

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Underdale High School

Conducted in August 2020



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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Joanne Costa, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs) and Youth Worker
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Underdale High School caters for year 8 to 12 students. It is situated 6kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 546. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 515. The local partnership is West Torrens.

The school has an ICSEA score of 991, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3% Aboriginal students, 24% students with disabilities, 47% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 1% children/young people in care and 31% of students eligible for School Card assistance. The school has 31% of students born overseas and 8% have a refugee status.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 5th year of tenure, a B4 deputy principal, two B2 senior leaders, twelve B1 leaders and a student wellbeing leader.

There are 48 teachers including 3 in the early years of their career and 15 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Explore and enact pedagogies that engage and stretch all students and incorporate student influence in their learning.
- Direction 2** Build leadership capacity in the school to lead pedagogical improvement and effectively monitor teacher performance.
- Direction 3** Collaboratively develop a vision and strategic plan that informs current and future leadership structures and resource allocation.
- Direction 4** Strengthen the engagement of leaders and teachers in the generation and use of data to inform their practice and improve student performance.

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

Pedagogical practice that is designed to maximise students' cognition, and influence in learning, was evident within the school. In some learning areas or year levels, students are provided with rubrics and criteria that allow them to understand the purpose of their learning, and monitor and adjust their progress towards known goals.

The gradual release model, where students are scaffolded toward independent application of skills or knowledge, was discussed by some teachers as their preferred approach. Many students and teachers reported that the provision of strategic feedback on draft papers was common practice. Students discussed the positive impact this had on their understanding and eventual grade. Formative assessment has been a focus of professional learning and was also commonly discussed by teachers. The variety of approaches to this concept include pre- and post-tests, surveys, exit cards and in-the-moment verbal

feedback. Some teachers reported this input from students allowed them to reflect on their practice and make adjustments to lesson structure, questioning techniques or the provision of feedback.

Band 2 leaders conducted observations to monitor teachers' practice. Teachers explained that some leaders organised pre-observation meetings to discuss areas of focus and provided feedback at post-observation meetings (video footage of this practice was provided to the panel).

An opportunity remains to further establish pedagogical coherence across faculties and year levels. The panel encourages leaders to consider a more deliberate and intentional process that allows teacher leaders to demonstrate effective practice to colleagues, and provides opportunities for teachers to trial and further implement contemporary pedagogical practice. The school's existing practice of classroom observations will complement this intent.

Previous ESR Directions 3 and 4, strategic planning and data-informed practice, are discussed further against the lines of inquiry.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

School's priorities of reading and numeracy are broadly understood by the teaching staff. Most teachers understand the importance of literacy within their faculty and report that they have referenced the Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence, and Link (TEEL) approach when designing written assignments or outlining expectations to students. This concept was commonly discussed by students and teachers.

Teachers' and leaders' understanding of expected approaches to reading or numeracy teaching was less certain and quite varied. A range of approaches, programs and concepts that staff perceived as expected practice in reading were reported. Within the site improvement plan's (SIP) challenges of practice, the intent to develop a 'consistent approach' to reading and numeracy is documented. The SIP actions indicate that curriculum committee leaders are expected to develop agreed approaches within their faculty, referencing the literacy and numeracy guidebooks. This more autonomous approach to developing improvement planning actions and strategies resulted in uncertainty about expected practice and hence compromised consistent implementation.

There is a need to review and redefine the school's challenge of practice and subsequent actions. Specificity on exactly how and what the school will employ to develop students' reading and numeracy capabilities will ensure greater clarity and enable coherent implementation. A collective approach to review, that includes teaching and ancillary staff and governing council, will see greater understanding of the school's direction and strengthen ownership and take-up. The school is encouraged to refer to the improvement planning handbook, the literacy and numeracy guides, and work in partnership with the local education team in progressing this work.

A review of existing forums convened to promote teachers' professional learning will further support coherent implementation of expected practice. The current model sees teachers elect to participate in inquiry groups in some terms and faculty groups in others. Designing dedicated, ongoing forums that focus solely on expected improvement actions will support widespread implementation.

Direction 1 **Maximise students' literacy and numeracy capabilities by collectively reviewing existing improvement plans to clearly identify expected practice, and developing professional learning systems dedicated to these agreements.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Data collection, organisation and collation is a strong practice within the school. Each student has achievement, attendance and wellbeing data harvested and plotted. Teachers report that data is used to compare grades across faculties, identify and discuss anomalies and determine students' growth. 'Traffic light' data identifies students potentially at risk of not achieving a passing grade, and literacy assessments are used to determine which students require intervention and support. Indication that data is used to build on the strengths of high-performing students was not as apparent.

Using data to analyse, identify and address students' miscues or strengths was not commonly reported. Many teachers referred to PAT, NAPLAN and grade data and how these determine a student's level of achievement and progress, yet not how they use the data to strategically plan. Building teachers' capacity to effectively use data diagnostically and interpret the information accurately to inform their practice is an important next step in meeting students' needs. Leaders, alongside external personnel, are advised to develop systems that allow teachers to access, analyse and understand the implication of data, and its place in planning.

Teachers discussed the broad range of students' learning needs within the school. The diverse student community is supported through intervention for students with learning disabilities, English as an Additional Language or Dialect and Aboriginal learners. Within classes, teachers commonly report that they will modify approaches to scaffold students who are experiencing learning difficulties. Modifications include simplifying language, implementing flexible timelines or options to present work in different modes. There is intent to support the varied needs of learners, identifying an opportunity to bring about greater coherence and intentionality in doing so.

What determines differentiated practice is not obvious; subsequently, implementation and impact varies. To better meet the needs of all learners, the collective development of a definition of differentiation, and how it translates to practice, is an important next step. Referring this inquiry to evidence-based and proven practice will be key in successful application.

Direction 2 Identify and address the learning needs of each student by building teachers' capacity to understand what data is indicating and how to respond to this when planning teaching and learning.

Direction 3 Raise the potential for all students to achieve by collectively developing an agreed, evidence-based approach to differentiation and identifying how this will be enacted in practice and planning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

At Underdale High School, the commitment and dedication of teachers and leaders is appreciated by parents and students alike. Relationships between staff and students are a highlight, and the targeted, effective processes of communication are welcomed by parents. The inclusive culture of the school is celebrated and valued by all. Conditions for learning are optimal.

Some work has been undertaken to bring about greater consistency and intentionality of pedagogy and data-informed planning. The findings of the external school review identify opportunities for the school to refine and specify its work in this area, and to dedicate systems that build teachers' capacity to respond to expectations. An opportunity to implement the following directions alongside local education team personnel is one that will complement the school's work in moving forward.

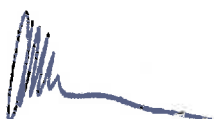
The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1** Maximise students' literacy and numeracy capabilities by collectively reviewing existing improvement plans to clearly identify expected practice, and developing professional learning systems dedicated to these agreements.
- Direction 2** Identify and address the learning needs of each student by building teachers' capacity to understand what data is indicating and how to respond to this when planning teaching and learning.
- Direction 3** Raise the potential for all students to achieve by collectively developing an agreed, evidence-based approach to differentiation and identifying how this will be enacted in practice and planning.


Based on the school's current performance, Underdale High School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 10% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 9, 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 reading, 29%, or 5 of 17 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 9% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2019, 70% of students enrolled in February and 99% 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 2019, 85% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 90% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 66% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 98% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2019, 97% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 8% of grades were at an 'A' level and 46% of grades were at an 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for the 'B' grades and decline for 'A' grades.

Fifty-two percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 17 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2019.

In terms of 2019 tertiary entrance, 54%, or 40 out of 74 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. In 2019, the school had a moderation adjustment of:

-1 for one student in Stage 2 Drama

+1 for two students in Stage 2 Society and Culture, and

+1 for two students in Stage 2 Community Studies.

