

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Penola High School**

Conducted in February 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 Rob McLaren Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Nigel Gill, 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 staff meeting
- Document Analysis (school policies and procedures, teaching planning documents)
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Support Officers
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Penola High School caters for children from year 8 to 12. It is situated in the township of Penola 383km south-east of Adelaide. The enrolment in 2018 was 109 students and is 107 students in 2019. The enrolment trend has remained steady over the last five years. FLO enrolments in 2018 were 8, with 10 in 2019.

The school is classified as Category 4 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 930. The local Partnership is South East Coast & Vines.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 3% students with a verified disability, 37% families eligible for school card assistance, 1% students of EALD background and 4 young people in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the third year of her tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal and 2 coordinators. There are 13 teachers including a teacher librarian, two in the early years of their career, and 3 step 9 teachers. There are 13 ancillary staff providing administration, grounds and classroom support.

The school values are: Tolerance, Respect, Integrity, Commitment and Healthy Lifestyle

## The previous ESR was undertaken in 2015 and the school's previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Raise achievement levels by linking learning design with AC and explicitly incorporating whole school literacy and numeracy practice with curriculum planning and documentation.
- Direction 2** Support students in their learning and assist sustainability of learning opportunities by exploring alternative curriculum delivery methods.
- Direction 3** Raise and sustain higher levels of achievement by targeted use of professional development in high yield strategies.
- Direction 4** Increase achievement and engagement through assessment design that informs planning.

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

From 2016 to 2017 a number of leadership changes occurred which hampered the ability of the school to effectively implement improvement strategies to enact the directions. With the advent of a more stable leadership team in 2018, work commenced on implementing the directions.

Leaders provided evidence and documentation of teacher planning using an agreed planning template where learning design processes were evident articulating learning intentions and success criteria for students while explicitly stating the literacy and numeracy requirements of the work. Staff and leaders commented that these shared documents supported and enhanced their work and that conversations between staff were increasingly more focussed on learning design and the literacy and numeracy needs of students.

Assessment design that assesses students learning at a point in time to inform planning and instruction and to promote rigour is still very early in its development. Evidence was provided to the panel of students supplying teachers with feedback about their teaching practice using Google forms. While this is not embedded practice across the school a small number of staff commented positively on it supporting student influence in learning.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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

During fourth term of 2018 staff collaboratively spent a student free day reviewing and analysing a range of data sets including NAPLAN, PAT, SACE and A to E grades to ascertain the school's improvement goals (SIP), challenges of practice (COP) and resulting actions for 2019-2022. This was revisited in week 0 of 2019 to include new leaders and teachers to the school. This collaborative approach has engendered ownership of the goals, clarity of the COP and actions to improve student learning outcomes. Staff spoke confidently about the agreed goals. While it was acknowledged by the panel that this is the early stage of the improvement planning process, a recognisable strength is the collaborative and inclusive way in which leaders have incorporated all staff in the development of evidence-based goals.

A challenge for the school, acknowledged by the leadership team is the breadth of the improvement agenda, enacting the 2015 and 2019 ESR directions, and a focused site improvement plan around literacy and numeracy. To ensure staff focus and alignment of practice there is a need for leadership to connect the current goals of improvement with the ESR directions and ensure coherence in terms of the school's improvement agenda.

**Direction 1** Connect and rationalise the school priorities and actions so that there is clear alignment and support for the current School Improvement Plan (SIP).

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

### *How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?*

Classroom observations and conversations with teachers and students confirmed that a range of pedagogical practices supporting students in their learning were being employed in the classroom. Staff commented that a number of these practices had been developed from sharing of practice and past professional learning activities. A number of classes observed illustrated the use of learning intentions and success criteria in which teachers attempted to make the 'what' and 'why' of learning clearer to students. One teacher described how she collaboratively developed these intentions and criteria with students in her class so that they had greater ownership of their learning. A small number of teachers demonstrated questioning techniques to elicit student responses to check student understanding of the concepts being taught. Examples of feedback to students about their learning progress were provided through marked assignments, assessment rubrics and using assistive technologies such as Google Classroom.

Teachers are provided with a number of data sets including NAPLAN, PAT-R and PAT-M to support planning processes to better meet the needs of students. In questions from the panel about their planning, teachers referred to these data sets in the differentiation of learning for particular groups, with a small number of teachers referring to learning progressions. Further questioning of teachers showed that while they were able to articulate practices they had difficulty in identifying the effectiveness of these practices in improving their students' learning. The use of data or feedback to inform teachers of the effectiveness of the strategies they were using was not a common practice. There was little evidence provided to the panel of specific pedagogical practices to engage and challenge high band students or common agreements on what are effective pedagogical practices.

**Direction 2** Develop agreements on evidence-based pedagogical practices that result in greater student engagement and achievement, particularly for students identified in the high bands.

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

Through conversations with teachers and students the panel was made aware of the strong and active organisational leadership capacity of the student representative council (SRC). Student leaders confidently described their organisation and support for running sporting and fundraising activities with the student body. The SRC also provided student representation on Governing Council committees and external school groups. Governing Council members and staff commented that this gave students an authentic voice in shaping the learning environment. SRC leaders positively described their leadership role in the school's transition program, acting as mentors supporting year 7 students' transition to high school.

Conversations with teachers and students about learning highlighted the strength in the senior school of close relationships between students and their subject teacher. They pointed to the importance in this partnership of one-to-one conversations about learning progress, feedback and support. While teachers

in the middle years provided learning intentions and success criteria in lessons the in-depth conversations and support for learning at an individual level was less evident.

When questioned about the extent to which teachers ensure that they have an authentic influence on learning, students commented that a small number of teachers asked for feedback on how they could better meet their learning needs. They believed this occurred more in the senior years where it was seen as valuable but thought it should be developed further to include all classes. Staff responses in the staff meeting to the value of student influence in learning strongly supported student feedback as one strategy to guide and improve teacher practice. They also believed that this could strengthen students' ownership and responsibility for their learning.

Given the enthusiasm shown by students and teachers for student feedback that could influence teacher practice, there is an opportunity to enact improvement processes that identify effective strategies for students working in partnership with teachers influencing their learning and providing teachers with feedback for improvement of practice. This would require the building of teacher and student capacity and the development of processes to successfully ensure sustainable practice.

**Direction 3** Develop the capacity and opportunity for students to have greater authentic agency in influencing their learning and providing teachers with feedback to improve teaching practice.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Penola High School self-review processes are developing to regularly and strategically determine the impact school strategies and practices are having on student achievement. Processes are being refined to enable student achievement data and other evidence (eg multiple measures) 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:

- Direction 1**      **Connect and rationalise the school priorities and actions so that there is clear alignment and support for the current School Improvement Plan (SIP).**
- Direction 2**      **Develop agreements on evidence-based pedagogical practices that result in greater student engagement and achievement, particularly for students identified in the high bands.**
- Direction 3**      **Develop the capacity and opportunity for students to have greater authentic agency in influencing their learning and providing teachers with feedback to improve teaching practice.**

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

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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 55% 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, 15% 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, 60%, or 3 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 100%, or 2 of 2 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

### Numeracy

In 2018 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 60% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2018, 5% 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, 50% or 1 of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 33% or 1 of 3 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 70% of students enrolled in February and 89% 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.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2018, 92% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 94% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 88% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-eight percent of grades achieved in the 2018 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 27% of grades were at an 'A' level, and 52% at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' grade and 'B' grade respectively.



Thirteen percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 8 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2018.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 64%, or 7 out of 11 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.

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