

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mitcham Girls High School

Conducted in February 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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Jayne Heath and Sylvia Groves, Review Principals.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal and Deputy Principal
- Class visits
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representative
 - Leaders
 - Parent group
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Mitcham Girls High School caters for girls from Year 7 to 12. It is situated 6kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 806. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 526. The local partnership is Mitcham Plains.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1072, and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 3% students with disabilities, 10% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 1% children/young people in care and 19% of students eligible for school card assistance.

Mitcham Girls High School is an un-zoned girls' school.

The school leadership team consists of 1 Principal, 1 Deputy Principal, 3 Assistant Principals, 3 Wellbeing leaders and 7 Heads of Faculty. At the time of the external review, both the Principal and Deputy Principal were acting in the roles and had done so for 4 weeks.

There are 59 teachers including 5 in the early years of their career and 9 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

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

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

Professional learning has been undertaken to further develop teachers' capacity to design tasks and assessments that enhance student achievement. Greater consistency across faculties is evident and opportunities to engage in shared planning are regularly scheduled. Documents sourced included some engaging and intentional plans, aligned with Australian Curriculum standards. Teachers and students would like to see more student input to learning design in the future.

Leaders have accessed departmental professional learning forums to develop their capacity to lead teaching strategies and to use data more strategically. The intent to focus faculty work on the school's improvement priorities has seen some leaders working with staff to initiate literacy strategies across the curriculum. There is opportunity to further broaden this practice across the school. Leaders will be pivotal to successful implementation.

The previous direction 3 will be discussed against line of inquiry 1 in this report.

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?

How effectively are professional development opportunities provided to build teachers' capacity to implement actions for improvement?

The school's improvement priorities are understood by teachers and the importance of literacy across the curriculum is valued by all. Faculties have engaged with the 'sprint' model of trial, implementation and evaluation. Some faculties focused their trial strategy on site improvement plan (SIP) actions. This saw the Arts faculty developing students' vocabulary and writing skills and Languages faculty developing students' articulation and pronunciation. Some faculties implemented the sprint model, but did not align it with SIP actions. All teachers and leaders are enthusiastic regarding the opportunity that the approach provides to develop their practice.

Most teachers reported that the evaluation aspect of the sprint model remains an area for development. Whilst faculties *discussed* the trial, after implementation the concept of accurately measuring impact on students' achievement was not highly evident. In moving this high yield approach forward, it will be necessary for all faculties to employ the SIP actions as their focus. To fully understand the impact of the teaching strategy on student learning, ongoing, evidence-based evaluation will be important. Teachers will then have the opportunity to reflect on and make adjustments to their practice to ensure they are meeting all students' needs.

Faculty meetings and professional learning community (PLC) forums are convened regularly. Teachers and leaders have varied perceptions of the purpose and leadership of these meetings. Whilst some are reportedly intentional and support teachers to progress school priorities, others are described as organisational and administrative. A few staff reported that they have not been involved in the forums. Teachers' perceptions of the intent and value of performance and development processes are similarly varied.

To achieve school priorities and implement effective teaching of literacy and numeracy strategies, systems that build teacher capacity need to be intentional and systematic. Those with responsibility to lead these forums will need to do so consistently across faculties, and remain mindful of teachers' differing expertise and learning needs. Building the capacity of leaders to implement these systems will be essential.

Direction 1 **Meet all students' needs through consistent implementation of school improvement strategies, monitoring impact and making adjustment to practice as required.**

Direction 2 **Progress school improvement strategies through systems designed to build teacher and leader capacity to implement expected practice across all faculties.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school has developed and documented a teaching and learning statement that features 9 concepts framed within a cycle of 'prepare, connect, reflect'. Included in the concepts are the provision of feedback and differentiated practice. Statements of intent are documented against these practices. Leaders explain that implementation is in the early stages.

Across the school, effective, high-yield approaches to planning and teaching are evident in some faculties and year levels. Maths planning documents show engaging and purposeful design and include an extension option for students exceeding the standard. Interdisciplinary teaching is evident in the arts faculty, where there is a clear focus on literacy learning.

Many students stated that they would welcome greater involvement and voice within their learning. They discussed the importance of feedback as a tool to promote student agency. Currently, the effective provision of feedback varies and school-wide development of this concept will be of benefit. Discussions also focused on the concept of girls' education and to what degree teaching maximises their potential to take risks, lead and collaborate.

Whilst all staff agree that differentiated practice is essential to meeting students' needs, evidence indicates there is an opportunity to implement this concept more effectively across the school. Notably, Aboriginal and international students reported limited differentiated pedagogy, particular to their contexts. Teaching and planning designed to address the requirements of diverse learners are limited to a few examples. Some teachers offer students differently levelled tasks based on the taxonomy of thinking, whereas some teaching is directed at the whole class, providing minimal variance in access.

To better meet students' diverse learning needs, a clear, common approach to differentiated practice is required. The panel advises collective inquiry, conducted by staff and students, to explore the concept of effective differentiation within the context of Mitcham Girls High School. Reference to evidence-based research, characteristics of girls' education and culturally responsive pedagogy will support the development of a contextually informed and relevant agreement.

Direction 3 **Collectively explore and establish a clear understanding of differentiated practice within the context of Mitcham Girls High School, and the implication this has for planning and pedagogy.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Conditions for learning at Mitcham Girls High School are optimal. All staff bring exceptional commitment to their work and are dedicated to supporting students through strong relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Learning areas are calm and there are minimal distractions from learning. The intent to develop and sustain contemporary approaches to teaching and learning is evident through the school's documentation. Leaders understand effective improvement practices and capacity-building systems, and are working towards consistent implementation of these across all faculties.

At the time of the external school review, changes and uncertainty surrounded the leadership team appointments. However, the panel would like to acknowledge the work of the acting leaders in bringing about a positive and optimistic start to the school year. Parents and staff universally commend the work of these personnel in ensuring a culture of optimism and unity.

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

- Direction 1** Meet all students' needs through consistent implementation of school improvement strategies, monitoring impact and making adjustment to practice as required.
- Direction 2** Progress school improvement strategies through systems designed to build teacher and leader capacity to implement expected practice across all faculties.
- Direction 3** Collectively explore and establish a clear understanding of differentiated practice within the context of Mitcham Girls High School, and the implication this has for planning and pedagogy.

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



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Governing Council Chairperson
Lesley Parker

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 81% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been downwards, from 85% to 81%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 24% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 35.5%, or 11 of 31 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been downwards, from 81% to 74%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 19% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy 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 numeracy, 44%, or 8 of 18 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 78% 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. This result for October SACE completion represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 94% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 98% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 97% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 31% of grades were at an 'A' level and 39% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents a decline for the 'C-' level or higher grade, and an increase for the 'A' and 'B' level grade, against the historic baseline averages.

Seven students completed SACE using VET. In 2020, 24 students were enrolled in FLO programs.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance, 97% of students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 5 students who were successful in achieving a merit.

In 2020 the school had 4 moderation adjustments.