EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR WHYALLA HIGH SCHOOL
Conducted in October 2015
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 overarching review question is “How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?”

This External School Review has evaluated:
- the school's self-review processes and findings,
- the school's achievement data and progress over time,
- the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and
- parent and student views about the school.

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Sue George-Duif, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Antoinette Jones, Review Principal.
Policy compliance
The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Whyalla High School has verified that the school is compliant in all aspects.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 85.2%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Whyalla High School is situated 500 metres from the Whyalla Foreshore, on the east coast of the Eyre Peninsula.

Whyalla High School caters for approximately 440 students in Years 8, 9 and 10 in 2015. The school is a partner school to Edward John Eyre High School and Stuart High School, which cater for Years 11 and 12. The school has an ICSEA score of 960, and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school population includes 9.5% Aboriginal students, 7% Students with Disabilities, and approximately 24% of families accessing School Card assistance.

The school's Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his first tenure at the school and the following leaders:

- Deputy Principal, Curriculum – Band B-4
- Daily Organisation and Timetabling Leader – B1
- English & Literacy Leader – B1
- Mathematics & Numeracy – B1
- Differentiated Learning – B1
- Science & STEM Programs – B1
- Humanities and Social Sciences – B1
- Health & Physical Education/Technology – B1
- Positive Behaviour for Learning – B1
- Student Counsellor – B1
- Business Manager.
### Lines of inquiry

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

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| Improvement Agenda: | How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement? |

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

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#### How well are the students achieving over time?

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 59% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

- The 2014 NAPLAN reading results at Whyalla High School for Year 9 students show that 49% achieved the SEA.
- The average reading result of the students over a four-year period from 2011 to 2014 was 51.5%.

There were 13 students, or 9% of Year 9 students, who achieved in the top two NAPLAN bands in reading in 2015.

- From 2012 to 2015 there is a slight upward trend from 5% to 9%.

10 out of a total of 22 students (45%), who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in Year 3, remain in the upper bands in Year 9 in 2015.

- This compares to 37%, or 10 out of 27 students, remaining in the higher bands in 2014.

8 out of a total of 15 students (53%), who achieved the top bands in the Year 7 NAPLAN test in Reading, continued to do so in Year 9 NAPLAN tests in 2015.

- This compares to 75%, or 9 out of 12, remaining in the higher bands in 2014.

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

- The 2014 NAPLAN numeracy result at Whyalla High School for Year 9 students was 45%.
- The average numeracy result of the students over a four-year period from 2011 to 2014 was 42%.

There were 4 students, or 2.8% of Year 9 students, who achieved in the top NAPLAN bands in numeracy in 2015.

3 out of a total of 17 students (17.6%), who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Year 3 Numeracy, remained in the upper bands in Year 9 in 2015.

- This compares to 12.5%, or 2 out of 16 students, remaining in the higher bands in 2014.

3 out of a total of 6 students (50%), who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Numeracy in Year 7 NAPLAN, remained in the upper bands in Year 9 in 2015.

- This compares to 12.5%, or 1 out of 8, remaining in the higher bands in 2014.

The school collects PAT-R diagnostic data in January and again in September. The school’s analysis of the 2015 data shows the following:

- The mean score for Year 8 students tested in January was 128, compared to the mean score of 130 for the same cohort when tested in September.
• The Year 9 students received a mean score of 132 in January, which increased to 136 in September.
• The Year 10 students tested in January achieved a mean score of 136, which increased to 140 when tested in September.

In summary, there is a pattern of student achievement over time showing improvements in both literacy and numeracy, which compares favourably with results from similar schools.

As Whyalla High School caters for Years 8 to 10 students, there is no SACE data available.

How effective are the school’s self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

The school’s Site Improvement Plan clearly articulates targets and measures for improvement, aligned to its three priorities of high quality teaching and learning; improving student wellbeing for learning; and improving learning conditions. All members of the Leadership Team outlined how their work aligned to the Site Improvement Plan, use of targets, data and areas for improvement. The Review Panel saw evidence of a positive and reflective culture and of the school’s commitment to further improvement. The school is doing much to improve the achievement of its students and is recognised by the Education Director as a ‘turnaround school’. The Principal acknowledged the staff’s commitment to the school’s initiatives to improve the achievement of students and the environment in which they learn.

The school has collected, displayed and analysed an extensive range of valid and reliable data on student learning and wellbeing. This data was communicated to staff by electronic means, through staff meetings and via printed copies in various formats. Data is displayed in the school’s staff areas, such as the conference room and in the staff room, and referred to regularly by staff. This data includes NAPLAN, A-E grades in the four core areas of English, Mathematics, Humanities and Science, Aboriginal student achievement, wellbeing data, satisfaction, and all students’ Individual NAPLAN and PAT results against the SEA. Exemplars of differentiated planning and assessment tasks are also displayed.

Leadership is beginning to triangulate data to compare information related to achievement, attendance, engagement and behaviour. This is used to identify issues and record support for students who are falling below the benchmark in Year 10. The school plans to extend this process for students in Years 8 and 9.

Evidence-based information is used to target resources and implement high impact intervention strategies to students in need. Data was used to identify the need for leadership positions in Literacy, Numeracy and Differentiation, and for the provision of specialist learning support staff. Whole-school agreements in literacy, bookwork and the learning environment have been established and complemented by feedback systems to staff via the use of walk-throughs.

Staff, parents and students articulated the improvements made in the environment at Whyalla High School. A whole-school agreement was developed, in consultation with staff, around the ideal learning environment. The classroom environment is now bright, full of displays, with modern furniture and equipment. Classes are well-ordered with students, on the whole, engaged in their learning. This represents a significant improvement in the condition of the school and the behaviour of students in the past.

When teachers were asked how they used data and evidence to inform judgements about student learning, they confirmed that they received whole-school, year-level and individual data. They said that the data was ‘front and centre’ of their planning, differentiation and instruction. However, the panel discovered inconsistencies in the use of the data by teachers to drive instruction to accommodate the varying needs of learners.

Direction 1
Improve student achievement by all teachers using data to drive instruction and to plan learning in a way that accommodates the varying needs of students.
To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

In 2015, a leadership position was introduced with a focus on differentiation. A survey was used to determine teacher capacity and implementation of strategies used as baseline data. The Differentiation Coach and Numeracy Coach developed and used an Observation Tool proforma, in order to promote a wide definition of differentiation to support staff in their efforts to cater for the varied needs of learners. Further efforts have been made in this regard by the provision of professional development by Jane Jarvis from Flinders University and by professional learning activities facilitated by their own staff. The panel endorses the view of some leaders that the wide focus on differentiation must be maintained, as differentiation is still seen by some staff as the narrow definition of accommodating for students with learning difficulties.

The panel saw and heard evidence from staff and students about differentiation occurring in literacy and Mathematics. In literacy, staff plan for explicit instruction of literacy in their curriculum documentation. There is evidence of differentiation by the use of guided reading groups, word walls, glossaries and genre writing in classrooms. However, some students indicated that they, and some staff, use the displays as a teaching and learning tool and the information on the walls needs updating. The focus on literacy is reflected in the literacy achievement data in NAPLAN, English and PAT-R. However, perhaps with the emphasis moving to numeracy, the literacy strategies are not being maintained or reinforced by some staff. Students would benefit from ensuring that literacy strategies remain embedded in the work and revisiting the tools and the rigour of the tools the school is using.

Teachers who were observed worked well in partnerships with other staff to cater for the needs of students. The science, geography and numeracy coach had planned a unit of work that integrated science and technology, incorporating a variety of modes of learning for two classes. The students were highly-engaged and could clearly explain the learning intention and the process they were using to learn the skill or task at hand. Another example observed was the Year 9 ‘class’ of over fifty students supported in mathematics by two teachers. Again, the students were highly-engaged in a mathematics activity, which involved tasks designed for their level of proximate development. The Learning Centre, located adjacent to the Library, provides a safe and supportive environment for those students who need learning support. The students in the Centre were keen to talk to the panel about their learning and show the panel some of their work and achievements.

The panel observed some exceptional teaching practice and had the pleasure of talking to a number of staff about their efforts to differentiate the learning for their students. The panel believes that the staff members are highly-dedicated and committed to providing the best quality education for the students they work with, and are well-placed to continue their work in the area of differentiation.

Direction 2

Improve student achievement by ensuring that all teachers use the Whyalla High School-designed tool of differentiation to plan, deliver and differentiate the curriculum, instruction, learning environment and assessment.

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

One indicator of challenge and engagement is student attendance at school. Whyalla High School’s attendance is below the DECD target, with an overall rate of 85.2%. The key process statements, action plan, and school follow-up processes clearly outline the procedures to be followed in case of absence from school. Evidence suggests that these processes are followed effectively.

The panel observed students in class who were happy and engaged in their learning. They described their learning as fun and enjoyable. This evidence is compatible with the student perception survey that indicated above-average responses to the questions regarding their teachers’ motivation for them to learn.
Another source of motivation for students was feedback from their teachers, with many reporting that their main source of feedback was either verbal, or through written feedback in their bookwork. Teachers confirmed that these were the main sources of feedback, but that they also provide assistance to students with self-reflection, by explaining the solutions to tests or demonstrating particular skills. Students commented that they would like more feedback of an ongoing nature to help them determine how they were progressing and what to do to get to the next level of achievement.

**Direction 3**
Improve student achievement through provision of constructive and ongoing feedback, using the Australian Curriculum Performance Standards and literacy capability.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Whyalla High School is performing well. The Review Panel saw evidence of a positive and reflective culture and of the school's commitment to further improvements. The school is doing much to improve the achievement of its students.

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

1. Improve student achievement by all teachers using data to drive instruction and to plan learning in a way that accommodates the varying needs of students.

2. Improve student achievement by ensuring that all teachers use the Whyalla High School-designed tool of differentiation to plan, deliver and differentiate the curriculum, instruction, learning environment and assessment.

3. Improve student achievement through provision of constructive and ongoing feedback, using the Australian Curriculum Performance Standards and literacy capability

Based on the school's current performance, Whyalla High School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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.

Graham Clark
PRINCIPAL
WHYALLA HIGH SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson