

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Northern Adelaide Senior 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 John Tiver, Review Principal.

## School context

Northern Adelaide Senior College commenced as an adult re-entry campus in 1989, known then as Para West Adult Campus. Prior to this it was Elizabeth West High School, which was established in 1967. The school provides an opportunity for adult students to complete secondary education. The curriculum is prescribed by the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) as well as Certificate I, II or III qualifications. Most adult re-entry students have been out of formal education for at least 6 months. In 2018 enrolment is 550. A large number of NASC students study part-time.

The school is classified as Category 1 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

Of the entire student body, 65% are female and the average age is 20 years. The school population includes 10% of Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, 9% of students have English as a second language, and 78% of students are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of her tenure at the school, a deputy principal, 2 assistant principals, as well as 8 senior leaders. There are 21 teaching staff and 644 ancillary hours allocated.

## 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 three key areas from the External School Review framework:

**Student Learning: How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?**

**How effective is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

**Effective Leadership: To what extent are the school's performance and development processes effective in building teacher and leader capacity?**

### How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

At Northern Adelaide Senior College the profile of data has been raised by the leaders. An understanding that intentional and differentiated teaching is informed by data has driven this intent. A position termed 'data manager' has been established and recently filled. A range of achievement, wellbeing and attendance data is now uploaded to the school's data management system.

Staff have the capacity to act strategically on data when considering their response to the student wellbeing data, harvested on enrolment. Health, emotional and familial issues are assessed and accommodations discussed and established. Evidence of this includes teachers seating anxious students in proximity to exits or understanding not to ask direct questions of some learners. When evaluating the concept of monitoring students' progress, the panel sourced strong evidence of teachers continually checking in with students to determine emotional dispositions and levels of comfort within the learning

agenda. Regular reports of teachers adjusting expectations showed their readiness to accommodate students' changing wellbeing needs.

Many staff and students described the low level of literacy that learners experience. Frequent long-term disconnect from school for numerous reasons has the potential to compromise learners' literacy. Teachers explained that they have gone to great lengths to work around this potential obstacle to learning. In one instance, the SACE Board agreed to accept videos of students discussing their learning with their teacher as evidence of a measurable outcome. In another instance, course content has been modified significantly to engage students with limited literacy skills.

Whilst valid achievement data indicating students' literacy levels and needs is available on the management system, evidence of teachers accessing this data in order to regularly track and evaluate students' learning needs was varied. A few teachers described having used PAT data to explore students' achievement. Both students and teachers reported that students' draft work provides teachers with a regular picture of how well a learner is responding to assignment expectations. Students explained the opportunity they have to seek teacher input and some referred to this as valuable in supporting them to complete assignments. Whilst these examples reflect the teachers' clear commitment to supporting student success, when the concept of achievement data was broached, discussion invariably reverted to wellbeing and case management, rather than raising literacy achievement through strategic data analysis and intentional teaching.

The college has introduced a foundations course to the curriculum. Teachers report that some students with low literacy levels can be referred to take part in this intervention. At this point, inclusion in the program is at teachers' discretion and not determined by a data-informed intervention point.

The college is successful in reconnecting disaffected students with learning shaped to accommodate their low-level literacy skills. This work can be further complemented by deliberately identifying and addressing students' literacy miscues. The place of data in initially informing, and then in regularly monitoring students' progress, will be key in further supporting individualised learning.

#### **Direction 1**

**Further individualise student learning and raise literacy levels through targeted teaching that is informed by analysis of achievement data, and by building teachers' capacity to use this data strategically.**

### **How effective is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

Throughout the review process, strong evidence of the college providing opportunities for students with exceptionally diverse and often challenging needs was sourced. On enrolment, courses designed to ensure subjects are relevant to learners' vocational and learning pathways are strategically designed. This has led to widespread engagement in learning that is perceived by students as purposeful and valuable. (Please see page 7 of this report to read more about the college's work in supporting students to achieve their goals).

Students are strongly supported to achieve through a variety of tailored interventions that assist wellbeing and better enable them to connect with their subjects and achieve success. Students discussed the culture of acceptance and celebration of difference as key in engaging them to keep on-track and attending. Teachers reported that a deep understanding of students, and the history they bring to the class, are vital in developing a relationship, without which they believe learning would not be possible.

This strong focus on relational learning allows teachers go to great lengths to design and provide support in maximising learners' potential.

When discussing their progress, students often referred to how they felt within the class; their comfort level or relationship with the teacher and peers, rather than their learning growth. A few students discussed their grades, and reported that feedback on draft work might inform them of the grade they are potentially going to achieve.

Teachers discussed the intent of the college as supporting students to 'stand on their own two feet'; a laudable concept that is relevant to the student cohort. Evidence sourced indicates that a culture of accommodation, intervention and support exists at the college, as teachers work tirelessly to address wellbeing needs and work around learning obstacles. An opportunity to consider how to work towards independence in learning is apparent.

All teachers are expected to upload learning tasks that include exemplars and rubrics, designed to inform the continuum of successful learning, possible grade allocation and examples of expectations. The response to this requirement is inconsistent and, subsequently, the impact is limited. Some students reported that they have accessed DayMap and seen the documents for some subjects, yet reports of teachers referring to the intent of the learning or criteria for success varied. Whilst students described regular and useful discussions with their teachers regarding their wellbeing and welfare, only a few had access to ongoing and strategic feedback. Conversations regarding students' draft work were reportedly useful to students to identify their likelihood of completing work, rather than achieving the actual intended learning outcomes.

The opportunity to further realise the college's intent to support students to 'stand on their own two feet' in learning is apparent. The provision of learning intentions and criteria for success will contribute strongly to students understanding the outcome they are working towards and, especially, how they are progressing throughout the learning. The potential for students to self-assess against criteria and to make adjustments and modifications accordingly will contribute to greater independence in learning.

Ensuring consistent implementation of strategies that provide student agency within the learning agenda will be key in further progressing the college's work to develop independent and informed learners. Clear expectations and accountability on the provision and promotion of learning intentions, feedback and success criteria will be pivotal in this work.

## **Direction 2**

**Strengthen students' independence and deepen ownership and confidence within learning through the provision of intentions, feedback and criteria that allow students to better understand their learning and monitor progress.**

## **To what extent are the school's performance and development processes effective in building teacher and leader capacity?**

In 2018, the performance and development (PD) structures have been redesigned to create more formalised approaches and school-wide unity. Expectations of meetings and documentation are clear and understood by staff. In order to further achieve cross-campus unison, leaders from the community learning centre (CLC) provide performance development for hub-based teachers. Leaders are reflecting on the positive impact this structure had, and will consider future plans in light of their findings.

Documents sourced showed that PD processes are referenced to evidence-based research and systemic frameworks, as PDP plans are aligned with both AITSL professional standards and the departmental policy.

Teachers and leaders have discussed and documented the behaviours evident within each of the professional standards. Leaders engaged in professional learning to support them in conducting observations and engaging in coaching.

The positive impact of PD on teacher practice or on building capacity varied widely across the college. Some staff reported experiencing an enabling and supportive process that is appreciated and valuable. Others valued the discussion and opportunity to identify goals for improvement, often reporting that achieving the goal was at their discretion. Few staff discussed observations by leaders or ongoing processes that build and improve practice, many reports indicating that after the initial meeting, there is a disconnect between the teacher and PD leader. In a few instances, accountability for teachers to respond to the college's expectations was clearly an area for development.

Leaders with responsibility to conduct PD reportedly do so in varying ways and with diverse impact. The panel saw copies of a presentation that leaders have accessed to reflect on their communication and leadership styles, representing the intent to strengthen leaders' impact. There is now an opportunity to further consider and build the capacity of all leaders to deliver PD processes that are based on an agreed model that is consistently conducted across the college. Collective design of an agreed PD model will ensure leaders understand and value this crucial improvement strategy.

The college culture is uniformly reported as conducive to learning, and students appreciate the focus on acceptance of difference and diversity. Generally, staff and leaders report a congenial culture of commitment, support and positivity, and agree that the opportunity for faculties to meet together is valuable in contributing to school unity. The concept of 2 separate learning programs emerged during the review; staff explained the hub and CLC as siloed sites, rather than 2 interventions operating as 1 college. Expectations and decisions are articulated inconsistently between the hub and CLC. Whilst staff discuss a positive culture between the 2 programs, language used and references made indicate segregation within the college, and an opportunity to establish coherence in moving forward.

### **Direction 3**

**Increase the impact of performance and development systems on building teacher and leader capacity, through a coherently led, planned and conducted PD model that makes responsibilities to achieve agreed outcomes clear.**

### **Direction 4**

**Broaden a culture of unity through a collective review of processes used to establish decisions and expectations, and ensure consistent articulation and implementation of these across the college.**

## **What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?**

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice is contributing significantly to school improvement at Northern Adelaide Senior College.

Effective practice in supporting students to gain SACE or to design vocational pathways was evident. Students' perception of themselves as valued learners with potential to succeed was often low at enrolment. However, staff attention to addressing students' social, emotional, gender or mental health issues allows every learner an opportunity to engage with learning. Pathways that are deliberate and specific in their design allow all students to reach milestones and outcomes they had not previously thought possible. It was not uncommon for the panel to hear students explain that without the college, they would not have been able to gain employment or strive for tertiary inclusion. The Gaming and Film

course allows students to discuss with clarity which tertiary studies they will undertake, the ATAR required and what applications their learning will have in the employment market. An opportunity to be on governing council, and participate in community roles, allowed 1 student to receive a leadership award and gain confidence to plan her career as a disability advocate. The evidence sourced through every avenue of the review portrayed the significant impact the work of staff is having on some previously disaffected or disengaged learners. The panel commends this work wholeheartedly.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Northern Adelaide Senior College, teaching is designed to actively engage learners and provide vocational or tertiary pathways in a culture conducive to adult learning.

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

1. Further individualise student learning and raise literacy levels through targeted teaching that is informed by analysis of achievement data, and by building teachers' capacity to use this data strategically.
2. Strengthen students' independence and deepen ownership and confidence within learning through the provision of intentions, feedback and criteria that allow students to better understand their learning and monitor progress.
3. Increase the impact of performance and development systems on building teacher and leader capacity, through a coherently led, planned and conducted PD model that makes responsibilities to achieve agreed outcomes clear.
4. Broaden a culture of unity through a collective review of processes used to establish decisions and expectations, and ensure consistent articulation and implementation of these across the college.

Based on the school's current performance, Northern Adelaide Senior College will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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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 54%.

## 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).

#### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2017, 41% of students enrolled in February and 94% 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. Between 2014 and 2017, the trend for has been upwards, from 78% in 2014 to 94% in 2017.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2017, 69% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 80% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 68% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units, and 92% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Eighty-eight 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 57 students enrolled in the CLC program in 2017.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2017, 9% of students achieved an 'A' grade, and 36% achieved a 'B' grade. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for both 'A' and 'B' grades.

In terms of 2017 tertiary entrance, 54.3%, or 44 out of 81 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 2 students who were successful at achieving a merit.

In 2017 the school had a moderation adjustment of 1.5.