

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR THE HEIGHTS P-12 SCHOOL

Conducted in April 2016



**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.

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Schneyder, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate, and Susan Hyde and Sue Mittiga, as Review Principals.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of The Heights P-12 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:

Part 1 Governance: Item 1.8

Site Bullying data is with the Governing Council:

- The school is in the process of recording bullying data onto DayMap and creating reports termly. The intention is that Reports will be presented at the Governing Council twice a year.

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 compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 91%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

The Heights P-12 School is situated 12kms northeast of the Adelaide CBD in the suburb of Modbury Heights, and belongs to the Golden Way ECD Partnership. The enrolment in 2015 was 1135, and in 2016, 1073. There has been growth in the Junior School over the past two years, with a waiting list now required. There has been a decline in Middle School, especially at Year 8, and Senior School enrolments, and the school has received no enrolments from its partnership into Year 8 in the past 2 years. The Autistic Intervention Program (AIP) enrolments are steady, and 60 mainstream students are diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

The school had an ICSEA score of 1020 in 2014 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3% Aboriginal students, 10% Students with Disabilities, 25% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 0.5% students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM) and 21% of families eligible for School Card assistance. Seventy percent of the current student cohort is male.

The Heights P-12 School has four specialist programs:

- It is one of three DECD sites that offers an Ignite Program for Year 8 to 10 students. This program enrolls approximately 50 students into Year 8 annually.
- It is one of two DECD sites to offer an Autistic Intervention Program. The program has a separate school number and currently has 4 classes for students in Years 4 to 10.
- It was nominated as a Defence School in 2014. It is developing programs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- It has had a specialist cricket program for many years, but this program is currently experiencing a significant decline.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his first year of a five-year tenure and a Deputy Principal (PC06) responsible for Timetabling, Curriculum and Data. There are six Band 3 positions who are responsible for Junior School P-5, Middle School 6-9 and Senior School 10-12, and leadership of the school's specialist programs, one Band 2 (STEM) and five Band 1s who lead curriculum areas. There is an intent to make all curriculum-related leadership positions P-12.

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 the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 76% of Year 1 students, and 72% of Year 2 students achieved the SEA. This is a trend upwards for Year 1, from 60% in 2013 to 76% in 2015. The Year 1 result is above the historic baseline average, although there is a decline at Year 2.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 68% of Year 3, 76% of Year 5, 75% of Year 7, and 69% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average at Year 3, and an improvement in Years 5 and 7. The school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across the DECD system at Year 3, but higher at Year 9.

In 2015 NAPLAN Reading, 32% of Year 3, 34% of Year 5, 32% of Year 7 and 22% of Year 9 students achieved in the top two bands. This result represents a decline in Year 3, from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 75% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, 60% of students remain in Year 7 and 52% of students remain in Year 9. Seventy-one percent of students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 65% of Year 3 students, 73% of Year 5 students, 75% of Year 7 students and 68% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average at Year 3, and an improvement at Years 7 and 9. The school is achieving similar to students across the DECD system in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

In 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy, 26% of students in Year 3, 27% of students in Year 5, 21% of Year 7 students and 19% of Year 9 students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 83% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, 60% remain at Year 7 and 50% remain at Year 9. Seventy-four percent of students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015. This result represents an improvement at Years 3 to 5, and an improvement of the historic baseline average at Year 5.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2015, 92% of students who had the potential to complete their SACE in October were successful. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for SACE completion has been upwards, from 78% to 92%. Fifty-seven percent of February enrolments were successful. This is an improvement from 49% in 2013 to 57% in 2015.

Eighty-five percent of 2015 SACE grades achieved at Stage 1 were C or higher, and 94% of grades achieved at Stage 2 were C- or higher. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been upwards, from 84% to 94% at Stage 2.

In Stage 1, a C grade or higher was achieved by 90% of students in English, 75% in arts and business and enterprise, 86% in Personal Learning Plan, and 78% in numeracy.

Stage 2 students achieved 90% or higher in all disciplines (including the Research Project where all students achieved a C- or better) except arts, with 100% achievement in business and enterprise.

Lines of Inquiry

During the 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 using the DECD pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teaching practice?
Effective Leadership:	How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

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

The Heights is a P-12 school that has operated as three separate sections in the past: Junior, Middle and Senior Schools. The current community is focused on the school providing a P-12 experience for all students that is both challenging and supportive. There is a focus on improvement in the delivery of curriculum and the achievement of its students and this is evident in the language used by all teachers, leaders and parents who were interviewed by the Review Panel. There is also a commitment to ensure transition points at Years 5/6 and 9/10, and Years 7 or 8 for the Ignite students, are easily negotiated by students.

It was evident that the school places importance on the wellbeing of each student in its community. All students, including those in Stage 1 and 2, have two Home Group Teachers and are required to participate in a pastoral care program on Monday mornings. Tracking of their progress is managed through DayMap, and comprehensive data about each student is readily available. Leaders of the Junior School, Middle School and Senior School are all Band 3 and are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of their program and the wellbeing, growth and achievement of their student cohort. The school has zero tolerance of bullying and this is well-understood.

Intervention processes and teams are in place to support the students identified as 'at risk' of not achieving. These are particularly effective in the Junior School and Senior School. The Middle School has recently completed their Action Plan to implement similar processes and teams. There is a robust Performance Planning process, aligned to student intervention, evident in the Junior School. This is to be replicated in the rest of the school in 2016.

Data is readily available and staff are trained in how to analyse and use it to inform improvement in teaching and learning. There was consistent evidence that the data was being used in the Junior School and Senior School, and a data wall and attendance data were on display in the staff room. There was evidence of the analysis of NAPLAN, PAT-M and PAT-R questions, and alignment of teaching to skills in areas identified as being of concern. Teachers and leaders had attended a range of Professional Development sessions in literacy and numeracy, including partnership programs with Dylan Wiliam, and on 'Growth Mindsets'.

A newly appointed Coordinator is currently reviewing the Ignite Program in order to improve outcomes for these potentially high-performing students. The program is an attractive option for many parents when considering secondary school enrolment and was highly commended by parents from the Governing Council, all of whom have, or have had, children in the program.

The Autistic Intervention Program (AIP) provides identified students with the opportunity to receive significant support in reaching their goals, over a two year period, before returning to their home school. Increasing numbers of these students want to remain at The Heights P-12 School. There were also increasing numbers of students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) wanting to enrol into the mainstream school. This was presenting a challenge to mainstream teachers, even with the comprehensive transition support provided by staff in the AIP.

A Defence/STEM Project is in its early phase of development and is mainly attracting boys. The intention is to involve students in highly challenging and innovative programs and projects, both within and outside the school. There is a drive to attract more girls, and develop a whole-school approach to the sharing of tools such as laser cutters and 3D printers, and programs such as robotics and coding.

There have been significant improvements in SACE achievement in the past two years, especially at Stage 2. There has been an increase in students using VET courses to achieve their SACE, and partnerships developed with Universities, TAFE and local businesses. Efficient and collaborative processes have meant fewer course changes, which is seen as a positive. There has been a reduction in FLO enrolment from 72 to 42 in 12 months, because of the availability of increased flexibility, early intervention and a focus on SACE completion. Teachers have been encouraged to focus on the 'Academic Mentoring', traffic lights and 'Smart Targets' strategies that were recommended by the DECD SACE Improvement Team. This team also supported some teachers within specific curriculum areas with task design and moderation practices.

There has been an increase in students with English as their second language in the Junior School where enrolment requests have exceeded capacity. The school has initiated an EALD program which students find helpful and enjoyable. Students and teachers also value the support provided in classes by the School Support Officers (SSOs).

Direction 1

The school will continue to build on numerous initiatives and strategies it is using to engage students and challenge them to aspire to excellence. For teachers, this includes ensuring learning intentions, differentiation, task design and pedagogy, are effectively incorporated into practice.

How effectively are teachers using the DECD pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teaching practice?

All staff have been involved in Professional Development around the TfEL framework and have been using Domain 3 to assess their work. The intention is to use Domain 4 in 2016. Some teachers were choosing to use their work with the TfEL framework as the focus of their Performance Plan. All staff are required to have a Performance Plan and these were sighted by the Review Panel.

However, most of the teaching observed in the Senior Centre or involving senior students, used traditional methodologies, with the exception of electronics and Design and Technology, where students had access to the 3D printers and laser cutters. Students appeared to be compliant rather than engaged in many of their lessons, particularly in maths.

The Review Panel found the students to be generally positive about their learning. This was particularly evident in the Year 6/7 classes, where the open-space learning environment supported flexibility in curriculum delivery. The students could articulate their tasks, explain their rubrics and participate in common assessment tasks in English and maths. Their English work was regularly moderated, maths included investigations and literacy lessons were linked to games. Open-ended tasks, persuasive writing, discussions about learning intentions and use of exit cards were common. Students were proud of their work. There were differences in the capacity of students, but differentiation was evident, often managed through group work. SSO support was also available. The teachers made reference to the 'Classroom Practice Continuum' in their Performance Plans.

Staff have been encouraged to trial different pedagogies. The Year 9 teachers trialed a 'super class' in Term 4 of 2015 where classes were shared, there were mixed ability groups and a focus on stretching students. There is an intention to extend this trial in 2016.

Junior School students have access to an extensive and thriving Stephanie Alexander Garden and the leaders and teachers are investigating how to integrate work in, and products from, the garden. There was evidence that some Junior School teachers require more training in differentiating tasks as some students did not know how to complete required tasks, and did not have the strategies to resolve this. There was evidence of streaming of students in Junior School maths classes and a need for more accountability of students in the 'Daily 5' reading activity if there was going to be NAPLAN improvement. However, there was a sequenced curriculum for NAPLAN improvement and the use of 'Read Up', 'Multi-Lit', 'Quick Smart'

and 'Jolly Phonics' evident throughout. Students were accessing a range of relevant ICT tools and programs.

The Leadership Team are expecting that current review of the 'P to 12ness' of the school will lead to development of a P-12 scope and sequence, improved differentiation and task design and whole school adoption of the 'intentions for learning' concept. It is also expected this review will result in changes to the roles of curriculum leaders at the school, who currently have a Year 8-12 focus, but already want to be involved in curriculum conversations and related activities with Junior and Middle School teachers and students.

Most students brought their own IT devices to classes, although pods of school computers were also available. Some teachers still required students to use textbooks and students interviewed believed they would receive better feedback if they submitted a hard copy of their assignments. Students in the Autistic Intervention Program were provided with a school device.

There is a whole-school focus on formative and collaborative assessment and most staff were comfortable using the Achievement and Performance Standards. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings focused on formative assessment and classroom practice, where teachers were looking for consistency in grading. There is an intention to include students, particularly those in the Ignite Program, in the design of assessment tasks in the future.

Despite all the opportunities available to teachers for Professional Development, school leaders believed that only about 20% of staff actually understood what it meant to differentiate between students in their classes. Highly aspiring students were either accelerated or given extra worksheets. Some Ignite students were given different tasks. However, students shared that teachers do know them as learners, do want them to achieve and that students know they will learn something different every year.

Direction 2

Further develop a coherent P-12 School, including a P-12 Scope and Sequence that is supported by all leaders and teachers.

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

The students, staff and parents were supportive of the school and its Leadership Team, and there was a consistent language used about school priorities. There was a strong sense of school pride evident in the upgrades to facilities and grounds, and there were many parent volunteers involved at all year levels. There was significant interest in membership of the Governing Council and elections were held for the first time in 2016.

The Site Improvement Plan had been recently revised and simplified, in consultation with school leaders and following feedback from teachers. Student input had not been sought at this stage, but a new student leadership group was being formed by the Senior School leader.

The community frequently referred to the advantages for students to be in a P-12 school.

There is a formal Performance Planning process, with student feedback being introduced this year. Line Management roles were clearly understood and teachers knew who their line managers were, and their role in the school's accountability and review processes.

Teachers were looking for consolidation of a small number of whole-school priorities, which are appropriately resourced, and a long-term strategic plan, developed to guide the school into the future. Teachers generally believed that some inconsistencies in practice were the result of 'so much going on'.

There are 19 leaders at the school, many of whom are new to leadership. The school also has a new Principal. In addition, there are a number of teachers who are aspiring to leadership in the future. The Leadership Team saw this as healthy, but have a concern about the financial sustainability of such a large team, particularly if enrolments into the Middle and Senior Schools do not increase. However, there is a level of optimism evident amongst the leadership group and teachers about the school's future, and there

is evidence of succession planning. Professional Development opportunities for these leaders and aspirants is being considered by the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team agreed that a major focus for the school in the short term will need to be on attracting, and maintaining, more students in the Middle and Senior Schools in order to sustain the current budget. They are investigating why there are currently no students from within the ECD partnership enrolling into Year 8, why 10% of Ignite students leave the school after Year 10, and what the attraction is in the Junior School. There is an opportunity to promote student success and achievement more effectively, both in the school and the community.

Direction 3

Develop a Business Plan that allocates resources to achieve school priorities. This includes a promotional strategy to build the P-12 reputation and attract local students, including those with aspirations in the STEM and Ignite Programs.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

The Heights P-12 School has a culture of improvement. Teachers and parents spoke about the process of change they are experiencing as they move from having 3 separate schools to one school with seamless transition points for, and high expectations of, all students. All use a common language when talking about evolving school priorities, improvements in curriculum delivery and student achievement and future directions. The school is continuing to offer 4 specialist programs: Ignite, Autistic Intervention Program (AIP), Defence Program/STEM and Cricket Program.

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

1. The school will continue to build on numerous initiatives and strategies it is using to engage students and challenge them to aspire to excellence. For teachers, this includes ensuring learning intentions, differentiation, task design and pedagogy, are effectively incorporated into practice.
2. Further develop a coherent P-12 School, including a P-12 Scope and Sequence that is supported by all leaders and teachers.
3. Develop a Business Plan that allocates resources to achieve school priorities. This includes a promotional strategy to build the P-12 reputation and attract local students, including those with aspirations in the STEM and Ignite Programs.

Based on the school's current performance, the Heights P-12 School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
A/CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Nigel Gill
PRINCIPAL
THE HEIGHTS SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson