

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Unley High School

Conducted in March 2017



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Schneyder, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Lyndall Bain and Warren Symonds, Review Principals.

School context

Unley High School caters for students in Years 8 to 12. It is situated 6kms south of the Adelaide CBD. In 2016, its enrolments were 1229, and in 2017, 1277, with increasing enrolments since 2013. The school has an ICSEA score of 1070 and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes <1% Aboriginal students, 5% students with disabilities, 11% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1 young person in care, and 18% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 3rd year of her first tenure. There is a Deputy Principal who has been newly appointed, and three Assistant Principals, for Middle School, Learning Technologies and Student Involvement, Wellbeing and Daily Operations. There are 8 Coordinators, with 5 in their first or second year of the role, 2 Counsellors, and 5 Year Level managers. There are 89 staff, of whom 2 are early career teachers. There are 31 School Services Officers (SSOs) and 2 Government Services Employees (GSEs).

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?
How well is data used to improve teaching and learning?

Effective Leadership: How well does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?

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

Unley High School has committed and professional teachers who willingly give up much of their personal time to support students. Students and parents are appreciative of the positive relationships that exist between the teachers and students. Feedback to students about their performance is readily available using Google Classroom, during 1-1 interviews or written on rubrics. Submission of drafts is encouraged.

There is a historical, collegiate and inclusive culture at the school that was talked about in many interviews. A group of students have led the development and ongoing management and promotion of the 'Gay Straight Alliance', which is regarded throughout our DECD system as a model of good practice. Teachers talked about their enjoyment of the new large teachers' offices, which are enabling teachers within curriculum areas to share resources, teaching strategies, and the preparation of curriculum documentation. The quality and quantity of documentation, Learning Assessment Plans, resources, and assessment tasks provided by many curriculum areas, was impressive.

Students talked about the range of pedagogies used by many of their teachers to engage them in their lessons. They believed almost 60% of teachers are using different ICT tools, encouraging the use of the internet, sharing classes, 'flipping' their lessons, and are using a range of applications available on students' iPads (Middle School) and devices (BYOD in the senior school). The school has invested in infrastructure and equipment to support this shift to a more contemporary learning environment.

However, students also talked about other teachers who are struggling to adapt their teaching style for a new student demographic. The school has traditionally catered almost exclusively for students aspiring to attain an ATAR. The latest Student Wellbeing data, and recent experiences, have indicated a shift in the

demographic to an increase in the level of complexity of students at the school.

The Review Panel also interviewed a number of highly aspiring students across all year levels in order to determine how well the school catered for their needs, and asked how they were being stretched and challenged. Some recent work on task design in the SACE has resulted in more explicit rubrics, which these students enjoy and which their teachers could clearly explain. Junior school students in streamed maths and English classes in Year 9 stated that they were expected to 'work faster'.

Science teachers have rewritten much of their curriculum to reflect a 'Project-based learning' or inquiry approach, so as to better engage and challenge students. This innovative pedagogy is proving to be highly effective as A-E grades for all students have already indicated some growth in achievement. This approach is very gradually being adopted by some junior school maths, English and HASS teachers. Teaching practices in the senior school continue to be generally teacher-directed, with a noticeable reliance on the use of textbooks. A traditional range of subjects is available, in addition to Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, including Certificate courses in plumbing and fitness, which are available on-campus for Year 11 and 12 students.

The students could clearly articulate characteristics of good teachers and were happy with most of their teachers. When asked about opportunities they had to provide feedback, they were clear that, while a few teachers sought feedback, usually through a survey at the end of a semester, they did not believe they could have an impact on the quality of teaching they received. While the school does have a formal Student Voice Council, there was limited evidence of any opportunities for students to have a voice in their learning, their curriculum or their assessment. The exception is in junior school science, where choice of activities and assessment tasks is common practice.

Staff conceded that the pastoral care program is largely ineffective and has not yet included the goal-setting programs, community-based, entrepreneurial or leadership programs that encourage relationships that foster the honest giving and receiving of feedback.

Direction 1

Provide a range of opportunities for students to give regular feedback to their teachers, resulting in improved pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all students.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

How well is data used to improve teaching and learning?

Teachers have worked very hard in their curriculum teams to implement all phases of the Australian Curriculum (AC) and are using A-E grades with varying levels of authenticity. While they expressed some frustration at the limited time given to them in after-school meetings to work on their curriculum, they are appreciating the moderation occurring between schools in the ECD Partnership. Formal internal moderation processes are yet to be introduced in all curriculum areas.

Most curriculum areas have documented their Learning Assessment Plans, resources and rubrics on Google Classroom. Parents and students are hoping to access information at home through the Parent Portal. EDUMATE is the Learner Management System used by the school, but its full capacity to store relevant documentation, provide easy access to student data, and enable the Parent Portal, is yet to be fully rolled out across the school. It will shortly be used to notify parents of student absences.

Access by teachers to the datasets that will inform their teaching and help them target their support for students is seen to be difficult and time-consuming. Many teachers appeared to have a limited understanding of how the data could improve the quality of their teaching, despite having been shown the data at numerous staff meetings. There is a formal Personal Development Planning program in the school, but analysis of personal student achievement data is not included in these conversations at this stage.

There are a number of strategies in place to support those students identified as below the SEA benchmark, including withdrawal in the Middle School for focused sessions, streaming in maths classes in Year 9, provision of maths pathways classes, and two levels of support for Stage 1 numeracy students to complete their compulsory SACE unit.

Flexibilities within the SACE are currently being considered to meet the needs of students who are not seeking an ATAR; these include Community Studies B, Workplace Practices and Integrated Studies.

Unley High School has the same timetable as the other 3 secondary schools in the ECD Partnership, to enable the sharing of senior school curriculum. More effective sharing of classes, team planning, inquiry-based and integrated learning could be explored in the Middle School.

Direction 2

Develop a whole-school commitment to the use of strategies, structures and data to facilitate growth in student learning.

How well does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?

Unley High School has a strong tradition of academic achievement. It is culturally and socially inclusive, and has a Human Resource profile with an effective mix of experienced teachers and Teach SA graduates. There are traditionally few disruptive students and “it is an authentic school, honest, and a great place to teach and learn”. The relationships between staff and students at the school’s annual Graduation Ceremony attest to the positive culture that is fully embedded in the school. Most teachers are passionate about their students and about their profession. They look forward to increasing opportunities for themselves and their students to grow.

However, the data indicates that, while students are mostly achieving, there has been limited consistent growth in student achievement across the school for several years.

A Performance Development Planning process is in place, with the DECD proforma expected to be used by all staff. While peer observations are part of this process, students were not aware of this happening in their lessons. Teachers, however, did appreciate the visits from the Principal and the feedback they received. Students also talked about knowing the Principal.

The need for increased opportunities for curriculum discussions and planning was expressed by many teachers in interviews. Teachers willingly attend meetings and particularly enjoy the Professional Learning Team conversations. Many are keen to work on a cohesive Year 8 to 12 curriculum plan for their areas.

While collegiality within faculties is clearly evident, that same cohesion is not as evident across different curriculum areas. Few teachers talked about curriculum integration, sharing classes or the sharing of equipment. There was little evidence of any progress in implementing STEM at Unley High School. It was also evident that many curriculum leaders are very effective managers of subjects, but are struggling to be effective leaders of learning or teams of learners.

The leadership structure is a traditional one. Over the last 10 years roles have been added to accommodate change in direction and pedagogy, for example, an additional AP Learning Technologies, an additional Coordinator VET and Career Development, expansion of Coordinator roles to each take on a whole-school focus (for example, Library, Literacy, Numeracy etc.), as well as a Learning Area responsibility. A lead teacher in Personalised Learning has also been appointed.

A concern of a number of students, teachers, and leaders during the review was the current Learning Management System, which is yet to fully meet their needs for easy access to data and consistent curriculum collaboration. Parents are also looking forward to consistent access to relevant curriculum and attendance information.

Teachers indicated in many interviews their desire for renewal, and are looking for clear directions from the executive Leadership Team, that will drive growth and a contemporary approach to teaching and learning. While there is a small number of teachers resisting any changes, there are many who are enthusiastic about new opportunities available through the use of ICT, sharing of classes, project-based and integrated learning, flipped learning, VET, SACE flexibilities, moderation and ongoing interaction with colleagues in neighbouring schools in the Partnership. They are seeking cohesive leadership where priorities are determined through consensus, targets identified and progress transparently monitored and regularly reviewed.

Directions 3

Align leadership roles, school structures and school processes, with targets, in a contemporary, long-term strategic plan.

Direction 4

Ensure the school has an effective Learner Management System that meets the needs of the whole community, and identify and implement an action plan for the use of ICT in future school programs and processes.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Unley High School.

There is a very evident culture of collaboration and respect between students, between teachers and also between teachers and students. Students, teachers and parents are positive about their school and the opportunities provided for students to be successful.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Many Unley High School students are high achievers and teachers are committed, professional and generally effective in actively engaging and challenging their students.

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

1. Provide a range of opportunities for students to give regular feedback to their teachers, resulting in improved pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all students.
2. Develop a whole-school commitment to the use of strategies, structures and data to facilitate growth in student learning.
3. Align leadership roles, school structures and school processes, with targets, in a contemporary, long-term strategic plan.
4. Ensure the school has an effective Learner Management System that meets the needs of the whole community, and identify and implement an action plan for the use of ICT in future school programs and processes.

Based on the school's current performance, Unley High School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Brenda Harris
PRINCIPAL
UNLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.

The Principal of Unley High School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- STAR – not all tasks are completed by deadlines. Clearer delineation of roles of leaders is needed when personnel change.
- Staff Performance Plans – will use the DECD proforma in 2017.
- Records Management – the school is working with the Recall company to assess files and plan for off-site storage.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be working towards being compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 91.5%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 78% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for has been slightly upwards from 72% to 78%.

In 2015 and 2016, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 9 NAPLAN Reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across the DECD system.

In 2016 NAPLAN Reading, 19% of students achieved in the top two bands. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend has been downwards, from 27% in 2014 to 19% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 45%, or 22 of 49 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016, and 58%, or 28 of 42 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 81% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 9 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across the DECD system.

In 2016 NAPLAN Numeracy, 16% of students achieved in the top two bands. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend has been downwards from 24% in 2014 to 16% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 37%, or 15 of 41 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016, and 52%, or 22 of 42 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2016.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2016, 81.4% of students in February and 97% in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Ninety-five percent of grades achieved in the 2016 SACE were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In terms of the number of grades for attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2016, 26% of students achieved an 'A' Grade, and 46% achieved a 'B' Grade. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for both the 'A' Grade and 'B' Grade.

In terms of successful completion of compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2016, 94% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 96% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Literacy units, 84% successfully completed their Stage 1 Numeracy unit, and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

In terms of tertiary entrance, 206 out of 209 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 10 students who were successful in achieving a merit.