

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### On-track evaluation report for Renmark High School

One-year return conducted in October 2019



## On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3 year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the ESR report is available on the school website.

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

In some cases, when the review panel identifies limited achievement and growth, together with evidence **about the school's capacity for systematic improvement**, a school is advised that they will be visited again in 1 rather than 3 years' time (1 year return).

Schools with a 1 year return are assisted by the education director and other department staff to receive additional coordinated and targeted support. This intervention is focused on **building the school's capacity** to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve improved student learning results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement.

Following intervention, which occurs for 12-15 months after the ESR, a review panel conducts an on-track evaluation (OTE) to determine the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is the main document used to inform the OTE.

This OTE visit was conducted by Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate, and Peter Kuss, Review Principal.

**The OTE report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Renmark High School in February 2018.**

## Directions from the External School Review report February 2018

- Direction 1** Ensure all teachers embed all the general capabilities in their lesson planning and delivery, so that all students are engaged, challenged and attend school.
- Direction 2** Develop and implement whole-school processes and structures that facilitate cohesion, consistency, equity, transparency, collaboration and compliance in regard to all school operations.
- Direction 3** Collaboratively develop and implement a 3-year strategic plan.
- Direction 4** Establish a culture of regular self-review amongst all staff and teams that is data-informed, includes documentation of strategies and targets that are shared between teams and amongst leaders, and includes the use of A to E data and feedback from students, peers and the wider community.

### Additional information about the school context

The principal has advised that the school has experienced a number of leadership changes in the past 18 months that have impacted the school's planning and operations.

While ongoing facilities developments in STEM works and the Building Better Schools program, major IT infrastructure upgrades, significant changes to the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) model, building capacity in literacy practice and reshaping of the leadership structure have occurred, the development of actions and strategies to address the agreed Priority Improvement Plan (PIP) has continued.


### Development of a school improvement plan

The principal has advised that the executive leadership team, in conjunction with the principal consultant (PC), developed the PIP from the previous ESR directions. The plan was sent to the executive director, partnerships, schools and preschools division in term 2, 2018. The executive leadership team presented the PIP to staff, identifying and clarifying the role of staff within the actions and strategies to be implemented. Staff have been engaged in regular reviews of the PIP progress, collecting artefacts as evidence of progress for discussion and illustrating this progress on an evidence wall.

Regular meetings between the principal, leadership and the PC took place to monitor progress and receive feedback against the indicators of success. Governing council representatives were kept regularly informed through the principal's report at their scheduled meetings.

### Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

The principal has advised that initial meetings with the principal consultant were to provide context for the school and to reach agreements on review processes and timelines. A leadership coach was appointed to the school for terms 3 and 4, providing quality, unbiased support and acting as a sounding board to the site leader and leadership team. Further support was provided to leaders by Department for Education Learning Improvement Division (LID) in reviewing and refining leadership team meetings, and staff from People and Culture Division in building the capacity of leaders in performance development and coaching processes.



The principal reported that while there has been significant changes in key staff, particularly in leadership, the effort of staff, driven by a desire to see the school do well and support from the Local Education Team (LET), have been positive influences on progress.

# Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the school improvement plan

**Direction 1** Ensure all teachers embed all the general capabilities in their lesson planning and delivery, so that all students are engaged, challenged and attend school.

## On-track evidence

The panel sourced evidence of the school's development of teachers' knowledge of the general capabilities and their role in supporting students to apply knowledge and skills confidently, effectively and appropriately in complex and changing circumstances. Expectations have been set by leadership for teachers to embed the capabilities into their practice where they offer depth and richness to student learning and encourage student engagement and challenge. Evidence cited included:

- Published professional learning calendar indicating sessions for the development of the general capabilities and year 8 literacy and numeracy
- Learning area meeting agendas and minutes reflect a re-focus towards teaching and learning with teacher discussions and sharing of practice
  - Protocols and checklists developed to support the embedding of the general capabilities into programs
- Assessment tasks and unit plans incorporate teacher articulation of the general capabilities demands of literacy and numeracy
  - To further develop challenge, learning area leaders and teams are reviewing the quality of tasks and plans while mapping the general capabilities and using learning progressions in literacy and numeracy to assist planning
- Attendance is monitored and intervention strategies implemented. It was acknowledged that the development of the general capabilities was in its early stages and that there is no direct impact on attendance. This is an area for future exploration.

## Review panel evaluation

Teachers commented positively on agreements developed by leadership that provided them with clear expectations in teaching and learning documentation. They cited targeted professional learning for leaders, provided by LID and staff professional learning sessions which have developed their capacity to effectively incorporate the general capabilities into planning for learning. Leaders described how they are now reviewing assessment tasks and unit plans to gauge the effective use of general capabilities in planning and how they might be promoting challenge.

Teachers and leaders highlighted that the general capabilities are more prominent in discussions and form a part of all learning area meetings regarding their practice. This has been further supported with a mapping exercise of the general capabilities in curriculum areas, the development of a teacher resource folder and a focus on the literacy and numeracy progressions at year 8. Executive and middle leaders reported that they monitor the progress of this development through meeting agendas and minutes and documentation stored in the learner management system.

There is evidence of foundational work in developing the general capabilities through professional learning and the development of clarity of expectations in teaching and learning documentation. However, it was acknowledged by the panel and leadership that ongoing development of the general capabilities will be required to embed them into effective practices to further promote engagement and challenge. Students

commented that there was a greater focus on the general capabilities, with some classrooms clearly displaying them. They found the general capabilities more useful when teachers spent time in explaining their connection to learning and the skills that students should be using.

**Key action to incorporate into the school's planning:**

Continue to action direction 1 using appropriate performance development processes to review their effectiveness in promoting engagement and challenge.

**Direction 2    Develop and implement whole-school processes and structures that facilitate cohesion, consistency, equity, transparency, collaboration and compliance in regard to all school operations.**

**On-track evidence**

Leaders influence the culture and processes that support learning for all. It was clearly evident to the panel that a substantial amount of work had been carried out by the executive leadership team in clarifying and documenting for staff the structures, processes and policies that support quality curriculum and effective teaching for all students. Evidence cited included:

- Leadership roles and responsibilities have been reviewed, clearly defined and documented to be more effective in supporting the development of agreed priorities
- Meeting structures and processes have been reviewed and refined to enable consistency and clarity of purpose
  - Established protocols guide staff and teams in a focus on teaching and learning improvement
  - Common templates (agendas, minutes, bulletins) established
- Action teams established allowing staff to collaboratively develop policy, procedures and documentation (eg assessment and reporting, timetable structures, decision making, professional learning and site calendars)
- Performance development and line management roles and responsibilities have been strengthened and documented, aligned to department policy
- Staff handbook developed outlining agreed policies and procedures that support staff consistency of practice and induction
- Communication processes refined to support transparency
- Department for Education policy compliance completed.

**Review panel evaluation**

Clearly defined and articulated leadership roles that support the priorities of change and improvement have provided clarity and consistency to staff, enabling and supporting them to effectively perform their roles. This has had a major positive impact on the school culture promoting collegiality and openness. Ongoing review of established and future whole-school structures and processes is essential to ensuring their effectiveness in supporting the improvement of teaching and learning.

### **Direction 3 Collaboratively develop and implement a 3-year strategic plan.**

#### **On-track evidence**

Effective strategic planning processes provide a framework to make decisions on how to allocate organisational resources, address challenges and take advantage of opportunities that arise at any time. The panel was provided with evidence of the executive leadership team establishing structures and processes to develop an evidence-based strategic plan. Evidence cited included:

- A strategic planning committee has been established to develop an evidence-based 3 year strategic plan encompassing priorities for improvement in teaching and learning, IT infrastructure, facilities, human resources, Aboriginal education, year 7 into high school and leadership development
- Strategic plan presented to the school community for consultation and refinement outlining the strategic priorities for improvement, targets, actions and outcomes to be achieved
- Leaders' Day forum in term 4 enabled leaders to reflect on the progress of strategic priorities based on evidence and plan for next steps in improvement for 2020
- The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) developed by the executive leadership team with agreed goals for improvement in literacy and numeracy
- Staff commented that they had a greater awareness of the site priorities, the processes that enable them and their roles in supporting their development
- Action plans developed by teams to further support the effective implementation of priorities.

#### **Review panel evaluation**

During interviews, the governing council chairperson and staff described the school's direction with confidence, citing greater clarity, connection and purpose. Leadership's coherent articulation of the school's improvement priorities and expectations of documented agreements to guide teachers work was appreciated by all. Teachers describe a stronger connection between this and their work.

When reviewing the strategic plan with its broad priorities of improvement and the more focussed SIP with its goals of numeracy and literacy improvement, a challenge for leadership will be providing staff and the community with clarity and consistency of the ongoing improvement agenda. The key elements that have provided current traction for improvement include clarity of purpose, effective leadership, clear processes and expectations, collective action leading to agreements, and support for staff are essential for future improvement planning.

#### **Key action to incorporate into the school's planning:**

**Revised direction:** Establish clarity of the SIP and strategic directions by engaging a collective, evidence based review of current and identified new areas of improvement.

**Direction 4** Establish a culture of regular self-review amongst all staff and teams that is data-informed, includes documentation of strategies and targets that are shared between teams and amongst leaders, and includes the use of A to E data and feedback from students, peers and the wider community.

#### **On-track evidence**

Essential to the improvement of teaching effectiveness is evaluation. The unique benefit of teachers involved in evidence-based self-evaluation is their close involvement in the consideration of the effectiveness of their own teaching. The panel was provided with evidence of ongoing development through professional learning to build the capacity of leaders and teachers in managing performance and having performance conversations. Evidence cited included:

- Executive leadership supported by the People and Culture Division reviewed and developed performance development processes to align with department policy
- Middle leaders supported by People and Culture Division engaged in professional learning in managing performance and having performance conversations
- Teachers have been engaged in professional learning to build their capacity to understand the importance of Performance and Development Plans (PDPs) in supporting improvement of practice
- Leaders' day conducted where leaders reflected on the progress of strategic plan priorities referencing student achievement and other data sources to inform plans for 2020
  - Reviewed performance development processes in which outcomes were linked to learning
- Action teams provide staff with forums to improve identified areas – positive impact on school culture
- Student review team refined to effectively case manage student referrals, intervention and support
  - Action plans cited from Aboriginal and student wellbeing teams
- Team meetings with agreed protocols have shifted focus from administrative business to reflections on and improvement of practice:
  - Examples provided include spotlights in practice in English and HASS team meetings
  - Reflections on practice in reference to professional learning in literacy and numeracy
- Teams are using a variety of data sources to inform decision making.

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#### **Review panel evaluation**

It was evident to the panel that leader and teacher capacity to effectively use PDPs to improve practice has been built through ongoing targeted professional learning. There is a developing culture of improvement utilising data to guide decisions, action teams to collectively progress work and reach agreements, and explicit PDPs and professional learning to improve practice.

#### **Key action to incorporate into the school's planning:**

Consolidate an evidence-based culture of self-review by further developing structures and processes of performance development that promote staff reflection and improvement of practice around the agreed priorities for improvement.



## Outcomes of the on-track evaluation

Based on the evidence provided, Renmark High School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions.

The review panel found that the influence of the previous ESR directions is evident in the school's strategic and improvement plans. The school is now using improvement planning, monitoring processes and strategically deploying resources to raise student achievement.

Effective leadership has provided clarity to staff through clear communication and consultation processes, developing a culture of collaboration and support. This has been supported further through the development of structures and processes that effectively support teachers' work.

The panel makes mention of the positive work of the principal and support of the executive leadership to bring about positive change.

The principal will continue to work with the education director to implement the OTE key actions.

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



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