ability groups, offering acceleration or identifying students requiring intervention. A more sophisticated analysis of data to identify and teach to students' strengths and miscues, or to differentiate task design, was discussed by one or two teachers. A number of teachers agree data analysis is an area for further development.

With greater capacity to analyse and understand what data is telling them, teachers will be better placed to work with students to set relevant and measurable goals with a focus on learning. Scaffolding teachers to use data purposefully to identify specific areas for improvement will facilitate a more strategic approach to developing student learning goals.

Direction 2 Establish measurable and relevant student learning goals by developing teachers' capacity to analyse, understand and respond to assessment data.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

The introduction of the student centred learning approach has been promoted broadly across the school and the community. All staff and parents with whom the panel spoke identified this as the school's priority. This initiative is providing an incentive for families to consider Findon High School as their school of choice.

Varied teaching strategies or initiatives to implement SCL have been introduced and trialled across the foundation and intermediate levels. These are representative of high yield, contemporary practice. Formative assessment is discussed by a number of staff who have introduced 'exit cards', 'tell to ask' questioning and the provision of two-way feedback to their practice. Evidence of students provided with task sheets that include grade criteria was common. Some students are able to discuss their learning, its intent and the criteria for success or grades confidently.

The redesign of the curriculum to enable students to select subjects that interest them is a strategy introduced to elicit greater engagement. A number of students, and all parents, reported that the LINCCCs¹ framework is of great value in determining appropriate curriculum choices and pathways for learning.

Some staff express uncertainty regarding the strategic implementation of the SCL approach, citing greater need to scaffold their ability to deliver teaching strategies aligned with the approach.

Reports from a number of staff indicate that the perception of SCL is a 'stand-alone' enterprise, disconnected from curriculum delivery. The panel understands that SCL is intended to act as the pedagogical vehicle to bring about improvement in student learning, specifically reading comprehension and numerical reasoning. An opportunity to further progress the connectedness between the SCL and the achievement of SIP goals, is apparent. The use of success criteria, learning intentions, goal setting and

¹ Literacy, Independence, Numeracy, Critical and Creative Thinking & Citizenship.

formative assessment in the teaching of literacy and numeracy will strengthen the school's areas for improvement.

Direction 3 **Progress student learning outcomes by continuing to embed teaching strategies aligned with student centred learning across the curriculum and within the teaching of reading and numeracy.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Findon High School, the school's vision is broadly understood. The intent to implement student centred learning across the school is articulated by all staff and parents. This initiative is raising the profile of the school within the community and interest from parents sees an increase in enrolments for 2020. The introduction has seen a number of high yield teaching strategies trialled and incorporated into practice, allowing students greater choice and increased autonomy in learning.

Whilst evidence indicates that there is opportunity to refine the initiative to bring about greater intentionality and sustainability of practice, the panel agrees the intent is one designed to develop the learning expertise of students at the school. The work of the leadership team in providing a coherent and strong approach to change is acknowledged.

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

- Direction 1** Ensure improvement in students' learning through targeted systems of professional learning and performance and development that build teachers' capacity to understand and teach reading strategies and numerical reasoning, as identified in the school improvement plan.
- Direction 2** Establish measurable and relevant student learning goals by developing teachers' capacity to analyse, understand and respond to assessment data.
- Direction 3** Progress student learning outcomes by continuing to embed teaching strategies aligned with student centred learning across the curriculum and within the teaching of reading and numeracy.

Based on the school's current performance, Findon High School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



Andrew Wells
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS



Phil Fitzsimons
PRINCIPAL
FINDON HIGH SCHOOL



GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

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 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 48% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2018, 3% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 0%, or 0 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 0%, or 0 out of 1 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% 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 higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 7% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 25%, or 1 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 100%, or 1 out of 1 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 69% of students enrolled in February and 98% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE, did go on to successfully achieve SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend has been upwards, from 91% to 98%.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2018, 79% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 95% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 76% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 95% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 8% of grades were at an 'A' level and 46% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for the 'C-' or higher, and the 'A' and 'B' grade achievement.

Eleven percent of students completed SACE using VET in 2018.

For 2018 tertiary entrance, 56%, or 24 students achieved an ATAR selection score. Five students were also successful in achieving a merit.