

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Le Fevre High School

Conducted in November 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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Liz Matheson, Review Principal.

School context

Le Fevre High School caters for children from year 8 to 12. It is situated 16kms north-west of the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2018 is 541 students, and enrolment has steadily increased from 523 in 2016. FLO enrolments in 2017 equalled 67.

The school is classified as Category 3 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 955. The school is a member of the Le Fevre Peninsula Partnership.

The school population includes 15% Aboriginal students, 11% of students with disabilities, 213 families eligible for School Card assistance, and 8% of students of EALD background.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the last year of his tenure at the school, 3 assistant principals, one of which has responsibility for student wellbeing, 2 senior leaders and 7 coordinators Band 1. There are 78 staff, with 43 FTE teachers and 2 Aboriginal community education officers.

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:

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Effective Teaching: To what extent do teaching teams reflect on practice and use this information to improve?

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

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Le Fevre High School staff have worked assiduously to map the curriculum requirements of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program with the Australia Curriculum. This enabled teachers and students to have greater clarity about the skills, knowledge and concepts that expected to be learnt at each level and in each learning area, together with the student dispositions for learning. This work was evident to the panel in the documentation 'Approaches to teaching and learning', 'Global Context' and in examples of unit planners. The Global Context document mapped the learning dispositions of fairness and development, identity and relationships, orientation in space and time, personal and cultural expression, scientific and technical innovation, and globalization and sustainability, to year level and learning area topics. Staff developed a genre map, which involved identifying the text types required in each learning area from year 8 to 12, so that teachers have a clear understanding of the literacy requirements in their subjects, and the need to explicitly teach the literacy strategies.

This curriculum development, mapping and documentation has provided clarity, consistency and an effective scaffold for new teachers appointed to the school. In 2018, the use of DayMap has been developed to enable teachers to put their unit planners, assessment tasks and timelines online, so they are transparent and accessible to students and parents.

Students across the school were positive about the care and interest their teachers showed in their learning and wellbeing. They believe teachers know them as learners, their strengths and weaknesses. There seemed a 'can do' approach to students, as the review panel heard of examples from students of staff exploring opportunities and options for them, even when the school did not have the internal resources to accommodate their interests. Aboriginal students talked specifically about the work of the Aboriginal education team to support them to be strong and proud of their identity and culture. Many class teachers support this process by ensuring there are Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum. Evidence of the effectiveness of the school's commitment and support of Aboriginal students is the increase retention of students in senior years, and the increased percentage of Aboriginal students who are gaining their SACE.

Students were asked about the extent teachers engage them in the learning process, and many examples were provided of how most teachers use various pedagogical strategies to find out students' interests, link learning concepts to real life, provide flexibility and choice where possible, and use Socratic questioning, games and activities to actively engage them. Students who have been in the school for some years noted a change in some teachers' practice, from predominately textbook, worksheet, stand and deliver pedagogy, to greater use of the internet, videos and clips to teach concepts. Many teachers use exemplars to provide students with a visual representation of quality products. Although the provision of learning intentions and success criteria does not seem to be a formal school expectation, the review panel noted many teachers incorporated these practices into their 'tool kit' to provide clarity about the purpose for their learning, and the criteria for assessment. Involvement of students in this process appears not to be common, and could be considered as an approach that develops greater student agency and responsibility for their learning.

Some teachers ensured they elicit prior knowledge and develop student learning from the familiar to unfamiliar contexts. Transference of knowledge is still a challenge, and some teachers are keen to develop interdisciplinary curriculum units to support this process.

When asked to explain the pedagogical practices expected at Le Fevre High School, teachers were less articulate and consistent in their responses. Many teachers talked about using an inquiry approach; however, this was not clearly or consistently explained in any depth. A few teachers 'admitted' using an explicit teaching approach; research clearly shows that regular, short (punchy) explicit instruction, supported by inquiry pedagogy and the development of student agency for and in learning, has the greatest impact of learning outcomes across subject disciplines.

Achievement data in SACE and year 9 NAPLAN shows an upward trend in the percentages of students achieving the Standard of Education Achievement (SEA). There is still room for improvement to support more students to achieve in the higher bands. The review panel explored the extent students are intellectually stretched in their learning. The school-wide strategy is based on transforming tasks (one at a time), to ensure the task enables students to demonstrate their learning at higher levels.

Several teachers provided a useful insight into their challenge of practice, saying it was relatively easy to tap into students' interests and to engage them, however, when tasks required hard thinking, persistence and belief, students were observed to give up, reluctant to stay the course, and tended to choose easier subjects. At the same time, teachers talked about not wanting to simplify their expectations and curriculum requirements.

These observations are supported by the year 8 and 9 students' response to the annual Wellbeing and Engagement survey. While responses indicate an improvement in students' perceptions of their learning readiness (cognitive engagement and academic self-concept) from 2017 to 2018, this data shows students rate themselves lower than the state average. Data and teacher observation need greater exploration, and consideration of implications for teaching and pedagogy. Explicit strategies and support for students may be required to develop a cultural shift in their understanding that a level of learning discomfort is critical for deeper learning.

In summary, there was clear evidence of curriculum development, associated unit plans, learning and assessment tasks, where student engagement in learning is supported. A consistent understanding of how teachers develop stretch and challenge was less evident. The long-term investment into curriculum development and a focus on building teacher capacity to support literacy and numeracy instruction have provided strong foundations for successful teaching and learning. Further opportunities exist for the development of agreements of evidence-based pedagogical approaches that support intellectual stretch and challenge in student learning.

Direction 1

Collaboratively develop agreements of evidence-based pedagogical approaches that support intellectual stretch and challenge in student learning.

To what extent do teaching teams reflect on practice and use this information to improve?

Through discussion and observation with a range of stakeholders within the school community, a positive and supportive culture is obvious. Staff members support each other in initiatives that attempt to drive improvement in student learning. As stated in the previous section of this report, many teachers are willing and ready to 'have a go' at improving their understanding of the students (individually and as a community), and at engaging in innovation. Some less experienced teachers were prepared to step up and take on leadership roles. The culture of faculties was described as varying from collegiate to collaborative, and the school culture is mostly learner-focused, providing an important solid foundation for further improvement, embracing and implementing system-wide changes.

The school is organised in a way that enables horizontal discussions for teachers across subject disciplines, and vertically, so teachers gain an understanding of year 8 to 12 learning requirements. The school achieved an effective balance, and is developing sound systems to support this structure, enabling communication and connection between curriculum teams and learning areas. Teachers indicated the process of curriculum review and renewal is hampered by a lack of time, although there is a strong staff willingness to provide contemporary and innovative curriculum opportunities for students.

Moderation practices at the IBMYP and SACE levels provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their task design and assessment plans. External moderation occurs through the IB networks, Partnership alliance and at the SACE level, through the Western Area Secondary School Network. The school participates in the internationally accredited IBMYP self-review program every 5 years for international benchmarking of work in the middle school. The school has capacity in this area, due to the numbers of teachers in the senior school who are involved in SACE moderation, including as chief moderators.

Staff members, including school services officers in the special education team, commented positively about the impact professional learning had on their work. Teachers provided examples of opportunities they have been afforded to enrich their teaching, and to work beyond the school. The review panel also

observed effectiveness of the internal professional development provided, particularly in literacy teaching. Improvement in students' literacy skills is seen as everyone's business, and teachers across subject areas were able to give examples of vocabulary development and grammatical teaching (for example, nominalisation) they do to enable students to succeed.

There is an expectation that all staff engage in the performance development planning (PDP) processes. While it is clear staff have ongoing conversations and a willingness to share practice, it was not evident to the review panel that the PDP process currently has a significant impact on how teachers reflect on, improve their practice, or develop greater student agency.

Leadership at all levels of the school articulate the vision for the school, providing clear strategic direction, establishing structures that enable horizontal and vertical communication and collaboration, and an alignment of professional and performance development processes with the school's improvement agenda. It involves the capability of the leader to use a range of processes to energise and motivate staff, influence others while providing a balance of support and challenge, willingness and capability to hold tough conversations while maintaining the relationship, and lead evaluative practices so that the focus of the work is on what makes a difference.

A group of leaders were asked how they support their team members' improvement, and leaders referred to their modelling of good practice as a major strategy to influence others. Several leaders referred to their participation in a professional development course focused on leading conversations with staff as being helpful. The review panel noted that Perspective survey data conducted in 2018 (62% response rate) showed a less favourable response to the statement "At our site, we challenge the practice of colleagues in a robust way" (33% of respondents supported this statement), suggesting there are staff who think it is time to 'ramp-up' the expectations.

As stated in the section above, the identified challenge of practice relates to providing students with strategies, dispositions and pedagogies to embrace and succeed when intellectually stretched. To enable the school to meet this challenge, leadership capacities could be further enhanced through structured development of leadership capacities to support pedagogical development, accountability and evaluative processes within teams.

Direction 2

Strategically implement a structured development of leadership capacities to support pedagogical development and accountability, and evaluative processes within teams.

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

There is an extensive range of datasets available through the data walls, DayMap, Dashboard and SACE reports, to support staff in tracking and monitoring student progress, facilitating team discussions, PLCs/PLTs and development of action or implementation plans, and for individual teacher planning. Moderation processes are implemented to ensure judgement and standards are consistent and supported with internal and external data.

Students in different year levels are getting prompt and concise feedback on their drafts, so that they can enhance their *summative* work.

SACE data has been used to develop a SACE improvement plan. This plan has been discussed in various forums, and will need to be implemented during 2019 and beyond. It raises the question of whether the

school's expectations of students are sufficiently rigorous. This question needs to be explored further with implications for practice articulated and documented.

Information about, and negotiated goals for students with special learning needs (NEPs and specific learning difficulties), is uploaded on DayMap, so that all teachers can easily access information to modify their planning. The school is also adopting the One Child One Plan approach, which is intended to streamline this process. This data is used to support intervention, which includes communication with families, homework centre, and flexi centre that provides more individualised tutoring during lessons as well as the NEP process for verified students. There is an internal school professional development staff meeting, in which a 'café' process is used to enable teachers to share examples of their planning in modifying the curriculum. Some teachers indicated they found it particularly useful to see examples of their colleagues' planning practices in differentiation.

Student attendance rates are a concern for the school. Key staff members were able to provide the 'back story' about the students with chronically poor attendance, and the school's efforts to support families is commendable. A deeper analysis of the available wellbeing, attendance and student perception data might result in more strategic and targeted actions.

The leadership team conduct a consultative process to analyse whole-school results at the end of each year to review the school's strategic progress and revise for the next phase of strategic prioritisation and planning. The strategic management of change by the principal and leaders over time is commendable. The school has a clearly articulated direction, and staff are on-board with the improvement journey. It was noted the current site improvement plan seems to lag behind, and does not sufficiently represent the school's clear focus on improving student learning and teacher capacity development.

The development of leadership capacity to use data (academic and perception) more effectively and regularly to progress priorities and targets, track and monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness of practices and strategies, will further enhance the focus on student learning improvement. This process of review and renewal can be further enriched with student voice to ensure the necessary alignment of these priorities to students and their learning needs. Departmental expectations within the new improvement plan for 2019 will require this capacity within leaders to ensure the enactment of the priorities for improvement.

Direction 3

Develop the capacity of leaders to use data more effectively to further enhance the focus on student learning improvement.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Le Fevre High School.

Effective practice in the implementation of the school's literacy strategy and the long-term development of teacher capacity around literacy in its improvement agenda was present. Evidence-based planning to meet the literacy needs of students, mentioned through examples of recently updated unit plans and assessment tasks, is becoming a feature of teacher practice.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Le Fevre High School has developed a culture of improvement characterised by high expectations of students while working in partnership with parents and stakeholders. Student achievement data and other evidence (for example, multiple measures) is used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels.

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

1. Collaboratively develop agreements of evidence-based pedagogical approaches that support intellectual stretch and challenge in student learning.
2. Strategically implement a structured development of leadership capacities to support pedagogical development and accountability, and evaluative processes within teams.
3. Develop the capacity of leaders to use data more effectively to further enhance the focus on student learning improvement.

Based on the school's current performance, Le Fevre High School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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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 82%.

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 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 58% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend has been upwards, from 44% in 2016 to 58% in 2018.

For 2018 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving with the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 5% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 9%, or 3 of 33 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 29%, or 2 of 7 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 53% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 11% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 37% or 7 of 19 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 57% or 4 of 7 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2017, 48% of students enrolled in February and 92% 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 2015 and 2017, the trend for has been upwards, from 40% in 2015 to 48% in 2017.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2017, 84% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 81% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 62% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 98% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety-two percent of grades achieved in the 2017 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for has been upwards, from 84% in 2015 to 92% in 2017). Seventeen percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 58 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2017.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2017, 9% of students achieved an 'A' grade, and 40% achieved a 'B' grade. This result represents an improvement and an improvement from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' grade and 'B' grade respectively.

In terms of 2017 tertiary entrance, 61%, or 35 out of 57 potential students achieved an ATAR, while 75%, or 43 out of 57 achieved TAFE SA selection score. There was also 1 student who was successful at achieving a merit.