

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mark Oliphant College

Conducted in October 2018



Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Debbie Hemming and Peter McKay, Review Principals.

School context

Mark Oliphant College was established in 2006, when the communities of Smithfield Plains Kindergarten, Smithfield Plains Junior Primary, Smithfield Plains Primary and Smithfield Plains High School, voted to close and become part of a new school to be built at Munno Para West, 33kms from the CBD. The college was opened in January 2010, at that stage across 2 previous sites – Peachey (early and primary years) and Beaumont (middle and senior years) campuses. The school moved to the new site at the start of term 2 2011. To cope with demand, a new building was completed in June 2013. There are currently 20 buildings on-site. The school is classified as Category 1 on the department’s category of disadvantage and has an ICSEA score of 927. In 2018, the enrolment is 1538.

The school caters for students from birth to year 12, and includes a Children’s Centre, early years, primary, middle and senior year sub-schools. There are 2 Area Resource classes to support students with disabilities.

Fourteen percent of students are students with disabilities, 8% are Aboriginal, and 16% of students have English as an additional language or dialect.

The leadership team comprises a principal in the 1st year of his tenure, a Band 6 deputy principal, a Band 5 executive leader, a Band 4 assistant principal, 5 heads of schooling, 4 wellbeing leaders and, across the schools, 9 Band 1 leaders of curriculum, cohort and learning areas, totalling 21 leadership positions. In addition, there is a 1.2FTE Aboriginal education teacher (AET) allocation, and 84 hours of Aboriginal community education officer (ACEO) and Aboriginal Community Education Transition Officer (ACETO) time. There are 118FTE staff employed at the school.

Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal’s presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school’s effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers using pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?

Improvement Agenda: How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

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

How effectively are teachers using pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?

In 2018, leaders, teachers and school services officers (SSOs) at Mark Oliphant College have embarked on a process of pedagogical reform. Previous expectations regarding teaching practice were informed by the explicit teaching model, an approach some middle years staff report as still operating within the school.

The ongoing appointment of the new principal was widely reported as having brought about a sense of calm, confidence and optimism after 4 years of uncertainty of leadership. The appointment has also made the pedagogical expectations of the new leader clear, as documented in the site improvement plan (SIP) and promoted through professional forums and discussions. The concepts of transforming tasks, student agency in learning and critical and creative thinking comprise the new leader's pedagogical direction for the school. These approaches represent high-yield and evidence-based teaching practice.

To progress the pedagogical reform, the leader has worked to *Realign, Refocus* and *Repurpose* the school's learning and improvement planning culture. The concept of *realignment* focuses on the connection between the children's centre and the early years cohort at the school. The panel sourced evidence of a strong and contemporary approach to teaching and learning in the children's centre, one that enables young learners to think critically and pose questions. Staff discussed the commonalities of practice between the foundation classes at the school and the children's centre, and how this will contribute to seamless transition.

To *refocus* staff on pedagogical expectations, teachers and many SSOs have been provided professional learning (PL) opportunities to inform changes in planning and practice. Student Free Days have been designed to include an opportunity to explore and experiment with transforming tasks, through an emphasis on 'tell to ask'. Staff have also accessed PL on STEM and innovative practice, high challenge, and the teaching of reading in the middle years.

Implementation of expected pedagogical practice is, at this point in time, in the early stages. Class visits and discussion with teachers, leaders and students made evident that, in some classes, or learning areas, students are provided opportunities to respond to provocations, think at a deeper level and pose questions, rather than answers. There were fewer of these examples, compared to students completing worksheets, answering closed and prompted questions and listening to extended teacher talk. The panel acknowledges that after 3 terms of reform, widespread response to changes in pedagogy is unlikely, and commends what has been achieved thus far. Some staff referenced the need for robust and regular professional learning to support them, particularly in developing a better understanding of how to transform a task. The panel concurs that a methodical and ongoing approach to change is required to bring about sustainable and authentic development of teachers' practice.

Direction 1

Broaden consistent implementation of the school's agreed pedagogical priorities through regular and rigorous processes that review and reinforce collective understanding, and systematically embed practice across the school.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

The External School Review (ESR) coincided with the finalisation of the school's new data management system. The platform allows staff to access a range of achievement data and attendance rates for each student in the school. Opportunities to disaggregate cohort data and to compare teachers' success rates are incorporated into the system. At this stage, the platform has been launched to Band 1 leader level and teachers are yet to access the data. The system provides opportunities to determine student achievement rates and to triangulate the varying datasets, as well as to identify the possible impact attendance has on potential. A focus on the analytical aspect of data usage remains key in tailoring teaching to meet students' needs.

Some staff and cohort groups have clearly used data intentionally and designed approaches for students accordingly. The panel heard that primary years teachers have accessed and analysed PAT Reading data to identify miscues and strengths students are demonstrating regarding their comprehension of texts. The group has designed learning opportunities for students accordingly, and discussed the intent to use data to better design extension for students at or exceeding standards.

Staff with responsibility for Aboriginal students discussed their targeted response to the analysis of Running Records and PAT data, reporting that they disaggregate data to inform intervention. Attendance data was also discussed by Aboriginal staff as being regularly evaluated to inform a targeted response for some students and their families. Staff who work with students with a disability have referred to data to inform strategies and goals in students' One Child One Plan documents. The panel was also informed that SPELD and Snapshot Writing assessments are used to identify intervention points that determine students requiring extra support. Senior years staff report that SACE data, namely student drafts, has been employed to indicate the need for early intervention. This forms the generation of 'traffic light' data used to alert learners and families of students at risk of not achieving a passing grade.

Systems data, such as NAPLAN, shows that, as a cohort, students are below SEA, yet individual student achievement data shows that a high percentage of learners are demonstrating excellent growth. An approach to ensure this attainment is continued as students progress through the school has been implemented. Students who have not yet met SEA in reading at years 7 and 8 are assessed against a school-based test designed to assess reading, spelling and writing. It is reported that they are then grouped for intervention, such as MultiLit. Staff also discussed the intent to source reading material that was engaging to middle years students, yet targeted to lower literacy levels.

A number of conversations with teachers and leaders made evident that experience in using data analytically and then responding through differentiated planning and practice, remains an area for development. Whilst some staff have accessed professional learning to raise practice in this area, class visits and conversations indicated a limited response to data in practice. The tendency to rely on ability grouping as a form of differentiation was apparent. Students discussed levelled groups in literacy and numeracy, describing 'harder or easier' word lists or worksheets. Senior years students reported that all learners take part in the same activity or assignment, and changes to expectations or learning design are not apparent.

In *Repurposing* the school's direction, the strategic and analytical use of data will be integral in ensuring the needs of all learners are met. The capacity of teachers and leaders to use data diagnostically and to draw inference for planning will be key in ensuring this intent.

Direction 2

Deliver targeted and differentiated teaching through professional learning that builds teachers' and leaders' capacity to use data analytically to directly inform planning and practice and better meet the needs of all learners.

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

In *Refocusing* the school's direction, the principal discusses the processes of performance and development (PD) as integral in bringing about sustainable and consistent practice. All staff have access to a line manager, some of whom are aligned with the staff member's learning area or year level. Newly designed processes of PD allow staff to identify 1 goal for improvement aligned with the SIP and one more personal aspiration. The departmental PD form is used to document agreements, and the review panel heard that AITSL professional standards for teachers guide the planning.

The potential for teachers to achieve their goals was reportedly more at their discretion than seen as a partnership between the line manager and staff member. Teachers and SSOs readily agreed that line managers are more than happy to engage in informal and spontaneous discussion to support and guide them, but that a more intentional and targeted approach to building their capacity was not as evident. The panel heard many reports that a number of leaders are new to the role and, although an executive leader modelled line management through a senior leader's PD, this was not evident as common practice. Leaders openly stated that they are in need of, and would welcome, opportunities to build their capacity to lead others and to promote and scaffold effective practice.

In building the concept of a unified school, the principal has strategically used learning as a focus, with an emphasis on task design, student agency and creative thinking. It is intended that these concepts will embed quality teaching and learning across the site and, in doing so, bring about a coherent culture. All staff with whom the panel spoke are committed to moving forward as a united group, whilst agreeing that, currently, 'small steps' are in place to bring the intent about.

Comments to the panel throughout the review were often prefaced with 'in senior years we' or 'what happens in the middle years is', indicating a sub-school culture still exists, and that differences between the groups is an agreed norm. In putting pedagogy forward as the unification point, executive leaders are promoting a clear message that the school is committed to excellence in practice, and that contemporary planning and teaching will bring about coherence. To actualise this outcome, the role of the senior leaders is crucial, as the executive leaders' intent is ideally articulated and actioned by middle managers. The consistency and clarity with which this is delivered then determines teachers' understanding and response. At this point, diverse messages and subsequent levels of impact exist dependent upon the senior leader. Some staff remain unclear about pedagogical expectations and, whilst others may be aware of expectations, leadership to support them to respond effectively is not consistent.

Again, the panel acknowledges the number of leaders in the early stages of their career and recognises the clear commitment they bring to their role. It is evident that building on the capacity of leaders to articulate school priorities and to conduct forums that, in turn, build the capacity of others, will be paramount in achieving a congruent and robust school culture.

Direction 3

Establish coherence in direction by building leaders' capacity to work strategically with teachers and ancillary staff to conduct processes that guide consistent practice and contribute to a whole-school culture.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Mark Oliphant College, effective leadership is providing strategic direction, planning and the development of a unified school culture.

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

1. Broaden consistent implementation of the school's agreed pedagogical priorities through regular and rigorous processes that review and reinforce collective understanding, and systematically embed practice across the school.
2. Deliver targeted and differentiated teaching through professional learning that builds teachers' and leaders' capacity to use data analytically to directly inform planning and practice and better meet the needs of all learners.
3. Establish coherence in direction by building leaders' capacity to work strategically with teachers ancillary staff to conduct processes that guide consistent practice and contribute to a whole-school culture.

Based on the school's current performance, Mark Oliphant College will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

Kym Grant
PRINCIPAL
MARK OLIPHANT COLLEGE

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 84.8%.

Appendix 2

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 the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2017, 54% of year 1 and 65% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change against the historic baseline average for years 1 and 2.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of year 3 students, 51% of year 5 students, 49% of year 7 students, and 40% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement. This result represents an improvement at years 3 and 9, little change at year 5, and a decline at year 7, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 9 has been upwards, from 31% in 2016 to 40% in 2018.

For 2018 year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

Between 2016 and 2018, the school has consistently achieved lower in years 5 and 9 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 11% of year 3, 11% of year 5, 6% of year 7, and 4.5% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 36%, or 5 of 14 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, 50%, or 4 of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 12.5%, or 2 of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 67%, or 4 of 6 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 44% of year 3 students, 50% of year 5 students, 51% of year 7 students, and 44% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement at years 5 and 9, at year 3, a decline, and at year 7, little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 5 and 9 has been upwards, from 39% in 2016 to 50% in 2018, and 30% in 2016 to 44% in 2018, respectively.

For 2018 year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

Between 2016 and 2018, the school has consistently achieved lower in year 3, 5 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 5% of year 3, 3% of year 5, 4% of year 7, and 3% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 12.5%, or 1 of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, 25%, or 2 of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 29%, or 2 of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 50%, or 3 of 6 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2017, 64% of students enrolled in February and 99% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE, did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2017, 72% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 96% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 61% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units, and 98% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-three percent of grades achieved in the 2017 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Twenty-nine percent of students completed SACE using VET, and there were 54 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2017.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2017, 4% of students achieved an 'A' grade, and 31% achieved a 'B' grade. This result represents a decline from historic baseline average for 'A' grades, an improvement for 'B' grades, and little or no change from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' grade and 'B' grade combined.

In terms of 2017 tertiary entrance, 121 students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.