

# **Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### **Report for Urrbrae Agricultural High School**

Conducted in February 2019



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## 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, they all have been considered and contributed 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 Tim Kloeden and Sandy Richardson, Review Principals.

## Review Process

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

- Presentation from the Executive Leaders
- Class visits, including Urrbrae Estate (the farm)
- Document Analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Executive leaders
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Support Officers
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Urrbrae Agricultural High School caters for students from year 8 to 12. It is situated in Netherby, 8kms from the CBD. The enrolment in 2018 was 1025 students and 1012 in 2019. The enrolment trend has been steady since 2015, with approximately 200 students in each year level. FLO enrolments in 2018 were 21.

The school is classified as Category 7 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1507. The local Partnership is Mitcham Plains.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 8% students with a verified disability, 12% families eligible for school card assistance, 2% students of EALD background and 6 young people in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the second year of her first tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal, three assistant principals and 14 coordinators. There are 79 teachers including three in the early years of their career and 35 Step 9 teachers.

Urrbrae Agricultural High School is a special interest agricultural school, recognised for its studies in agriculture, science, technology and the environment. The school's motto is 'Science with Practice'.

## The last ESR was undertaken in 2015 and the previous directions were:

- Direction 1** Ensure higher levels of learning for all students by the implementation of effective Performance Management and Development processes by all line managers, with all staff, which align to the Site Improvement Plan and are based on data, evidence-based strategies and feedback.
- Direction 2** Improve staff cohesiveness and commitment to the Site Improvement Agenda by developing and implementing more effective decision-making processes and addressing, documenting and following through on inappropriate behaviours and non-compliance.
- Direction 3** Build a positive and rigorous culture of professional learning based on evidence about student achievement, informed by research and relevant to practice.
- Direction 4** Improve the school's self-review and improvement processes by incorporating a clear focus on data analysis, including explicit targets in the Site Improvement Plan (SIP), connecting teachers' and all leaders' work to the SIP and regularly reviewing the effectiveness of programs and strategies.



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

The current External School Review made evident the work undertaken to respond to the 2015 ESR directions, and to systematically embed improvement in culture and effective practice. Professional Learning (PL) forums are reportedly more intentional and aligned with the school's priorities. Almost all teachers reported that they appreciate the dedicated time to explore, discuss and trial practice. Professional Urrbrae Development Sessions (PUDS) are convened three times a term and as well as building teachers' capacity, the sessions provide opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills. These forums have offered PL in differentiated practice, literacy, numeracy and data analysis.

The culture of the school and conditions for effective learning are vastly different to those identified in the 2015 ESR. Decision-making practices are reported as transparent and inclusive. The Executive Leadership team structure is aligned with school priorities and almost all staff reported that role clarity is evident. Actions taken by the new leadership team have seen professional behaviours and interactions that previously compromised conditions for learning challenged and addressed, leading to greater staff unity and collective responsibility.

Prior to the new iteration of Improvement Planning introduced in 2019, school leadership worked strategically to identify improvement imperatives identified by data analysis. These formed the 2017-2018 School Improvement Plan (SIP) and provided a broader understanding of direction and individual staff roles in actioning improvement strategies. A more detailed report regarding Improvement Planning in 2019 is provided in section two of this document.

Performance and Development processes (PDP) are reported by most staff as more formalised in 2019, and documentation is aligned with systemic requirements. All teaching staff perceived the process to be more personalised and afforded greater importance. Leaders with line management responsibility discussed opportunities provided to build their capacity to implement PDPs through targeted professional learning. The ESR panel agrees that an opportunity exists to better align PDP goals with the school's improvement targets and actions and to identify strategies teachers and leaders will undertake to work intentionally towards those goals.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

#### *How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?*

The ESR panel acknowledges that in February 2019, improvement planning systems are in the early stages across the system. To date, generation of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) has been enacted as collectively as possible, given time constraints. Most staff are aware of the Goals and Challenges Of Practice (COPs), and some are beginning to articulate the implications for classroom practice. Data including NAPLAN, PAT Maths and Reading and SACE has been employed by leaders to identify the COPs. The draft SIP was tabled for discussion in term four 2018, where staff had the opportunity to consider, discuss and become more familiar with the school's intended direction. It is noted that the leaders were conscious of the school context within the plan, and were committed to improving learning outcomes and contemporary practice within the areas of Agriculture and Science. Faculty Action Plans to progress the identified strategies are in their infancy, and now provide an opportunity to bring about a coherent, focused response to the SIP.

**Direction 1** Ensure the actions and priorities of each faculty align with the School Improvement Plan.

### EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

#### *How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?*

The profile of data and the concept of differentiated practice are afforded a higher priority within the school in 2019. The SIP Goal 3 identifies differentiation as a priority to which the school will work and Professional Learning forums have seen teachers provided opportunities to explore analytical use of data to inform tailored planning.

Evidence of teachers accessing and responding to data to plan for individual students' needs was sourced in several discussion forums. Some staff articulated how they have used PAT-R data to identify students' miscues in the area of comprehension, reporting that the drawing of inference is an opportunity for improvement for a number of students. Of these staff, several discussed how they would respond to this data, whilst others agreed they would require greater support to implement teaching that builds students' comprehension strategies.

Teachers' concepts of differentiation varied, lacking specificity. A number of staff reported differentiated practice as that which allows students to choose a topic, or how they will present their research findings. Some describe the levelled English and Maths classes as opportunities for students' learning needs to be met. Students report that learners with varying expertise are usually provided the same assignment or task and that some teachers may offer one-on-one support to those requiring assistance to complete the work.

Parents describe the concept of differentiation as one the school excels in, perceiving the many varied and valued extra-curricular options as opportunities for students' various interests to be met.

The school's priority to develop differentiated planning and practice is timely. Limited evidence of teaching designed to meet students' specific learning needs, or diagnostic use of achievement data, was sourced.



**Direction 2** Establish a clear and coherent understanding of differentiated practice across the school through collective exploration of evidence-based, contemporary research into effective practice designed to meet learners' needs.

**Direction 3** Design and deliver intentional teaching tailored to learners' needs by systematically building teachers' capacity to work analytically and responsively with data.

## **EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING**

### ***To what degree do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?***

At the time of the ESR, year 8 students were involved in the peer leader program whereby their successful transition to secondary school is scaffolded by year 11 peer leaders. This program sees the peer leader provided training to fill the role and dedicated events for the younger students to develop a relationship with their peer, and, gradually new classmates. The program is ongoing throughout semester one and offers both parties positive learning experiences.

A recent focus on the use of drafts to provide students with feedback has seen learners offered opportunities for improvement in the development of their written work. Students in senior years report that they are provided rubrics that include performance standards and grade criteria, and most agree that they use these to monitor or assess their progress. Middle-years students explain that some teachers provide criteria for success, describing this as varying in intentionality; some criteria pertain to learning and understanding, whilst others refer to the end product they create.

Evidence of teachers seeking and responding to student feedback was sourced, but not widely practised across the school. Students agreed that they would welcome opportunities to offer feedback to teachers, citing concepts such as pace of the lesson, opportunities for extension and practical, inquiry-based learning as areas they would raise for discussion.

Opportunities for students to provide authentic input to the learning agenda and to offer teachers feedback are few. Students exhibited limited knowledge of learning intentions and were not able to describe having contributed to or negotiated task or assessment design. The student cohort is characterised by compliant, respectful and appreciative learners who want to be at the school. The opportunity to capitalise on the enthusiasm learners bring to the school and to maximise their agency within the learning agenda is apparent, and exciting. This will contribute to achieving the school's current improvement imperatives, within the 2019 SIP.

**Direction 4** Initiate and sustain greater student influence in learning through the development and consistent implementation of teaching strategies that elicit student input, enable them to see the purpose of their learning and independently monitor their progress.

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Urrbrae Agricultural High School, the agriculture curriculum engages students in purposeful learning, coupled with strong connections to literacy and numeracy learning.

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

- Direction 1      Ensure the actions and priorities of each faculty align with the School Improvement Plan.
- Direction 2      Establish a clear and coherent understanding of differentiated practice across the school through collective exploration of evidence-based, contemporary research into effective practice designed to meet learners' needs.
- Direction 3      Design and deliver intentional teaching tailored to learners' needs by systematically building teachers' capacity to work analytically and responsively with data.
- Direction 4      Initiate and sustain greater student influence in learning through the development and consistent implementation of teaching strategies that elicit student input, enable them to see the purpose of their learning and independently monitor their progress.

Based on the school's current performance, Urrbrae Agricultural High School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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# 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 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2018 18% 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, 41% or 27 of 66 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 53% or 30 of 57 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 80% 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 higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 18% 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, 46% or 15 of 33 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and 54% or 22 of 41 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

### SACE


In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 94.4% of students 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 2018, 98% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 96% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 99.5% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety seven percent of grades achieved in the 2018 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 25% of all grades were at an 'A' level, and 45% at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' grade and 'B' grade respectively.





Twenty four percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 21 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2018.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 118 students achieved an ATAR and 139 a TAFE SA selection score. There were also 7 students who were successful at achieving a merit.