

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Plympton International College

Conducted in October 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 Meredith Edwards, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Susan Copeland and Sharryn Daly Review Principals.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal and leadership team
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers
 - Specialist teachers in the Chinese Bilingual program

School context

Plympton International College caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 7kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 711. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 373. The local partnership is West Torrens.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1054 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 5% Aboriginal students, less than 5% students with disabilities, 39% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 23% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a newly appointed Principal

- Deputy Principal
- Director of Primary
- Director of Secondary

The remaining leadership team structure consists of 6 Band 1 leaders and 1 Band 2 leader as well as a newly appointed Business Manager.

There are 61 teachers including 11 leaders, 6 teachers in the early years of their career and 17 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1 How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of its improvement planning processes and impact on student learning to inform next steps?

Direction 2 How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Direction 3 To what extent is leadership capacity developed across the school to improve student learning?

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

Since the previous External School Review, there has been significant turnover of leadership, with the current Principal and Deputy Principal new to the school in 2021 and several appointments still to be made. The current leadership team has worked closely with the school improvement plan (SIP) developed by the previous leadership team and is in the process of evaluating progress against the SIP goals and developing the next iteration of the improvement planning process.

They have attended to the previous directions, while considering the significant changes in demographics in a school with growing enrolments.

The school has engaged in a wide range of professional learning with the view to building students' cognitive processing through collective inquiry into contemporary pedagogy. This is evident in many classes across the school and is particularly highlighted in the work undertaken in the school's unique bilingual learning program. Other examples include the introduction of a whole class literacy program R – 2, high impact Maths program and the literacy improvement work led by the R-12 literacy leader and the

English/HASS teachers. Work has been established for staff to collaborate in professional learning communities (PLCs) and these are closely aligned to the SIP goal of writing improvement. Recent guidelines and expectations for PLCs have strengthened staff commitment and they are generally appreciated as opportunities for collective planning and self-evaluation. With the recent approval of an early closure for professional learning, the role of these groups in school improvement planning will be strengthened.

Tailored teaching to address the needs of a diverse range of students is evident in the implementation of an effective writing assessment tool, approaches to phonics, initial work on differentiation and English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) levelling resources.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of its improvement planning processes and impact on student learning to inform next steps?

Members of the executive team are skilled in triangulating a range of student achievement data to identify areas for improved teaching and student learning. Data monitoring and analysis inform the evaluation of current practices and identification of next steps in school improvement. Early in 2021, the executive leadership team identified the need for further work on building the data literacy of middle leaders. A survey revealed that while most middle leaders were aware of how to access a range of data, they did not feel confident to support teachers in how to gather, triangulate, analyse and respond to student achievement data. Recent conversations with middle leaders indicate that their confidence and skills are growing.

Data-informed conversations increasingly play an important role in improvement planning. Data literacy features in the professional learning for middle leaders. So too are PLCs which are now data-led. The school's planned teaching and learning framework will also highlight agreed data sets to inform reflection and action. The next step is to build the data literacy of teachers. A single platform, linked to the Department for Education's data dashboards, has been developed to facilitate easy access for teachers to data relating to their students. This is a result of the appointment of a student support officer (SSO) for data analytics.

Data-led PLCs bring the monitoring of effective teaching practices closer to the classroom. The impact of their work has been enhanced through closer alignment with the SIP and documentation of clear expectations and guidelines for their work. While there are still pockets of dissatisfaction about this recent alignment of PLCs with the SIP, there is general support for these opportunities for professional collaboration. The decision to encourage teachers to lead PLCs is an effective strategy to increase teacher engagement with achievement data. Consequently, these forums are central to increased line of sight between the SIP, classroom practice and student learning.

Direction 1 **Build the data literacy of teachers and middle leaders as a key strategy for further school improvement planning, monitoring, and evaluation of challenges of practice.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school skilfully evaluates and builds on the effectiveness of previous initiatives to identify both current pedagogies requiring refinement and additional teaching strategies for goals in the next school improvement plan (2022-2024). The changing demographics of increasing school enrolments with diverse aspirations and learning needs are also considered in determining future challenges of practice. Through staff interviews, conversations with students during walkthroughs, professional learning communities and reference to the Department for Education's Guidebooks, the executive team focuses on classroom practices that engage and challenge all learners. The results of this research are being drafted in a teaching and learning framework.

The school's unique Chinese Bilingual Program engages and challenges all learners. The pedagogies have been developed in collaboration with both UniSA and the curriculum and learning division. Not only are the students in years 3-6 challenged in their learning through a balance of evidence-based pedagogies but information technology is integral to student learning and access to quality resources. Students described the role of QR codes in accessing resources, using iPads to practise writing Chinese characters and producing plays with Chinese landscape backdrops in the Green Room. When asked if learning in another language was challenging, one student explained that, 'it makes your brain exercise, so you think stronger'.

Despite many examples of outstanding practice, a regular theme in conversations with leaders, teachers, students, and members of governing council is the need for greater levels of consistency of agreed practices across year levels and between teachers. An example of this is in the variable appreciation of the role of learning intentions with linked rubrics to provide formative feedback to students. The use of the topic sentence, evidence, elaboration and links (TEEL) strategy, as a scaffold for extended writing, and the adoption of a synthetic phonics approach in the junior primary years demonstrate consistent implementation of agreed pedagogies. These examples of consistent practice provide models for further work in consistent understanding and implementation of other high impact teaching strategies to support and extend learning.

Direction 2 Develop the school as a centre of excellence and innovation through consistent implementation of agreed evidence-based pedagogies that support and extend the diversity of learners.

Effective leadership

To what extent is leadership capacity developed across the school to improve student learning?

The school's executive leadership team is strategic in its approach to developing the instructional leadership of middle managers. They recognise that the close proximity of these leaders to the classroom places them in a key position to improve the pedagogical practices of a school which aspires to be recognised as a centre of excellence with leading innovative practices.

To this end, executive leaders have designed a comprehensive leadership development program which draws upon internal and external expertise. There are scheduled leadership meetings to share professional readings relating to instructional leadership, how to lead coaching conversations and the important role of achievement data in setting and evaluating the effectiveness of challenges of practices. The importance of a line of sight between SIP goals and classroom practice is highlighted. Consequently, there is a changed mindset in the recognition that a focus on learning improvement is central to leadership. Members of the executive team model the role of walkthroughs to 'check the pulse' of learning across all classes. Students are asked what they are learning, why they are learning this, how they will know how successful they have been and how they can access support when they face challenges.

Currently, middle leaders do not have time to conduct similar classroom observations leading to coaching conversations about improved teaching and student learning. The number of leaders has not kept up with the increasing student enrolments at the school since 2018. Consequently, Band 1 leaders are stretched by a wide range of responsibilities, reducing the scope for instructional leadership. Instead, they are busy managing teams and projects. To enable greater focus on leading learning, the executive team has developed job and person specifications for additional leadership positions. With increased leadership density, middle leaders will be able to focus on the challenge of leading greater consistency in innovative and effective teaching practices between classes and across year levels.

Direction 3 Develop the instructional leadership capacity of all leaders to foster innovative and evidenced-based teaching practices to improve student learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Year 10 students who have been at Plympton International College since reception commented on the improvements, they have observed. They feel that they are well supported by teachers in terms of their wellbeing and learning and are now more presentable due to the professionalism of the school and increased expectations. They rated the school between 7 and 8 out of 10 and explained that, 'we are proud of what the school has achieved but we are hopeful of its potential.'

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

- Direction 1** **Build the data literacy of teachers and middle leaders as a key strategy for further school improvement planning, monitoring, and evaluation of challenges of practice.**
- Direction 2** **Develop the school as a centre of excellence and innovation through consistent implementation of agreed evidence-based pedagogies that support and extend the diversity of learners.**
- Direction 3** **Develop the instructional leadership capacity of all leaders to foster innovative and evidenced-based teaching practices to improve student learning.**

Based on the school's current performance, Plympton International College 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 2021, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 93% of year 5 students, 75% of year 7 students and 78% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 9, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 7 this represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2021, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 63% to 89%, for year 5 upwards from 67% to 93%, for year 7 upwards from 73% to 75% and for year 9 upwards from 69% to 78%.

For 2021, in year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools, in year 5, they are performing higher, in year 7 they are performing lower and in year 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 and 2021 year 3 achieved higher in NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups across government schools. Between 2018 and 2021, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 5 and 9 but lower in Year 7 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2021, 62% of year 3, 37% of year 5, 21% of year 7, and 19% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 54%, or 6 out of 11 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 70%, or 7 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 53%, or 9 out of 17 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2021, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 91% of year 3 students, 78% of year 5 students, 72% of year 7 students and 81% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 9, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 7 this represents little or no change.

Between 2018 and 2021, the trend for years 3 and 9 has been upwards, from 68% to 91% for year 3 and 66% to 81% for year 9. For years 5 and 7 the trend has been downwards from 86% to 78% for year 5 and 92% to 72% for year 7.

For 2021, year 3, 5 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools. In year 7 the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups across government schools.

Between 2018 and 2021, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2021, 38% of year 3, 22% of year 5, 28% of year 7 and 19% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 5 this represents little or no change. For year 7 this represents an improvement. For year 9 this represents an improvement.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33%, or 3 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 100%, or 4 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, 80%, or 8 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 79% of students enrolled in February and 100% 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 an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2018 and 2020, the trend has been upwards, from 92% in 2018 to 100% in 2020.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020, 95% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 99% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 86% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 100% of grades achieved were at 'C--' level or higher, 24% of grades were at an 'A' level and 38% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents little or no change for the 'C--' level or higher grade, an improvement for the 'A' level grade and little or no change for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages.

Seventy three percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 19 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance, 76%, or 24 out of 33 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 2 students who were successful in achieving a merit.

In 2020, no results were adjusted through the moderation process.