

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Willunga High School

Conducted in February 2021



# 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 Cez Green and Caroline Fishpool, Review Principals.

## 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers.

## School context

Willunga High School caters for students in years 8 – 12 and is situated 47kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 1035. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 983. The local partnership is Sea and Vines.

The school has an ICSEA score of 976, and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, 2% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 1.5% children/young people in care and 38% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of

- Principal in their 5th year of tenure
- Deputy Principal – curriculum and school improvement
- Business Leader
- 4 x Assistant Principals (middle school, senior school & SACE improvement, quality teaching / Year 7s, timetable / data systems / innovation in ICT)
- Band B2 - Senior Leader Inclusion
- 12 band 1 coordinators (Maths/Science, English/HASS/Languages, HPE, Design and Technology, Arts, year level coordinators x 4, student wellbeing leaders x 2, VET/SACE)

There are 42 teachers including 3 in the early years of their careers and 19 Step 9 teachers.

### The previous OTE directions were:

**Key Action 1:** Fully implement the teaching and learning Charter through a continued, consistent emphasis on agreed pedagogy and ensure regular staff forums focus intently on expected practice.

**Key Action 2:** Maximise staff's potential to enact agreed pedagogy by ensuring performance and development goals identify improvement in teaching practice and that strategies to achieve this are documented and actioned.

**Key Action 3:** Ensure students' learning needs are identified and addressed through a continued and concentrated process that enables teachers to understand and use data effectively to inform their planning.

**Key Action 4:** Progress coherent implementation of the school's improvement plan by ensuring each area of learning is planned, structured and conducted consistently.

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

To implement the school's Teaching and Learning Charter, professional learning has focused on differentiated teaching practice and the effective provision of success criteria and learning intentions. Many students discussed teachers using criteria to describe the characteristics of grades. Students in the Flexible Learning Option reported positively about the highly personalised approach that teachers provide them. Effective pedagogy and performance and development will be further discussed against lines of inquiry 2 and 3 in this report.

The profile of data is more apparent in 2021. Many teachers refer to data to determine students' standards and the next teaching point. Teachers in both middle and senior years' classes offer students options to engage with 'developing, emerging or advanced' assignments, dependant on their level of progress. In performance and development meetings in 2021, teachers will discuss students' achievement data and implications for teaching. The concept of data to inform practice is more evident when compared to previous years. However, there remains a need to continue to grow the capacity of teachers and leaders to respond analytically and intentionally to data to effectively meet students' varied needs.

Line of inquiry 3 of this report evaluates the school's response to key action 4.

## 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?

Actions within the site improvement plan (SIP) have been adopted across most Areas of Learning (AOL). In these AOL, most teachers can articulate the place of comprehension and vocabulary within their faculty's work.

AOL action plans have positively influenced implementation. The school has designed consistent planning documents modelled on the priority improvement plan developed in 2017. Priorities, actions, timelines and criteria for achievement are included on the document. In one AOL, teachers have discussed, trialled and evaluated teaching strategies aligned with the plan.

In most AOL, evaluation of impact of the strategies on student achievement is yet to be conducted. Executive leaders reported that they have begun to spend time in class to identify if teachers are employing expected strategies. They will then complete a checklist to confirm implementation. The panel acknowledges the place of accountability and the need for consistent implementation. To take this concept to a deeper level, it will be beneficial to evaluate the impact the teaching strategies are having on student learning. Full understanding of the degree to which teaching is making a difference for students will allow teachers and leaders to make ongoing adjustments and improvements to practice.

Students reported that teachers will 'check-in' with them throughout the lesson to see how they are progressing, offering support as they go. This 'in-the moment' monitoring goes some way to addressing learners' needs, whilst not necessarily informing changes to teaching strategies.

To effectively monitor student growth and the impact of teaching, data needs to be sourced regularly. Within the SIP, each challenge of practice is referenced against success criteria that describe what the student will say, make, do or understand, if the teaching has the desired impact. The panel sees an opportunity to refer to success criteria to systematically evaluate the impact of teaching practice. This will ensure that teaching meets the needs of all learners.

**Direction 1      Ensure teaching strategies are meeting learners' needs through ongoing monitoring of students' progress and making adjustments to practice as required.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school's Teaching and Learning Charter has had an impact on teaching practice across some year levels and areas of learning. Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP) has been the focus for ongoing professional learning. Some teachers design learning to connect with all students' needs and abilities. Opportunities for students to choose 'emerging, developing or advanced' assignments are apparent in the middle years. In the senior years some teachers employ 'must, could and should' to better meet learners' varied needs.

The school speech pathologist has worked with staff to develop task design to maximise student access to the learning. Assessments have been developed to include vocabulary that allows students to better understand expectation and to demonstrate their learning.

Teaching strategies to develop students' thinking and independence are apparent. Students explain that teachers will review draft work and rather than providing corrections, will advise where improvements are required. The students then amend their errors. Students understand the value this adds to their learning and the potential to apply it in other contexts.

The provision of success criteria is widely practiced. Some students use these scaffolds to monitor and adjust their progress. Some success criteria provided describe the characteristics of successful learning outcomes, aligned with the Australian Curriculum, whilst others are about the product the students will develop. Greater clarity regarding the development of informative success criteria will be of benefit.

Students explain that many teachers provide them with a clear understanding of what they need to demonstrate to achieve a particular grade. Some students use this to set goals and increase their achievement.

There is a more intentional approach to teaching in 2021. The Teaching and Learning Charter has influenced improved practice for some teachers, but not all yet. A tendency to set tasks aimed to the 'average' is still quite evident and students report some learning lacks purpose. Some teachers remain resistant to changing their practice. To consistently embed strategies within the Teaching and Learning Charter a continued, intentional and sustained undertaking will need to be implemented and distractions from such work avoided.

**Direction 2      Meet all students' learning needs through an ongoing, intentional approach to develop each teacher's capability to implement expected teaching strategies.**

## Effective leadership

How effectively does the school leadership ensure a clear focus on improving teaching and learning?

During 'O' days in 2021, leaders introduced the concept of Consistent Predictable Routines (CPR) to structure lessons and identify organisational expectations across the school. Most teachers are enthusiastic about this approach and the consistency it provides. Teachers commented positively on the leadership of this initiative.

In 2017 a Performance and Development Process (PDP) policy was developed. A few teachers and leaders agree this has positively influenced PDP systems. Some teachers report that the process has inspired them and brought about greater improvement in their practice. However, many teachers reported that PDP is diversely conducted and that effective PDP relies on the perceptions and capacity of the line manager. Some teachers report that they have had no access to PDP over a number of years. Some leaders explain that they are unsure how to lead PDP systems.

Area of Learning (AOL) meetings also operate with varying impact, some intentionally designed to build teachers' capacity to implement the SIP and Teaching and Learning Charter actions, others are more administrative. In 2020 Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP) meetings were initiated. The opportunity to bring about alignment between the concepts progressed in QDTP and AOL meetings is evident. Ensuring both forums progress teachers' capacity to deliver expected practice will provide the ongoing, sustained focus described in direction 1 of this report.

Executive leaders explain that they have invested time and resources to support AOL and band 1 leaders to fulfill their role. This includes organisational aspects and how to respond in challenging situations. Moving leaders' from a culture of 'management' to leading learning is now necessary. Ensuring leaders' PDP focuses on how to model effective practice and coach teachers will be essential. Supporting leaders to conduct classroom observations that go beyond checking compliance and move to evaluating impact and providing ongoing, formative feedback, will also contribute to ensuring effective leadership.

Utilising leadership team meetings to establish a consistent approach to leading AOL forums will further ensure the school's priorities are coherently implemented and effectively monitored.

**Direction 3      Work with leaders to develop their ability to effectively lead and coach others and to conduct systems and forums focused on the school's teaching and learning priorities.**

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

At Willunga High School, a recently introduced program - Consistent Predictable Routines (CPR) has been received very positively by teachers and strategically initiated. The potential this approach has to bring about greater certainty for teachers and students regarding organisation and expectations is significant. Teachers' readiness to access and interact with data is more common in 2021 while differentiated practice responsive to data is implemented by some teachers.

The school's site improvement priorities have been widely adopted and concepts of vocabulary, subject-specific language and comprehension are evident in most areas of learning.

The following directions will strengthen the school's existing practice, if a sustained, unrelenting approach is undertaken.

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

- Direction 1**    **Ensure teaching strategies are meeting learners' needs through ongoing monitoring of students' progress and making adjustments to practice as required.**
- Direction 2**    **Meet all students' learning needs through an ongoing, intentional approach to develop each teacher's capability to implement expected teaching strategies.**
- Direction 3**    **Work with leaders to develop their ability to effectively lead and coach others and to conduct systems and forums focused on the school's teaching and learning priorities.**

Based on the school's current performance, Willunga High School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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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 53% 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 lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved lower in year 9 NAPLAN reading, relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 7% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading 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 reading, 28%, or 12 of 43 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been upwards, from 50% to 56%.

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

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved lower in year 9 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 4% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy 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 numeracy, 32%, or 8 of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 93% of students 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 2020; 98.7% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 91.3% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 83.4% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 98.7% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 98.7% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 17% of grades were at an 'A' level and 41.5% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for

both the 'C-' level or higher grade, and for the 'A' level and 'B' level grades, from the historic baseline averages.

Sixteen percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 52 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance, 60%, or 77 of 128 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 3 students who were successful in achieving a merit.