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 framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Liz Schneyder, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and John Tiver, Review Principal.
Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Balaklava High School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 86.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Balaklava High School is situated 92kms north of the Adelaide CBD and belongs to the Lower Mid-North DECD Partnership. The enrolment in 2015 was 316 students. Student enrolment has declined steadily over the past 5 years, but is expected to stabilise at just below 300. The school has an ICSEA score of 953, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3.5% Aboriginal students, 11% Students with Disabilities, 4% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 0.2% students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM) and 23% of families eligible for School Card assistance. There has been a change to the school community as increased numbers of families are moving north of Adelaide in search of affordable housing.

Eight students are enrolled in FLO programs.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 3rd year of his second tenure, a Deputy Principal responsible for timetabling and daily organization, a Senior Leader responsible for the student wellbeing team, and 6 Coordinators, including a Student Counsellor and 5 Curriculum Area/Year Level Leaders. There are 18FTE teachers in 2016, including 2 in their first two years of teaching, and 343 hours of support staff time is allocated.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 52% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend has been slightly downwards, from 58% to 52%. The school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Reading, 4.5% of students achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 14%, or 1 of 7 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015, and 40%, or 2 of 5 students from Year 7, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 53% of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. The school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system. For 2012-2014 the school was achieving higher than the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy, 9% of students achieved in the top two bands. This result represents little or
no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33%, or 3 of 9 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 7, remain in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion, 98% of students who had the potential to complete the SACE, did go on to successfully achieve their SACE.

Eighty-seven percent of grades achieved in the 2015 SACE Stage 1 were C or higher. Ninety-six percent of grades achieved in the 2015 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher.

One hundred percent of Stage 1 students achieved the SEA in English. At least 92% of Stage 2 students achieved a C grade or higher in all subjects except humanities/social sciences, which was 87%.

There were improvements in SEA achievement in maths and science at both Stage 1 and Stage 2.

One hundred percent of Stage 1 students achieved a C or better in the compulsory Personal Learning Plan and Literacy requirements of the SACE. Eighty-four percent achieved a C or better in the numeracy component. Ninety-seven percent of Stage 2 students achieved a C- or better in the compulsory Research Project.

Seventy-five percent of VET students completed Certificate 3 units of competency compared to a state average of 40%.

Lines of Inquiry

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<th>To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?</th>
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To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

The Review Panel interviewed many students from all year levels and also talked to students in classes, about their learning. Most of these students were supportive of their school and the opportunities they could access, and believed most of their teachers encouraged them to aspire. They were honest about their aspirations, with senior students admitting to aiming for an ATAR of ‘around 70’ and a C grade in their subjects. Some of the Year 8 students indicated higher aspirations.

Teachers were pleased with the improvement in the school’s SACE results, but shared their frustration that, despite their endeavours, there has not yet been improvement in NAPLAN results and other Middle School data sets. They attributed this to a casual approach amongst many of the students towards their learning, and possibly towards the testing regime.

There are increasing numbers of new students who are ‘below benchmark’ in literacy and numeracy and intervention strategies and programs are available for these students. Two newly appointed Curriculum Leaders in Maths/Numeracy and English/Literacy, and teachers in the Learning Enhancement Hub, are leading and managing the process. A new model for literacy and numeracy support is being trialled in 2016.

The change in ‘student cohort’ was consistently mentioned by all members of the school community who were interviewed, as having a significant impact on school improvement, and on the engagement and
achievement of all students. During 2015, a ‘Resilience Youth Australia’ survey provided information about the student cohort, including the impact of trauma, abuse, neglect and non-attendance on literacy and numeracy levels and student aspirations. The school’s own ‘Bullying and Harassment’ survey provided similar information. As a result, the school applied for, and received, an ICAN grant to establish a ‘Learning Enhancement Hub’. Teachers could articulate positive outcomes for some students because of their participation in programs provided by the Hub, but there were concerns about the sustainability of the program.

Some new programs are in place for high achievers in Years 8 and 9 maths. English and HASS where teachers are looking for strategies to challenge students and make them ‘assessment capable’. They are also working with colleagues from nearby schools in the ECD partnership on improving their task design and assessment practices.

Students in the senior school are supported by the Year 11 Coordinator to pursue relevant pathways that will engage them in their learning and retain them at school. This was widely acknowledged during the Review Panel’s visit. A broad range of options is available, despite falling enrolments. These include Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses available on and off campus, goal-setting, and pathway planning embedded in the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) that is delivered by Year 10 home group teachers.

Student engagement and achievement is tracked by a number of leaders, using a range of different spreadsheets, and is shared with all teachers. However, the Review Panel was unable to observe how or where this data was impacting on the practice of teachers and, in interviews, teachers were not able to consistently articulate how their students were being engaged and challenged in their classes. Students indicated that they have limited opportunity to provide feedback to their teachers, despite two feedback weeks being formally scheduled into each Term calendar. Leaders and some of the new teachers talked about the value of data in informing change in teaching practice and outcomes for students, but others found time constraints limited their capacity to both access the data and use it.

**Direction 1**
Engage and challenge all students by using data and feedback from students to inform and influence teaching practice.

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**How effectively are teachers using DECD pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?**

Eighteen months ago, the school adopted the ‘Visible Learning Framework’ to guide curriculum development, innovation and improvement in teacher practice. This was a commitment made by all schools in the ECD partnership. While there is some consistency in language used by teachers about pedagogy, many conceded that the Framework had lost some momentum in 2016, as teachers focused on implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) and improvement in SACE and NAPLAN data.

Most teachers could articulate requirements of the Australian Curriculum and SACE, and the achievement and performance standards. A Year 8-12 scope and sequence across all curriculum areas is available on the intranet. Planning is underway for resource material and lesson plans to be stored on DayMap, the school’s Learner Management System, in preparation for the eventual roll-out of the parent portal.

There has been a deliberate strategy by leadership to employ more early career teachers in the school. These new teachers use the Visible Learning language and are appreciative of the quality of feedback and guidance they are receiving from the Leadership Team, as well as the license to try new methodologies in their lessons. Building on this, additional support could be provided to enable more effective classroom practice that delivers the content of the AC, while also engaging and challenging the broad range of students.

Facilities and equipment, particularly for Agriculture and in the Trade Training Centre, are of high quality and supportive of innovative teaching practice. A new drama suite is about to be built. It is important that these facilities and equipment are shared across the campus to engage and challenge students in their learning. Through this, opportunities exist for innovation and to create a focus on Science, Technology,
Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

All staff were provided with a laptop in 2014 to record attendance and, from 2016, all students also have a laptop. The Review Panel did observe a lesson where ICT was used to engage the students. Students were not enthusiastic about using ICT in their lessons and shared that it was not often incorporated by teachers. A strategy to implement the Digital Technologies curriculum is yet to be determined.

Some teachers are sharing teaching, task design and moderation strategies with colleagues from schools in Riverton and Clare and are finding this enjoyable and professionally valuable. There is also increased participation of teachers in Professional Learning programs offered through the ECD partnership. The Leadership Team is supportive and manage release time effectively.

However, many students and parents raised concerns about the consistency in teaching practice and teacher expectations, and the capacity of some teachers to manage their classes and provide relevant curriculum. There is minimal understanding of authentic assessment or formative assessment within the teaching groups that we interviewed, and most students are not familiar with rubrics or assessment plans.

The Review Panel spoke to student leaders, and one of the clear messages was that their participation in providing feedback to teachers and leaders, and in any learning design, has been limited. The development of student voice, within the Visible Learning context, is a priority in 2016.

**Direction 2**

*In order to improve curriculum delivery, focus professional learning on formative assessment practices, student feedback and the use of student voice to inform learning design.*

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**How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?**

It was evident in all interviews conducted by the Review Panel that there is high regard for the school's Leadership Team. Teachers and students feel supported and parents appreciate the timely communication they receive.

There is consistency in language used by members of the leadership group about school priorities, the Visible Learning Framework and the use of data to inform improvement. However, support for emerging leaders and the need for succession planning in regard to school leadership was raised a number of times.

Leaders could articulate their roles in the school and appreciated the opportunities for professional development provided, based on their negotiated personal learning plan. There is a well-understood process for line management. The meeting cycle supports regular and planned communication and high-level educational dialogue between teachers and leaders. There is a Site Improvement Plan that is acknowledged.

The student wellbeing team appreciate their positions being in place for the remainder of the year and, in particular, that of their leader. Other leaders shared their frustration at having to juggle multiple leadership roles and the difficulties they experience in providing leadership, rather than management. They also expressed concern at their capacity to implement a broad range of school priorities, including the Australian Curriculum and Visible Learning Framework, given the time available and their lack of teaching and leadership experience.

**Direction 3**

*Provide professional development that builds the capacity of the Leadership Team to implement and sustain school priorities.*
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Balaklava High School has a culture of improvement that was discussed enthusiastically by students, teachers, leaders and parents. There is a widespread commitment to improving the engagement and achievement of all students and challenging them to realise their potential.

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

1. Engage and challenge all students by using data and feedback from students to inform and influence teaching practice.
2. In order to improve curriculum delivery, focus professional learning on formative assessment practices, student feedback and the use of student voice to inform learning design.
3. Provide professional development that builds the capacity of the Leadership Team to implement and sustain school priorities.

Based on the school’s current performance, Balaklava High School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

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Tony Lunniss                     Jayne Johnston
DIRECTOR                        CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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.

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Mark Healy                       Governing Council Chairperson
PRINCIPAL                       BALAKLAVA HIGH SCHOOL