Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Bordertown High School

Conducted in November 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 (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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Joe Priolo, 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with: Governing Council representatives
  Leaders
  Parent groups
  School Services Officers (SSOs)
  Student groups
  Teachers

School context

Bordertown High School caters for children from year 8 to year 12. It is situated in the south east of South Australia, 274km from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 218. There are 228 students in 2019.

The school has an ICSEA score of 970, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 5% students with disabilities, 21% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2 young people in care and 19% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in 2nd year of their tenure at the school. The school has a senior leader and 5 coordinators. There are 16 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 5 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   Increase the opportunities for all students to reach higher standards of achievement by providing targeted professional development for all teachers on data analysis and how data should inform their teaching practice.

Direction 2   Improve student engagement and attendance by including, in staff meetings, the sharing of teaching practices that promote innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial skills in all students**.**

Direction 3   Support the achievement of priorities in the Site Improvement Plan by implementing processes and allocating resources that build the capacity of leaders to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of teachers and the achievement of goals in their Performance Development Plans.

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
The panel was made aware from a variety of sources that the previous directions were embraced and have made a positive impact on school improvement. The capacity of staff to access and analyse student achievement data has been strengthened through targeted professional learning on what data tells us about learning growth and areas of weakness, so that teachers can plan appropriate learning to meet the needs of students. Leaders provided examples of where data is being used to inform strategic planning, construct classes and track and monitor student progress. Teachers commented that regular interrogation of SACE, A to E, traffic light and transition data informs planning and intervention.   Evidence provided by leaders of meeting schedules showed a variety of opportunities are provided for staff to share their practice with others in staff and faculty meetings. To support the development and implementation of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities there has been a greater alignment of Performance Development Plans (PDP) and professional learning to the priorities. Teachers commented that they reference best practice papers and guidebooks to support them in enacting the priorities of

improvement. Sharing of practice has been formalised in a 'show and tell' and 'pop up' professional development sessions in both staff and faculty meetings.

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?

Evidence supplied to the panel through the leadership presentation and interviews with staff confirmed a collaborative, evidence-based process had been conducted with staff to develop the priorities for improvement and refine the challenges of practice as detailed in the SIP. As a result, staff comments indicate that they have ownership of the goals for improvement in writing, mathematics and SACE higher bands and a willingness to engage in the ongoing improvement cycle.

Leaders and teachers described how they have access to a range of student achievement data at an individual, class, cohort, subject and whole-school level to guide their planning, and the monitoring of student progress. Some teachers explained that they have used data and feedback from students in the form of student surveys and exit cards to gain feedback allowing them to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice. Others commented that this occurs more informally through discussions with their peers in office areas or faculty meetings. Leaders described allocated staff meetings as a 'formal time' in which the progress of the SIP priorities were reviewed using student achievement data and opportunities were provided to staff to share and reflect on their practice.

Evidence was supplied of well-defined PDP processes in which teachers aligned at least one of their goals for improvement with the school improvement priorities. It was clear in conversations with teachers, and the examples provided of PDP documents, that conversations had taken place around the priorities for improvement but it was not clear how teachers were recognising their impact or monitoring their improvement towards the challenges of practice.

It was evident that the priorities for improvement and the challenges of practice are understood and owned by staff. However, there was a lack of clarity and consistency among staff of the structures and processes which has enabled them to review the impact of their changes in practice.

Direction 1   **Support teacher's and leader's reflective practices in monitoring their impact by further developing and aligning professional learning and evidence-based performance development structures and processes that enable the successful achievement of the challenges of practice.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING & STUDENT LEARNING

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

Teacher's and leader's commented that the use of data by leadership to inform strategic planning and teachers to plan for learning was more prominent since the last review. Teachers described having access to student achievement data and how they used it to support the identification of students with learning needs, guide their planning and track and monitor student learning progress. They highlighted that additional classroom support using SSOs for students with identified needs was provided and allocated by the learning support coordinator referencing this data.

A number of teachers acknowledged that providing challenge to some classes was difficult when there was a high percentage of students with a broad range of learning needs. Leaders described how they used student achievement and transition data to construct classes based on ability to address some of these concerns. Identified staff were also trained to support EALD students in classes so that these students can successfully access mainstream classes. These strategies were positively viewed by teachers, students and parents.

Teachers described to the panel a variety of techniques that they use to differentiate the learning for students in the classroom. These strategies could be characterised more as student choice in the way in which they present or how they work in the classroom. They commented that the current professional development on student free days in Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) was supporting them in developing strategies to better differentiate learning and assessment design to meet the needs of students. Moderation of assessment work to gain greater consistency in teacher judgement, share and develop assessment and task design was valued by teacher's, who would also like to moderate across like schools.

Classroom observations indicated a variety of effective teaching strategies being employed to meet the needs of students. However, there was little evidence of agreements on what is highly effective differentiated practice that would guide teachers in planning learning and assessment. Students commented that the differentiation of learning was teacher dependent and only a small number of teachers in the junior school engaged with them to construct the learning and who sought feedback on their teaching. Further questioning in staff interviews confirmed that there was no agreed practice in this area across the school. Students commented that they received feedback about their progress in learning through teacher comments in draft work, verbal comments from teachers during lessons, interim traffic light data and end of term reports. Teachers described how they were utilising formative assessment in classrooms as a result of professional learning to gauge and ensure student understanding.

There is a need to further develop agreements of what is effective differentiated practice in assessment and learning, incorporating the role of high quality feedback from assessment data and student feedback. This will inform both teachers and students about the effectiveness of their work and supports teachers in ongoing planning for success of all learners. These agreements would be further strengthened through focussed and evidence-based professional development processes.

Direction 2   **Ensure challenge and engagement for all learners by reaching agreement on what is highly effective differentiated practice in assessment and learning supported by appropriate performance development processes.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING & STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers using evidence based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners? (In particular, the stretch and challenge in learning of all students and other priority groups).

In conversations with teachers and leaders, and verified through classroom observations, it was evident that a range of pedagogical practices are being employed to engage and challenge students. These have been developed from ongoing professional development, the sharing of practice and supportive PDP processes. In the leaders' presentation, it was emphasised that teachers were expected to know the learning needs of their students to guide their planning. Teacher capacity to effectively plan learning and assessment has been strengthened through professional learning to effectively use student achievement data and improve learning and assessment design in the partnerships LDAM strategy.

The school has identified challenges in increasing the numbers of students starting high school with a range of learning needs and an increased number of students from an EALD background. The school has engaged in targeted professional development to build the capacity of specialist support teachers, realigned class structures and student groupings and started on the long term process of building teacher capacity to support EALD students and students with specific learning needs.

Observations in classes and conversations with teachers and students confirmed that teachers approach learning in a planned and positive way. Classes observed were focussed on learning and teachers were utilising a number of tools and techniques to engage learners. However, there was a lack of consistency in the observed approaches to teaching and learning, particularly in challenging higher band students. Some teachers were seen to provide feedback to students in a variety of effective ways both verbally and in written form. Formative assessment was a common feature in teacher conversations and was visible in classroom observations. While there was some evidence of effective differentiation of teaching and learning, there was limited evidence of this being consistent across the school. The panel did not observe agreements of best practice that would guide teachers in their approaches to teaching and learning. There is an opportunity to develop and document agreements on what highly effective evidence-based pedagogical practices will be utilised that support all learners, in particular higher band students.

Direction 3   **Ensure the needs of all learners, in particular higher band students, by reaching agreements of high impact, evidence-based pedagogical practices to guide teachers work.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Bordertown High School, the influence of previous directions is evident with the school effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to support this work. Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by effective systems that build capacity, and provide effective conditions for student learning.

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

Direction 1   Support teacher's and leader's reflective practices in monitoring their impact by further developing and aligning professional learning and evidence-based performance development structures and processes that enable the successful achievement of the challenges of practice.

Direction 2   Ensure challenge and engagement for all learners by reaching agreement on what is highly effective differentiated practice in assessment and learning supported by appropriate performance development processes.

Direction 3   Ensure the needs of all learners, in particular higher band students, by reaching agreements of high impact, evidence-based pedagogical practices to guide teachers work.

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

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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 74% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 9% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. 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, 17%, or 2 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 81% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 14% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. This result represents a 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, 33%, or 4 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 78% of students enrolled in February and 100% 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. Between 2016 and 2018, the trend has been upwards, from 90% to 100%.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2018, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 94% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 93% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 92% of grades achieved were at 'C-'level or higher, 7% of grades were at an 'A' level and 48% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents little or no change for the 'C-' or higher grade, and both a decline from the 'A' grade and 'B' grade respectively for historic baseline averages.

Nine percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 0 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2018.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 83%, or 18 out of 22 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.