The Department for Education
External School Review
Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Open Access College

Conducted in September 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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Andrew Wells and Tim Kloeden, Review Principals.
School context

Open Access College caters for between 5,500-6,000 students (1100-1350FTE). In addition to providing Australian Curriculum, SACE and VET courses, the school also offers targeted alternative programs for students with specific needs, a primary years Language Partnership program, and includes School of the Air (SOTA), whose teachers are located in Port Augusta. Lessons are conducted via remote access.

In 2018, 117 students are identified as students with disabilities, 4.4% are Aboriginal students, 1.2% are students from non-English speaking backgrounds, 192 families are eligible for School Card, and 2 students are in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in her 12th year at the school, who has been re-appointed in 2018, a deputy principal, a head of schooling (SOTA), 4 assistant principals, 2 senior leaders Band 2, as well as 14 pedagogy coordinators, and 4 student wellbeing leaders. There are also a full-time psychologist and full-time social worker, 96.5FTE teaching staff members, and 4 itinerant teachers.

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:

**Effective Teaching:** How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

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

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent are the school’s professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Teaching and learning at Open Access College is structured differently than in a traditional class setting. Whilst the principles of effective teaching and quality learning remain the same, it is noted that students access teacher instruction for a limited time for each subject. Consequently, teachers are required to plan learning that incorporates a before, during and after (BDA) aspect to each unit of work. Strategic employment of BDA supports the establishment of prior learning and initiates engagement (before), provides opportunities for direction, modelling and experimentation (during) and enables the application, demonstration and assessment of learning (after). Leaders and some teachers reported that the college has promoted the Backwards by Design model to complement the BDA structure.

In some lessons observed, students had completed short quizzes that allowed teachers to establish prior learning, while in others, students viewed video clips to stimulate interest in the learning. Observations showed classes provided direct instruction about the knowledge content and, during this time, students responded to questions requiring accurate answers. At the end of the ‘during’ session, students were provided clear instruction on an assignment that required them to consider and apply the learning they had accessed. The review panel acknowledges the influence this model can have on student learning.
when applied effectively, and commend the work that has been undertaken to introduce and embed the approach across the college.

Continued work to broaden effective planning and implementation of the BDA model is necessary. Whilst leaders made clear that this approach to planning and delivery of instruction is expected, and that professional learning has supported teachers to respond accordingly, the model is not yet operating consistently across the college. Some students reported their teacher access time is used for assignment work, others, that the ‘after’ aspect is more a test than an opportunity to apply learning, and some students described the ‘before’ aspect as unclear. Some teachers conveyed a dismissive response to the college’s planning expectations and a lack of commitment to the model.

Leaders and a number of teachers discussed the college’s work in introducing success criteria and learning intentions to teachers’ pedagogy, which is commendable. The student cohort comprises many learners who experience anxiety. Making the intent of the learning known, and ensuring students are aware of what they need to do to be successful, provides a scaffold to which anxious learners can refer, and is one that also develops students’ agency within the learning agenda.

Consistent and accurate application of success criteria and learning intentions is a priority to which the college is working. At the time of the review, many teachers are experimenting with the concepts. In the primary years, year 6 students have developed their own rubrics by exploring the Australian Curriculum learning outcomes; a highly strategic approach to students understanding and monitoring their learning. Some teachers have incorporated learning intentions into their planning, yet provide students with little insight into these principles. Others provide intentions that describe the task, but not the learning outcomes aligned with Australian Curriculum standards, and some provide knowledge or content-based criteria. When describing the concept and use of these valuable strategies, teachers’ and leaders’ understanding was noticeably diverse.

The panel would like to acknowledge the outstanding work in bringing about a reconnection of so many disengaged and vulnerable young people with the learning agenda, and agrees this achievement makes a difference to the future of these students. A strong commitment to the students in their care and to making adjustments to increase potential was evident. The intent to embed planning and pedagogical approaches that meet the broad range of students’ learning needs was apparent. Consolidation of these expected approaches remains a priority, and ensuring all teachers respond and commit to this will be key to achieving consistent practice.

Direction 1
Consolidate consistent practice and ensure all teachers implement the college’s agreed planning and pedagogical practices by reviewing collective understandings of expectations and embedding a robust culture of accountability.

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

A priority of the college and target within the site improvement plan is to ensure one-year’s growth each year for all students in years 1 to 10, as measured by Running Records and PAT assessments. Given the diverse student cohort, growth targets are highly appropriate in this context. It was evident too, that students not on-track are provided reading intervention to achieve this goal or agreed standards. In these school-wide initiatives, data is used to directly inform, support and raise learning outcomes.
A wealth of wellbeing data is also used to support students’ transition into learning. College-based students experience a rigorous enrolment process that sees attendance, medical and perception data used to ensure teachers are aware of personal needs and sensitivities, and tailor approaches accordingly. This process allowed a significant number of students previously disengaged from education or experiencing issues that prevent mainstream enrolment, to successfully reconnect with learning. The college’s alternative learning program is also informed by examination of learner data, and students are identified to take part in interventions, including vocational directions, intensive reading and pathways. These programs were reported as key in supporting students at-risk to achieve personal and learning goals.

The intentional use of student achievement data varied across the college. Primary years teachers explained their use of both PAT and Running Records data to identify students’ reading capacity, decoding strategies and phonetical skills, and to address errors accordingly. These teachers also discussed using the data to build on students’ expertise and to challenge and extend them. Primary years teachers monitor and track students to assess learning progress and achievement of the school’s priority, to ensure one-year’s growth for each student each year.

The panel saw significant documentation of individual student achievement data years 7 to 11, including PAT-R and M data, and NAPLAN data that had been disaggregated to identify attainment in all aspects of the test. Students were allocated a below, at, or above colour code. Throughout the review, teachers did not refer to this collated data or its place in informing practice. Some staff reported that the DayMap platform provided them a source of data to inform students’ levels, and a few middle years teachers discussed using PAT data to identify students’ needs. The ‘traffic light’ approach to identifying senior students’ needs or progress was referred to by a few teachers and described as being implemented at teachers’ discretion.

The analytical use of data to determine how best to support individual students was limited. ‘Building a picture’ of students was a catchphrase that indicated teachers’ tendency to refer to wellbeing and quantifiable data, rather than a diagnostic use of informative data to design tailored teaching. Whilst understanding where a student is at in their learning is one aspect to progress individualised learning, the ability to use data to analyse why a student is at that level and how to respond with targeted teaching is the most vital aspect of data-informed planning. An opportunity to build teachers’ capacity to become more data-literate is apparent.

There is significant work undertaken to develop One Child One Plan documents for students identified with a disability. These documents, strategies and targets within, represent targeted and intentional planning informed by data. This contributes to intentional support for students at risk. A number of conversations made evident the opportunity to deliver teaching that supports those learners at or exceeding standards. Students reported limited opportunities to extend or build on their understanding or to challenge their thinking. The intentional and planned approach designed for students at-risk provides an excellent model against which staff can consider how to plan for the needs of all students.

**Direction 2**

**Strengthen the school’s priority to increase learning growth for all learners, by building teachers’ data literacy, enabling them to accurately analyse students’ achievement data and plan responsively.**
To what extent are the school’s professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

A highlight of the review findings was the work undertaken to support early career teachers to move from graduate to proficient when assessed against the Professional Standards for Teaching. A professional learning team (PLT) has been convened to support new teachers to grow and refine their practice in accordance with the standards. These teachers discussed opportunities to access regular feedback from their line manager and engage in processes of reflective practice. More about this highly influential process can be found on page 7 of this report.

Other PLTs operate across the college and include 3 wellbeing groups, OCOP and higher-order thinking. These are convened through teachers expressing an interest to pursue an area of professional learning that aligns with the college SIP. Many reports indicated that teachers used these forums to progress their understanding of good practice or to incorporate new strategies. Some teachers discussed their PLT as having less than the anticipated impact, and reports regarding planning and reporting expectations indicated a lack of clarity or consistency. Clearly, the structure has had a positive impact for some teachers in effectively managed and led forums. An opportunity to refer to these as a model for broader, consistent implementation across all PLTs is apparent.

Similarly, teaching team forums were reported as having varied impact on improvement. Each faculty or year-level team is expected to develop and submit an action plan, aligned with the SIP. These are structured against SIP priorities, team strategies, targets and evaluation measures. Analysis of the documents showed varying sophistication of the plans and subsequent potential to impact improvement. Teachers described the teaching team plans and actions differently. One group discussed a strong plan that positively influenced their actions and progress improvement imperatives, bringing together a collective culture. Other teachers perceived the plan as ‘things we already do’, and some reported that the team’s plan was informed by teacher feedback and reflections. An evidence-based, data-informed approach to developing action plans was not obvious. The potential of the teaching team was reliant upon who was leading the planning and process and their capacity to do so effectively.

The concept of performance and development (PD) represents a strategic approach, with all teachers expected to incorporate 1 goal aligned with the SIP, and another of a more personalised nature. Meeting times are termly, and some teachers described processes of observation that had been incorporated into their plan to support improvement in practice. Staff with line management responsibility of teachers discussed their own PD conversation and plans with variance. Some described having worked with their executive team line manager to explore and build their capacity to lead; others reported not having had these conversations, and that they worked with their teachers using their intuition and advice from colleagues. Teachers’ differing perceptions of the impact of PD may well result from this inconsistency.

Discussion with executive leaders made clear the different ways they work with and lead the middle managers. The panel heard descriptions of conversations developing organically or of informal and spontaneous approaches to building leaders’ capacity. Similarly, executive leader members expressed uncertainty about a coherent message being promoted by the middle managers, and agreed there is a need for them to be explicit and aligned in articulating priorities and expectations. To embed the college’s agreements consistently, coherent leadership practices and structures will be pivotal.

Many reports to the panel made abundantly clear the culture of support and assistance that is apparent at the college. Teachers discussed the fortuitous opportunity to sit in close proximity to line managers or teachers of the same learning area, and believe it enables numerous incidental and valuable conversations that contribute to their practice. There is a clear culture of goodwill and commitment.
There is an opportunity to now build on this strong foundation, to strengthen targeted and intentional processes that build capacity and progress the college’s priorities. Consistently led systems and coherently articulated expectations will further contribute to the successful work undertaken.

**Direction 3**
Reinforce a collective response to the school’s agreed priorities through the design of professional learning and performance and development systems, for both teachers and leaders, which are coherently led, planned, and consistently conducted.

**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 Open Access College.

Effective practice in building teacher capacity was evident at the school. A professional learning team has been convened to support early career teachers to transition from graduate to proficient when assessed against the Professional Standards for Teachers. This group has seen individual teachers work closely and regularly with their line manager to discuss and identify areas for development identified by the Professional Standards for Teachers and the college’s priorities. Goals have been set and, in most instances, observations conducted. Some teachers use recordings of their lessons and provide these to their line manager for feedback. The panel heard that responding to identified areas for improvement can be achieved through observations of colleagues with expertise in that area or attendance at professional learning forums. Notably, teachers who have recently achieved proficiency may remain on the PLT to provide mentorship for colleagues going through the process. This intentional and effective approach represents a model that would support early career teachers in all departmental sites.
Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Open Access College a culture of commitment and understanding of diversity has re-engaged many learners and increased students’ potential to achieve successful learning or vocational pathways.

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

1. Consolidate consistent practice and ensure all teachers implement the college’s agreed planning and pedagogical practices by reviewing collective understandings of expectations and embedding a robust culture of accountability.

2. Strengthen the school’s priority to increase learning growth for all learners, by building teachers’ data literacy, enabling them to accurately analyse students’ achievement data and plan responsively.

3. Reinforce a collective response to the school’s agreed priorities through the design of professional learning and performance and development systems, for both teachers and leaders, which are coherently led, planned, and consistently conducted.

Based on the school’s current performance, Open Access College will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND PRESCHOOLS

Julie Taylor
PRINCIPAL
OPEN ACCESS COLLEGE

Governing Council Chairperson
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.

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 the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2017, 43% of year 1 and 40% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of year 3 students, 62% of year 5 students, 53% of year 7 students, and 62% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average, for year 7, little or no change, and for years 5 and 9, an improvement.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for years 5 and 9 has been upwards, from 36% to 62% and 31% to 62%, respectively.

For 2017 year 3, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools, and for year 5, just below.

In 2017, 33% of year 3, 54% of year 5, 20% of year 7, and 15% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 70%, or 7 of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, 25%, or 1 of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 22%, or 2 of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of year 3 students, 69% of year 5 students, 53% of year 7 students, and 51% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average, for year 7 little or no change and for years 5 and 9, an improvement.

For 2017 year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 33% of year 3, 15% of year 5, 13% of year 7, and 3% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.
For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 20%, or 1 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, nil percent, or the 1 student from year 3 did not remain in the upper bands at year 7, 33%, or 1 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and nil percent, or the 1 student from year 7 did not remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2017.

**SACE**

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2017, 69% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 74% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 68% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units, and 100% 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.

Thirty percent of students completed SACE using VET.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2017, 19% of grades achieved were an ‘A’ grade, and 40% achieved were a ‘B’ grade. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline averages for the ‘A’ grade and improvement for ‘B’ grade averages.