

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Renmark High School

Conducted in September 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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lia Tedesco, 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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Renmark High School caters for year 8-12 students. It is situated 250kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, is 493. There are 6 students enrolled in Flexible Learning Options (FLO) programs. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 537. The local partnership is Renmark Loxton.

The school has a ICSEA score of 940 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 9% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 7% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6% young people in care and 36% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 5th year of tenure, 3 Assistant Principals

- Director of Inclusion
- Director of Learning
- Director of Operations

There are 35 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 9 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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** 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.

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

Renmark High School undertook a strategic approach to address the previous external school review directions incorporating support from the local education team (LET), learning improvement division (LID) and external consultants. Meeting protocols were developed to ensure recorded minutes reflected decisions, effective communication and sharing of discussions. Targeted professional learning has built teacher capacity to implement the general capabilities into the curriculum. This was seen as a catalyst for extensive review and renewal of curriculum and assessment practices. A refinement of the school improvement plan (SIP) has provided focus and clarity for improvement in reading and numeracy. A culture of evidence-based self-review is developing through professional learning that builds leadership capacity to support staff in the advancement of teaching and learning. Established strategic plans ensure resources to support priority development.

A review and restructure of leadership roles and responsibilities has taken place to effectively support school improvement. The newly established curriculum leadership and action planning teams are examples of a more focused approach to oversee processes and expectations. Leadership expectations of teachers were made more explicit and accountable through transparent, performance development processes and supported through targeted professional learning. Meeting structures have been established to better facilitate team rotations, professional learning and collaborative practices. Perspective survey data of staff perceptions of many aspects of school operations show improvement.

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?

The collaboratively developed SIP documents the priorities for improvement in reading and numeracy. The current leadership has strategically aligned staff roles and responsibilities, meeting structures and processes along with professional learning and performance development, to support these priorities. Conversations with leaders and teachers confirmed that the progress of the priorities is everyone's business. Most staff understood the goals for improvement and felt supported in developing the agreed actions and challenges of practice in their classroom practice. Agreed statements have been established to guide teacher practice in the improvement of literacy and numeracy.

Leaders and teachers collect and analyse a range of student achievement and wellbeing data. Leaders use this analysis to track and monitor learner progress, inform intervention, support teacher planning for learning and provide students and parents regular reports on achievement. Teachers explained how they use pre and post-test data during literacy and numeracy zone classes to review and reflect on learning progress. This is a measure of their impact on student growth, which informs their next steps in planning and improvements in practice. Teachers in all learning areas use this cyclic process across the school in the development of vocabulary.

The staff viewed professional development plan processes as very supportive of self-reflection, and performance feedback from leaders improves practice. The school has clear expectations of staff to align their individual goals for improvement with those of the SIP and incorporating evidence of student improvement in these discussions. Teachers described several other approaches that provided feedback, including structured classroom observations, mentoring, coaching, moderation activities, and student feedback. Some students confirmed that they could provide teacher feedback in surveys or classroom conversations with teachers, but this was not a widespread practice.

An opportunity exists to strengthen teacher and leader reflective practices through the use of agreed data sets which reflect student learning progress. Analysis of this data will enable continuous review and improvement.

Direction 1 Support improved student achievement by strengthening and aligning evidence-based performance development processes that enhance teacher reflection.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Leaders articulated school expectations of teachers to plan effective teaching and learning that meets the needs of all students. Teachers are expected to know their students learning needs, through access to data and evidence in their learner management system. Several teachers listed other methods to gauge student needs, including pre-testing in class and information gained from conversations with colleagues and support staff. Teachers described a developing focus on goal setting and monitoring student progress, highlighting the role of care group teachers and academic coaches in year 12.

Most students could articulate their progress in learning. They referenced mid-term, termly and semester reports when discussing their achievement. Several students also referred to learner conversations with teachers in response to progress reports, drafting comments, and feedback on assignments. They were also clear about the learning expectations with learning intentions and success criteria visible in all classrooms. The use of assessment task sheets that clearly describe the conditions, expectations and success criteria using a standard template further support student learning.

Classroom observations verified that many teachers employ a range of evidence-based pedagogical practices that they have acquired and developed from various sources, including current professional learning in literacy and numeracy. Some teachers referenced the teaching and learning cycle with explicit instruction to build understanding and releasing control to students to apply their knowledge. Teachers described how they try to meet the needs of all students through class groupings, tailored assessment tasks with multiple entry and exit points and open-ended inquiry questions. Many teachers provided scaffolded tasks, work exemplars and rubrics to enable all students to be successful. Most students mentioned the student-teacher relationship as being crucial for learning success and a strength of the school. They viewed feedback on assessment tasks and questioning in class for improvement as timely and valuable.

There is evidence of a strategic approach to building teaching and learning expectations by developing evidence-based practices and supportive performance development processes. However, responses varied when asked what highly effective evidence-based practices are and how they know. Teacher explanations in how they effectively differentiate learning and assessment was varied, with some teachers describing elements of high impact teaching strategies. It is timely to review the effectiveness and connection of each, developing this further and consolidating pedagogical and other agreements that clearly articulate the roles of teachers, students and parents to meet the needs of all students.

Direction 2 Consolidate teacher practice by establishing a framework with a collective understanding and agreement of high yield pedagogical practices guiding teacher work to engage and challenge all learners.

Effective leadership

How effective is the feedback from leaders, peers and students in improving teaching?

Leaders are to be commended for their vision and development of quality of teaching and learning. This has been achieved through ongoing targeted professional learning and supportive performance development processes aligned to the actions of the SIP. Teachers commented that supportive relationships and honest, effective feedback about their teaching practice is provided through informal conversations and more formal professional development plan meetings and discussions with line managers. Feedback provided in several professional learning documents is comprehensive. Other strategies mentioned included informal discussions with colleagues, some peer observations, and surveys of students. The use of these strategies varied between teachers.

Teachers described several ways in which they reflect on data to measure their impact. Zone work in literacy and numeracy vocabulary development across the curriculum, was an example of using teacher reflection on data to inform planning. Leaders said this and other data sets are used to inform the professional learning needs of staff.

Staff positively viewed the professional development plan processes as a transparent and regular process that provided feedback against negotiated improvement goals. Strengthening collaborative forums to review improvement actions and their impact on learning while connecting performance development processes, including classroom observations, mentoring, coaching, and greater utilisation of student feedback, would support teacher capacity development at a school and individual level.

Direction 3 Enhance teacher capacity in developing school priorities by strengthening and connecting structures and processes that provide feedback on teacher practice.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

At Renmark High School, the influence of previous external school review directions is evident. The school's improvement planning and monitoring processes are evidence-based and targeted to raise student achievement. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning, and targeted interventions.

There is a coherent and engaging curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum and South Australian Certificate of Education. Targeted professional learning aligned to school priorities supports the development of practices that engage and challenge all students. Teachers are developing skills to analyse feedback and assessment data to more effectively design differentiated learning. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Support improved student achievement by strengthening and aligning evidence-based performance development processes that enhance teacher reflection.**
- Direction 2** **Consolidate teacher practice by establishing a framework with a collective understanding and agreement of high yield pedagogical practices guiding teacher work to engage and challenge all learners.**
- Direction 3** **Enhance teacher capacity in developing school priorities by strengthening and connecting structures and processes that provide feedback on teacher practice.**

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

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 56% 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 7% 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 14% or 1 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 57% 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 year 9 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 6% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 9 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 29% or 7 out of 24 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 47% of students enrolled in February and 96% of those enrolled in October who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019 99% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 94% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 88% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 98% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020 93% of grades achieved were at 'C'-level or higher, 27% of grades were at an 'A' level and 36% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for the 'A' level grade and a decline for the 'B' level grade from the historic baseline averages.

Sixty three percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 43 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance 69% or 31 out of 45 potential students achieved an ATAR score.

There was also one student who was successful in achieving a merit.

In 2020 the school had a moderation adjustment of 0.03%.