

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Riverton and District High School

Conducted in May 2021



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 here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Christine Bell, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Rosie Heinicke, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Riverton and District High School caters for young people from years 8 to 12. It is situated 100kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 143. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 130. The local partnership is Gawler 2.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 967 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, 2% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 3% young people in care and 11% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 7th year of tenure, a Deputy Principal with responsibility for senior school pathways, a wellbeing coordinator who supports whole-school wellbeing, a coordinator: teaching and student engagement, and a coordinator: learning support and intervention.

There are 14 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and 7 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Improve and monitor the quality of teaching by ensuring all teachers use student data to effectively differentiate and engage students and promote opportunities for teachers to share good practice.**
- Direction 2** **Build cohesion in the development of a year 8 to 12 continuum of learning that focuses on skills and consistency in digital documentation and use.**
- Direction 3** **Develop a 4-year strategic plan that includes a review of current curriculum, succession planning, consistent implementation of school systems and the development of an innovative promotion strategy that recognises the individualised support, pathways and opportunities available.**

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

Direction 1: The school has developed methods for collecting, analysing, and tracking impact evidence, including the collection of NAPLAN, SACE, Brightpath, PAT-M and -R data. Staff underwent extensive professional development around student-to-teacher feedback and can identify the next steps for student learning. There is now a focus on documentation of learning programs aligned to the AC achievement standards and SACE learning and assessment plans (LAPs). Staff have been involved with opportunities to improve their pedagogical practice by:

- using departmental curriculum documents and data to inform practice
- agreements in curriculum areas – leaders monitoring
- sharing of programs/assessment/office space.

Staff have demonstrated a clear understanding and commitment to have one goal in their performance and development plan aligned to the SIP.

Direction 2: All staff and students have access to a laptop provided by the school. Riverton and District High School created a curriculum network drive where overviews within each subject area, planning and data is recorded digitally.

Direction 3: There is evidence of a shift from leadership having a focus on management to leading the teaching and learning, through restructuring of the leadership team. Extensive curriculum reviews are ongoing to cater for movement of year 7 students into high school in 2022. Transition programs, that include teacher skill development, are occurring with a wide range of primary feeder schools. Increased school promotion occurred through establishing a Facebook page, regular newsletters and an updated website. Middle leadership is leading the implementation of a coherent school-wide approach to strategically reviewing current curriculum, implementing a process for succession planning and meeting regularly to address student learning needs and monitor intervention.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effective does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

There is a clear commitment from staff to the school improvement plan (SIP) and actions required to have an impact on student learning and raise student achievement. Staff, students and families appreciate the way the school has managed the implementation of small class sizes, to allow for individual pathways and learning programs. There is a strong understanding of and implementation of departmental curriculum materials, assisting teachers to scope and sequence their planning and teaching.

The Principal has a clear vision for improved student learning and provides staff with comprehensive data for analysis to identify areas for improvement. There are operational procedures in place for student-to-teacher feedback and teachers are adjusting their practice in response to this feedback in some classes. Some teachers conduct check-ins during lesson time, and give timely feedback, which students value; however, this is not consistent practice. Providing timely and targeted feedback to students is an area for continuous monitoring, adjusting and embedding in all classrooms for all students.

Students commented that teachers are willing to help them most of the time; however, most students felt that their learning is not challenging enough, especially the high-achieving students. A reflective survey and data indicate staff recognise their need for capacity building around differentiation. Governing Council also voiced this as an area of improvement.

Developing robust processes, where leaders and staff share ownership for driving the improvement agenda through collaborative whole-school agreements around the consistent understanding and implementation of differentiation practices, will deepen staff understanding of best practice. In addition, developing agreed practices can then strengthen teacher capacity and be embedded across the school to lift student outcomes.

Capacity building with middle level leaders is emerging, and there is evidence of a cohesive team with an aligned vision for teaching and learning improvement. Considerable time and resources were placed into the development of this middle leadership team, and there is an opportunity for this team to facilitate and lead effective, targeted learning experiences for all staff.

Direction 1 Collaboratively strengthen teachers' and middle level leaders' capacity to provide learning experiences, through targeted programming, to enable differentiation and intellectual stretch as an essential aspect of daily learning for all.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

The school collects a comprehensive variety of data for analysis and to identify areas for improvement. This is seen in student 'bookwork' of sequential, intentional teaching across the mathematics curriculum linked to data analysis.

The Brightpath datasets demonstrate an increased improvement in writing across the school, achieving agreed targets in goal 1 of the SIP; however, summative mandated datasets, such as PAT-R and -M, indicate a decline or little growth in reading and numeracy over several years. The challenge of practice for SIP goal 1 of 'improved task design' needs to be identified by leaders as the next step, to ensure pedagogy and intentional task design supports the learning requirements of all learners with appropriate scaffolding that provides students with opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of learning.

Most students can articulate aspirational goals for their future and their learning goals in numeracy and literacy, but felt they have limited opportunities to co-design their learning and assessment tasks. The school is well-placed to build onto the positive attitude of the students, by providing an opportunity for teachers to work in partnership with their students to make decisions about their own learning.

Through professional learning, teachers are focused on embedding high-impact teaching practices of learning intentions, success criteria and feedback into their daily practice. While there is some evidence of learning intentions and success criteria in classrooms, staff acknowledge, through the self-assessment survey, they require further professional development and observational feedback to engage and challenge their students with meaningful learning.

Targeted and structured conversations regularly occur between leadership and staff, and all staff align at least 2 of their performance development plan goals to the SIP and school priorities. The challenge for the leadership team is to build onto these processes, through pedagogy practice observations and authentic feedback, to raise student engagement and achievement.

Direction 2 Develop a culture of high expectations, through planned performance development meetings, which focuses on peer-to-peer and line managed strategic observations and feedback processes for improved student learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Riverton and District High School has a clear vision for improved students' learning, and is well-positioned for continuous improvement with the increased intake of year 6 and 7 students in 2022. Teachers are well placed and supported to collaboratively work together with their line managers to receive and give feedback on their pedagogical practices. All staff are invested in the SIP and understand its importance in driving success for all students. Students and their families have high aspirations and believe the school can support them to achieve their goals.

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

- Direction 1 Collaboratively strengthen teachers' and middle level leaders' capacity to provide learning experiences, through targeted programming, to enable differentiation and intellectual stretch as an essential aspect of daily learning for all.**
- Direction 2 Develop a culture of high expectations, through planned performance development meetings, which focuses on peer-to-peer and line managed strategic observations and feedback processes for improved student learning.**

Based on the school's current performance, Riverton and District High School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Governing Council Chairperson

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 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been upwards from 52% to 63%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved higher in year 9 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 7% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 25%, or 2 out of 8 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 60% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been upwards, from 59 to 60%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools. Between 2017 and 2019 the school has consistently achieved higher in year 9 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, no year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 9, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 9 has been downwards from 9% to nil. For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, none of the 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 54% 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 SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 90% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 96% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 11% of grades were at an 'A' level and 56% of grades were at an 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for the 'C-' level or higher grade, an improvement the 'A' level grade and an improvement for the 'B' level grade from the historic baseline averages.

Six students completed SACE using VET and there were 4 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance, 7 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.