

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR MITCHAM GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Conducted in November 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 Richard Abell, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Mitcham Girls High School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 92%, which is just below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Mitcham Girls High School caters for girls from Year 8 to 12. It is situated 6kms south of the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2015 was 523 students and in 2016 is 526. There were 600 girls enrolled in 2012. The school has an ICSEA score of 1058, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

In 2015, the school population included 0.6% Aboriginal students, 5% students with disabilities, 22% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 0.6% (3) young people in care, and 23% of families eligible for School Card assistance. In 2016, there are 13 international students and 9 students in the FLO program, some of whom attend classes at the high school. Girls in Year 8 come from 75 different primary schools. Girls can apply to be part of the Gifted and Talented Program (GifT) class in Year 8. This class provides additional academic challenges in Years 8, 9 and 10.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 7th year of her second tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal, 2 Assistant Principals and 9 Coordinators. There are currently 42 staff, with 11 being in the early years of their career, and 9 School Services Officers (SSOs).

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 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 84.6% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been upwards, from 76% to 85%. The school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Reading, 40% of students achieved in the top two bands.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been upwards, from 29% in 2013 to 40% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 82%, or 31 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015, and 91%, or 32 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

Between 2008 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 to 9 upper band retention is upwards, from 55% to 91%.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 80% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

The school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy, 25% of students achieved in the top two bands. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been upwards, from 12% in 2013 to 25% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 71%, or 15 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015, and 81%, or 21 students from Year 7 remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2015, 97% of students who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. The school was able to provide relevant information about the 13 Stage 2 girls who left school between February and October, and the 2 girls who were not SACE completers. They could also account for the 32 students who completed the SACE Personal Learning Plan in 2013 but were not enrolled in 2015.

Ninety-five percent of grades achieved in the 2015 SACE were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Seventeen percent of SACE Stage 2 results were an A- or above. One hundred percent of girls successfully completed their SACE Research Project, and 100% of girls enrolled in SACE Stage 2 English were successful.

There has been an increase in SACE achievement using VET, from 15% in 2014 to 27% in 2015.

In SACE Stage 1 in 2015, 93% of girls achieved a C or higher for their Personal Learning Plan, and 94% achieved a C or higher for their literacy component. Sixteen percent of grades achieved in the 2015 SACE Stage 1 were A- or higher.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: **How are all students engaged and challenged in their learning?**

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

Effective Leadership: **How effective are the performance development practices in providing feedback to improve teaching?**

How are all students engaged and challenged in their learning?

Teachers and leaders at Mitcham Girls High School can be justifiably proud of the girls' achievement in NAPLAN literacy and numeracy tests, and the improved number of SACE completers. Leaders believe the improvement in NAPLAN literacy is the result of the 'Literacy for Learning' focus across the whole school for a number of years, the ongoing provision of scaffolding in lessons, and the use of ESL teaching strategies by a number of teachers. The school is currently investing in a 'Word Flyer' to continue to challenge all girls to improve their literacy levels, including those in the higher NAPLAN bands and those in the Gift class.

Despite the positive numeracy results, there is a concern amongst some leaders and teachers about the mindset of many of the girls about mathematics and the small number of girls enrolling in Stage 2 high-level mathematics courses. A numeracy audit, a new focus on STEM and consolidation of leadership of mathematics are strategies being implemented to address these concerns.

The girls consistently indicated their enjoyment of coming to school, and they appreciate the relationships they have with their peers, even though they come from 57 different primary schools. They love being part of a small school community with minimal bullying and where they feel safe. They also enjoy learning in an

environment 'where they are not distracted by the boys'. There is intent across the school to build the girls' resilience.

The girls indicated that lessons they enjoyed the most were delivered by teachers with whom they had a good relationship. The girls in the Gift classes talked enthusiastically about their experiences in the Lego League, Big Science Competition, Oliphant Science Competition, Bridge Building Competition, Engineering Challenge, Crest, and a science camp. The science coordinator acknowledged that the school is attracting sponsorship and opportunities from tertiary organizations and businesses, particularly related to STEM, because they cater for girls.

The Review Panel received a range of comments from students, teachers and leaders when they were asked to talk about how all the girls are being challenged or stretched in their lessons and how the different capacities of girls in classes is catered for. Some girls shared examples of being challenged by some of their teachers. Limited examples were provided by teachers and leaders in some curriculum areas, while it was evident that high-level pedagogical practice is used consistently in others.

Some teachers discussed how the girls increase in confidence whilst at the school, and become less afraid to make mistakes. There was frequent reference to students' low resilience, particularly when they arrive in Year 8, and reluctance amongst most of the girls to take risks in their learning. There was agreement amongst a number of teachers and leaders that there is a level of complacency amongst some of the students, as well as some of the teachers. There also seemed to be little appreciation amongst a number of teachers of the need to stretch, challenge and differentiate in their classes, even though the school has recently invested in professional learning programs for teachers and leaders on teaching pedagogy. The valuable in-class support of SSOs was often mentioned as a strategy to support differentiation.

The school has also introduced the School Recommended Device (SRD), and most students in classes were observed with laptops. However, teaching pedagogy observed and described by students continues to be traditional in many curriculum areas, with the use of textbooks and worksheets common practice. Assessment practices are also generally traditional, even though other options are available, including the use of technology.

Direction 1

Further increase the expectations and achievement of students by building teacher capacity to design learning and use assessment to enhance student achievement.

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

The girls and their parents appreciate the range of subjects available, within the context of school enrolments. Individualised career pathways are discussed with each girl, and her parents, with many seeking an ATAR and acceptance into a university course. A number of the girls find the SACE Personal Learning Plan useful in initiating conversations about post-school options.

The school offers traditional subjects, including a small physics class at Stage 2, and also supports students to study other subjects at either Urrbrae Agricultural High School or Unley High School if necessary. HASS has maintained strong enrolments at both SACE Stage 1 and 2 and is offering Global Education for the first time in 2017. A STEM subject will also be offered to Year 10 and 11 girls in 2017. Parents and girls spoke positively about the availability of SACE subjects to Year 10 students in 2016.

Curriculum Coordinators have an overview of the school's curriculum, its documentation, delivery and assessment. It was evident that the level of experience of these middle level leaders is varied and this is impacting on consistency in teachers' pedagogical practices and the capacity of teachers to understand and implement the Australian Curriculum and SACE. This inconsistency was also evident in how some teachers are using the achievement and performance standards to guide assessment, both within and across curriculum areas. The practices and understanding of some teachers and leaders is of a very high quality and there are significant opportunities for sharing their good practice with colleagues.

There is an expectation that all curriculum documentation, Learning Assessment Plans, assignments and resources are stored on DayMap, the school's Learner Management System. The Review Panel found

inconsistencies within and across curriculum areas, with one curriculum area storing everything on Google Docs. This is frustrating for students who enjoy being able to access resources and assignments on DayMap.

Most teachers provide rubrics of varying quality for their students, and these indicate some collaborative work by teachers on task design, with some areas using Common Assessment Tasks. The school is hoping to use the STEM agenda to drive more widespread use of activity-based or project-based learning, and to further develop problem-solving skills and creativity. Internal moderation is encouraged, and there have been opportunities through the ECD Partnership for shared moderation, which has been valued by teachers.

There is a large amount of student wellbeing and achievement data readily available to staff on DayMap. Some teachers and leaders are using this data to inform their teaching, and several leaders are monitoring its use by teachers in their teams. In relation to SACE Stage 2, a number of students were unaware of the significant impact exams, Directed Investigations and portfolios had on their final grades. Closer examination of this information could enhance teacher practice and student preparation.

Curriculum leaders and teachers have asked for more time to share good practice and investigate contemporary learning strategies that will engage and challenge the girls in their classes. A new professional learning program with Martin Westwell is being introduced to the Wednesday night staff meeting program to address some of these requests.

Direction 2

Utilise and enhance existing curriculum leadership structures to develop consistent and agreed understanding and application of contemporary teaching and learning practices.

How effective are the performance development practices in providing feedback to improve teaching?

The school collaboratively reviews its Site Improvement Plan (SIP) annually, and an aligned Performance Development Program (PDP), including line management, has been in place for some time. Leaders have job and person specifications, and the Review Panel was provided with details about each leader's roles at the school.

All leaders were interviewed several times during the External School Review visit, and specifically asked about their perception of their leadership role and its effectiveness in achieving the articulated SIP outcomes for the girls and the school. All teachers and leaders were also asked about the impact of the current Performance Development Process on their practice.

There was widespread acknowledgement of the professional learning opportunities that are available to all staff, on Wednesday afternoons or through the ECD Partnership. The focus has been on pedagogical practice. There is a small number of SACE moderators on staff, and a few teachers indicated a desire to be involved in SACE marking or moderating in the future, as part of their own personal professional learning goals from their PDP.

Teachers and leaders indicated there were variations in the quality of line management provided, and in the timing and frequency of meetings, with some referring to occasional informal chats, while others suggesting they would like more regular lesson observations and more written feedback. Several identified that they are keen to use data as the basis for discussing the achievement of their students and their effectiveness as a teacher.

A professional learning program for leaders is planned for Week 0 of 2017, and the Principal is working with the Leadership Team to develop a long-term and sustainable Leadership Plan for the school, with clearly defined responsibilities that align with the SIP.

Direction 3

Consistently implement the existing performance development program/line management process to ensure teaching and learning practices are based on data and evidence and aligned to the Site Improvement Plan.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Mitcham Girls High School has experienced growth in achievement in NAPLAN and SACE, and the girls are performing consistently above students in similar schools within DECD. There is a strong commitment from the whole school community towards the education of girls.

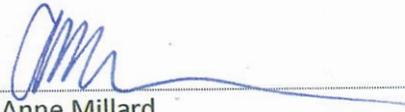
The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Further increase the expectations and achievement of students by building teacher capacity to design learning and use assessment to enhance student achievement.
2. Utilise and enhance existing curriculum leadership structures to develop consistent and agreed understanding and application of contemporary teaching and learning practices.
3. Consistently implement the existing performance development program/line management process to ensure teaching and learning practices are based on data and evidence and aligned to the Site Improvement Plan.

Based on the school's current performance, Mitcham Girls High School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

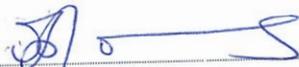


Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
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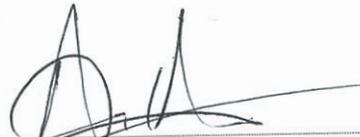


Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.



Antoinette Jones
PRINCIPAL
MITCHAM GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson