

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR JOHN PIRIE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Sue George-Duif, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Olivia O'Neil and Cez Green, Review Principals.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of John Pirie Secondary School has verified that the school is compliant in the majority of aspects. The following is a list of areas identified by the Principal as non-compliant and actions to ensure compliance in the near future:

- *Documentation and monitoring of a site Parent Complaints Policy – to be reviewed by staff and Governing Council in 2016.*
- *Individual Learning Plans developed for all Aboriginal Students, and Children under the care of the Minister, are currently under review to increase student ownership and effectiveness.*
- *The Site Improvement Plan and Policy Group are working to strengthen targeted, relevant professional learning.*
- *The school has established provision for student voice through traditional student leadership processes. The school aims to introduce student voice through feedback for learning.*
- *The Camps and Excursions Policy is one of a number of policies under review.*
- *The school is reviewing its procedures to ensure compliance with the Records Management policy, and has in place processes for confidential management of student data.*

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 79%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

John Pirie Secondary School has approximately 604 enrolments and is located in the regional town of Port Pirie. It is the only public secondary school in the town. The school has an ICSEA score of 923, and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 10% Aboriginal students, 19% Students with Disabilities, 3% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 53% of families eligible for School Card assistance. In 2014, there was one student enrolled at the school under the Guardianship of the Minister. The numbers of these targeted groups has been rising.

The school Executive Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his first tenure and the following leaders:

Deputy Principal

Assistant Principal, Numeracy and Literacy

Assistant Principal, Senior School

Assistant Principal, Middle School

Assistant Principal, Timetable and Technology.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning:	How well are the students achieving over time?
Effective Teaching:	How effectively are teachers using the Australian Curriculum and SACE to support and improve student learning? How effectively do teachers build a positive and supportive classroom environment?
Effective Leadership:	To what extent is leadership capacity evident across the school?

How well are the students achieving over time?

In 2014, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 35% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

- *Between 2011 and 2014, the average percentage of students who achieved the SEA is 39%.*

There were six students, or 3% of Year 9 students, who achieved in the top two NAPLAN bands in reading.

Four students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in Year 3 remain in the upper bands in Year 9. However, 16 students are no longer reaching those higher bands of proficiency in reading.

In 2014, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 34% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA.

- *Between 2011 and 2014, the percentage of students at SEA was 32%, 29%, 32% and 34% respectively.*
- *The average of students over the four-year period was 31%.*

The percentage of Year 9 students achieving the top two proficiency bands in Numeracy is 4%.

- *Four out of the 16 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Numeracy in Year 3, were retained in the higher proficiency bands in Year 9 NAPLAN testing.*

At Stage One of the South Australian Certificate of Education, 67% of students completed the compulsory literacy requirement, while 66% of students met the compulsory numeracy component.

The percentage of grades that are above the SEA standard of 'C' or better for the compulsory numeracy requirement at Stage One was 75%.

The percentage of grades that were above the SEA standard of 'C-' or above for attempted Stage 2 subjects was 82%.

- *Between 2012 and 2014 there was an average of 81% of students achieving a 'C-' or above.*
- *The percentage of students completing the Stage Two, compulsory Research Project requirement in 2014 was 82%, an increase from 65% in 2013.*

In 2014, the percentage of students completing the SACE as a percentage of potential completers was 89.8%.

- *Between 2012 and 2014, the average was 75%, 88%, and 85% respectively.*
- *The percentage of students who completed the SACE with some VET studies was 69%.*

How effectively are teachers using the Australian Curriculum and SACE to support and improve student learning?

The staff has concentrated their efforts on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum by the development of a common Learning and Assessment Plan template. Staff complete unit plans at their discretion and it is expected that the unit plans are submitted to the Coordinator of the relevant learning area so that they can, in turn, provide feedback. The assessment plans include information about the topic, assessment criteria, assessment tasks, timeline, achievement standards, general capabilities and cross-curricular priorities.

Staff from John Pirie Secondary School and local primary and preschools are members of various Professional Learning Communities, with differing foci offered by the Port Pirie Partnership. The Health and Personal Development PLC is using the implementation of the Australian Curriculum to develop a seamless transition in teaching and learning. They have developed a common Learning and Assessment Plan proforma and a clearly documented process. The common template contains more detailed information regarding the units taught in each of the year levels. Accompanying documentation includes elements of the learning design process, describing the learning intention, key concepts, Literacy and Numeracy skills to be explicitly taught, and how students will show evidence of learning. The Health and Personal Development teachers in the partnership schools are in the process of developing documentation on all years of learning. For example, the primary teachers are developing the teaching resources for Reception to Year 7 and the secondary teachers are developing the resources from Years 8 to 12. Some units are being trialled in 2015 and 2016.

The Review Panel found it was difficult to obtain curriculum planning documentation for all years of schooling and in all curriculum areas. This perception was reinforced by comments from teaching staff and some leaders - they were concerned that they had to plan for learning in areas in which they had no formal training, and the frequent timetable and staffing changes had resulted in them planning different subject areas within and over the years. They also believed the meeting structure distracted from their work in this area.

Staff have been supported in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum by the provision of a Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) leadership position. The decision to ensure that this position is based in Port Pirie to replace the previous model of the person travelling from Adelaide has been well-received by both leaders and teachers alike. Staff members report this allows a more tailored approach to professional learning and coaching for staff. However, they report that the meeting schedule does not provide sufficient time to allow for deep and sustained work in this area.

The ability to attract and retain teachers remains an issue for John Pirie Secondary School. School-provided data demonstrates a high staff turn-over, with many teachers and leaders early in their careers. This is coupled with the number of staff on leave and winning leadership and teaching positions in other locations, compounding the issues of successfully using the Australian Curriculum and SACE to improve student learning. The panel believes that both students and staff would benefit, in terms of continuity and clarity, from the development and use of common, sequential and structured curriculum documentation in all learning areas. This would provide clearer expectations on what is to be taught across year levels and bands of schooling, and guarantee consistency in terms of learning and standards expected.

Direction 1

Improve student achievement by allowing sufficient time within the school's meeting structure and staff learning days for the preparation and adoption of a documented and planned curriculum, in all year levels and all learning areas, utilising a common template.

How effectively do teachers build a positive and supportive classroom environment?

The 2015 Site Improvement Plan 2015-2018, identifies that a key strategy in building a culture of achievement at the school is to embed the student qualities into the school and wider community culture. This requires shared responsibility and accountability by all those who work and learn at John Pirie Secondary School.

The Principal has been instrumental in developing the student qualities of *Respect, Confidence, Persistence* and *Responsibility*. These qualities were developed through a collaborative and inclusive process with the school, primary schools and members of the wider Port Pirie community, and underpin the expected behaviours of all who work and study within the school.

When asked to describe the strengths of John Pirie Secondary School, staff, students, parents and members of the community commented favourably on the impact of the Principal. They provided examples of the new administration and student services facilities, the garden areas, and the uniform as tangible examples of school improvements. Community leaders commented on the positive impact these strategies have had in relation to the reputation and image of the school with the community, and believed that this was vital in ensuring students felt a sense of pride and belonging in their school. The staff commented on the importance and effectiveness of the teams within the school in supporting each other to learn and enhance their skills. The Principal emphasised the cohesive and effective work of the Executive Leadership Team in leading these improvements. However, staff, the community, parents or students did not identify the team's work as a driver of educational change.

Senior students who were interviewed clearly articulated the changes in the school, including their observations of more respectful behaviour of students, and could openly convey the student qualities. Staff and leaders reported that the reduction of incidents in bullying and incidents of violence has been achieved through clear expectations and strong consequences. However, during the visit, the Review panel observed a vast difference in the expectations and adoption of procedures described in the Behaviour and Uniform policies, with the actual practice by a number of staff and students. Concerns raised included duty of care, follow-up of behavioural issues and demonstration of protective behaviour measures for some staff.

Direction 2

Improve student achievement and engagement by the development of consistent, proactive and responsive Student Behaviour Management Systems, that promote learning and engagement. Clearly outline the responsibilities of all staff and continually monitor its use to ensure consistency of practice.

The school caters for a wide range of student pathways, including ongoing tertiary education and employment. All students interviewed could clearly articulate their preferred post-school destinations, their pathways and the support they receive for achieving their goals. For example, students outlined the benefits of the University Pathway program in preparing them for life studying in Adelaide, by facilitating visits to university and by focusing them on their studies. Other students reported their involvement in Vocational Training Programs, including automotive, welding and animal husbandry.

The Site Improvement Plan for 2015 identifies a focus on achievement, teaching and learning, and is supported by one-year operational plans. The Principal reported a focus on the learning intention and success criteria in the classroom. Students were able to articulate the success criteria, although not using that terminology. Again, the panel identified, through a range of evidence, including interviews with teachers and leadership, a mismatch between the stated focuses on the Site Improvement Plan and the focus on learning intention.

When asked to describe how they knew how they were going with their learning and how they determined their progress, students commented that teachers were willing to provide extra help, if asked, in class and out of class, including out of normal school hours. Even the most disengaged students acknowledged the efforts of the staff to support their wellbeing. They described the staff as caring and easy to talk to. The panel identified that many staff are passionate about supporting the students, and are dedicated and committed to this focus. In relation to feedback, students believed that the use of rubrics was the most common feedback tool, with many teachers highlighting the standard of work achieved by the students, some identifying where they should be aiming for, and others providing detailed feedback to them. However, the majority of the student comments focused on wellbeing support.

The staff aim to create a safe, supportive and comfortable environment, and focus their effort on student wellbeing. The Student Intervention Team, consisting of representatives from all departments in the school, relies on their knowledge of the students. To some extent that data is used to determine the identification of students at risk. The panel was interested in exploring the percentage of students who accessed services

provided by the Student Intervention Team and requested data to determine this. The data compiled and provided on the day of the request indicated that approximately 80% of students access the services overseen by the team.

This method of support relies heavily on the use of withdrawing students from lesson and providing them with a wellbeing program based on their needs. Students access the Flexible Learning and Intervention Program (FLIPS Centre) if they prefer to work in an alternative environment to the classroom, to access a program, or if they require additional help or are experiencing difficulty controlling their anger. Students with Disabilities are either mainstreamed or access specialist assistance in two identified classes. The Aboriginal Education Team ensures that a range of cultural activities are accessed by students. A range of external services are accessed by the students, including Boystown.

Students are identified for intensive literacy and numeracy programmes within the Flexible Learning Program (FLO) or additional classes in Years 8 and 9, based on their PAT-R and PAT-M testing results. However, it is unclear how this data is used to inform the teaching and learning process or to measure the success of intervention programs.

The panel believes that staff and students would benefit from integrated professional development on growth mindsets, and a clear focus on learning.

Direction 3

Improve student achievement and engagement through a staff and student learning focus around growth mindsets.

To what extent is leadership capacity evident across the school?

The panel believes the current leadership structure, which makes up 42% of staff, and current systems, including the use of resources to employ approximately 40 support staff (many of them to help students complete their work or provide wellbeing support), further perpetuates educational disadvantage experienced by many students. Whilst the panel acknowledges the key to improving student outcomes is through relationship-building and the implementation of the Site Improvement Plan, which is in its early stages, the panel believes that the school should, as a matter of urgency, pursue an underpinning focus on learning and high expectations.

The Principal, leadership and staff enjoy the collegiality of working with each other and within their teams. Leaders report that they are encouraged to pursue leadership goals and there are transparent opportunities for staff to build their leadership capacity. Leadership learning activities have been provided through the employment of consultants, high stakes performance conversations and the opportunities to learn from each other. They are resilient and speak positively about the students they work with and the challenging work they do.

However, the panel believes that the extent to which stated areas for teaching and learning match actual practice is an issue. There is a whole-school Numeracy and Literacy Agreement, but there appears to be little implementation and reference by other staff. The panel believes that there is an absence of an improvement-focused culture endeavouring to provide a coherent whole-school approach to learning and teaching.

In relation to educational leadership, the panel believes that leaders would benefit from greater delegated responsibility, visible leadership on a broader level and the use of data for planning. More thorough, consistent and focused Performance Development and Management processes, where teachers and leaders reflect on their practice would also be very beneficial.

Direction 4

Build a focus on learning and high achievement of students, through reviewing the leadership structure, the use of support staff, the improvement cycle, delegated authority and leaders' learning.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

John Pirie Secondary School is performing below expectations. The school has a strong wellbeing ethos and the basis upon which to develop a clearer focus on student learning and achievement, in order to improve student learning outcomes.

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

1. Improve student achievement by allowing sufficient time within the school's meeting structure and staff learning days for the preparation and adoption of a documented and planned curriculum, in all year levels and all learning areas, utilising a common template.
2. Improve student achievement and engagement by the development of consistent proactive and responsive Student Behaviour Management Systems, that promote learning and engagement. Clearly outline the responsibilities of all staff and continually monitor its use to ensure consistency of practice.
3. Improve student achievement and engagement through a staff and student learning focus around growth mindsets.
4. Build a focus on learning and high achievement of students, through reviewing the leadership structure, the use of support staff, the improvement cycle, delegated authority and leaders' learning.

Based on the school's current performance, John Pirie Secondary School will be externally reviewed again in 2017.

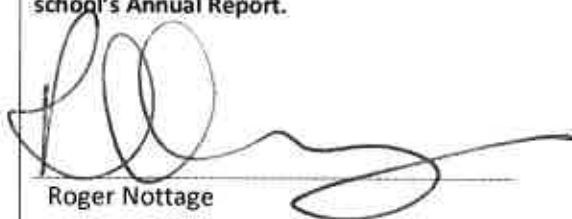


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REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.



Roger Nottage
PRINCIPAL
JOHN PIRIE SECONDARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson