

External School Review

Banksia Park International High School

Final School Summary Report

March 2024



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education

External School Review details

Public education is for every child and young person in every community across our state. Educators and staff work in partnership with families and communities to nurture, develop and empower all South Australian children and young people with the knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to become fulfilled individuals, active, compassionate citizens and lifelong learners.

External School Review teams work in schools with school leaders and staff to enable in-depth evidence-based reflection on their recent improvement journey and their current strengths and challenges, in the areas of expert teaching, school leadership, and conditions for optimal learning.

Round table participants	
Natasa Penna	Principal
Anne Lamont	Education Director
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Review team	
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Post review meeting participants	
Natasa Penna	Principal
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Expert teaching line of inquiry: How effectively are teachers using evidence-informed pedagogical practices that engage, challenge and improve outcomes for all learners?

Strengths and challenges

- The school has recently developed a comprehensive, user-friendly data dashboard. A wide range of student information, assessments, achievements, and tracking and monitoring of data are available. Regularly updated learning goals and agreed differentiation strategies support identified students, providing insights on the best ways to access their learning and wellbeing needs. This tool complements the use of Daymap, which supports many aspects of school and student management.
- Year level leaders and care group teachers monitor and track student progress. Where necessary, appropriate interventions to support student learning are initiated. However, although comprehensive student data is accessible, there is variability in how effectively teachers are using it. The next step could be to document an agreed implementation strategy, including timelines and expectations, for adopting and embedding the effective use of data as an integral part of supporting every student's learning.
- Student engagement with achievement data has been introduced recently and provided them with an up-to-date understanding of where they are in their learning and what they need to focus on to improve. It is intended that students will set goals from this data.
- The school has introduced half-term progress checks across the senior years, to inform the teaching and learning and provide ongoing feedback to students and parents on the learning progress. Students interviewed were positive about receiving this important feedback early in the school year to act upon it.
- The use of success criteria was mostly evident in practical lessons and with assignment-based learning. Many teachers use rubrics, however, some students feel that teachers are not unpacking the rubrics well enough to provide a deep understanding of expected requirements. There is an opportunity to work more closely with students to fully understand how they can engage more effectively with the expectations to include co-creating rubrics.
- Some year 11 and 12 students have concerns about pathways and have been actively discouraged from taking certain subjects, leaving them with little understanding of future consequences. Awaiting the return of assignment drafts is the cause of most concern. The next step could be to meet with year 11 and 12 students to work through viable solutions to their concerns.
- There is variation in the way learning intentions are utilised across the school. There is an opportunity to develop a collective understanding of the varying ways teachers can support students in their understanding of what is expected in their learning. Overviews of student progress are communicated with parents and students during the first two weeks of each term.
- The use of student goal setting is varied across the school. Students reported that while it does occur in some subjects at the start of the year, it is rarely revisited. Most students are unclear about how to identify appropriate goals and have an unrealistic expectation of the effort required to successfully achieve them. A focus on specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timed, agreed, reviewed (SMARTAR) goal setting, would assist teachers and students to identify the appropriate next steps in learning and ensure positive achievement of student goals. A collective understanding of the purpose of goal setting as an improvement strategy could be unpacked to ensure common understand.
- PAT M and PAT R assessment data is not being analysed or effectively used to identify misconceptions in student or cohort learning. There is an opportunity to use this valuable tool more widely to target required learning and address some of the gaps in student learning. Literacy and numeracy progressions are other tools that can be used to ensure continuity of progression, where gaps and misconceptions in learning can be identified and addressed.
- Students in the middle years reported limited opportunities to answer or ask questions in most of their classes. While this varies between teachers and subjects, the overall frequency and diversity of questioning is low. Most questioning requires the recall of information or procedure. Few questions require deep analytical thinking. Most students feel safe and confident to contribute to discussions in class. An opportunity exists to engage in professional development (PD) on questioning and develop a whole-school agreement and expectations to ensure high quality questioning becomes integral to the learning design and every lesson.
- Many students believe the overuse of Padlets, PowerPoints and worksheets is replacing the dialogic classroom. A current school focus on explicit questioning and associated dynamic conversations will be beneficial to all students.
- Most teachers surveyed described a wide range of differentiation strategies they use to cater for the individual learning needs of students. Some pockets of exemplary practice in the design of differentiation to cater for individual student needs were evident, however, this is not common practice across the school. There is an opportunity to amplify this exemplary practice to develop a whole-school approach to quality differentiation.

Potential next steps

- Document an agreed implementation strategy for adopting and embedding the effective use of data by all staff.
- Develop a whole-school agreement to ensure quality questioning becomes an integral part of learning design.
- Develop and implement a whole school understanding and approach to effective differentiation.

Opportunity for improvement 1

Develop a whole-school agreement to ensure high quality questioning becomes an integral part of learning design.

Quality leadership line of inquiry: To what extent is leadership capability developed across the school to monitor and improve student learning?

Strengths and challenges

- Staff report leaders across the school are approachable, well respected, and supportive. They communicate openly, engage quickly with staff questions and provide anecdotal feedback on a daily basis.
- Strong collaboration is evident within curriculum faculties and year level teams. Classrooms and shared offices are located nearby, providing opportunities to develop close working relationships and maintaining a line of sight. The shared learning areas also provide opportunities for leaders to engage with students around their learning.
- Regular leadership team meetings provide a forum for effective collaborative planning within the team, however, there are low levels of cross collaboration between curriculum and year level leadership teams. Although similar improvement work is a focus, the action and development work does not appear to be well synchronised across teams. An opportunity exists for greater collaboration between the two teams to increase the effectiveness of the improvement.
- Leaders are seen as effective managers by staff. For example, year level leaders are becoming increasingly more engaged in managing classroom behaviour. Students reported they sometimes see leaders during break times in the yard but not often in the classrooms. Curriculum and year level leaders need a meaningful and planned approach to becoming more involved in proactive classroom support and engage responsively with the improvement work. Participating in professional learning and adopting an instructional leadership approach to successfully achieve the expected improvement and learning outcomes could be the next step.
- The leadership team is engaging in conversations about the 'leadership of learning' and student outcomes. Creating opportunities for leaders to engage effectively with teachers to develop consistency of pedagogical classroom practice will positively influence student outcomes. Most teachers would welcome leaders to be more engaged with the learning in their classrooms. Currently there is no formal process for this to occur.
- Middle leaders value the professional learning that continues to build their capabilities. This includes the recent SA curriculum and crucial conversations workshops. An opportunity exists to further explore options for middle leadership training.
- Individual performance and development plans (PDP) have been tailored to the school context and include a focus on leadership. Leaders have the responsibility to line manage three teaching staff in their PDP process, however, leaders reported that PDP meetings are not highly prioritised.
- Check-in meetings occur each term between senior leadership and middle leaders. While these are valued in providing support and informal feedback, leaders would welcome a leadership program that is based on a cycle of continuous leadership improvement including walkthroughs and observation processes based around the Australian institute for teaching school leadership (AITSL) standards.
- The leadership team is collaboratively engaging with student achievement data using the school's recently developed PowerBi and Daymap as tools to make informed improvement decisions and track and monitor student academic progress, behaviour and attendance. Currently, this is in its infancy and shows a great deal of potential in analysing and cross-referencing data, to provide a deeper understanding of the effect of using multi-measures of data. The development of a strategic rollout plan, including effective communication, training and expectations, are the next step.
- The recently developed whole school strategic plan is a comprehensive and detailed blueprint for school improvement. The new leadership team is currently developing an understanding of specific school priorities and improvement actions for 2024. This will require:
 - A collective understanding of the current practices in the area of focus.
 - A clear, collective and agreed understanding of the improvement initiative and the required outcomes.
 - Clear and consistent processes for ensuring effective and consistent implementation.
 - Prioritising improvement work with carefully constructed timelines and professional learning.
 - Agreed processes for monitoring and evaluating the impact of outcomes for teachers and students.
- Teachers have indicated that they would welcome leadership to observe their practice and provide quality feedback to improve their pedagogy. While observations of classroom practice may be a part of the PDP process for some teachers, the school currently does not have a formal classroom observation or learning walk process. There is an opportunity to develop observations and focused learning walks, in line with AITSL standards, for teachers and identified school improvement priorities.
- Leadership opportunities are provided for interested teachers to develop their leadership skills by participating in small group initiatives, to lead on specific projects and participate on committees.

Potential next steps

- Engage middle leadership teams in strategic training and collaboration focussed on proactive classroom engagement.
- Develop and implement a process of observation and focused learning walks in line with the AITSL standards.
- Develop a clear, collective and agreed leadership understanding of improvement initiatives and the outcomes required.

Opportunity for improvement 2

Develop and implement a process of observation and focussed learning walks in line with the AITSL standards.

Conditions for optimal learning line of inquiry: To what extent does the school promote, maintain and monitor a culture of learning and high expectations of achievement for all learners?

Strengths and challenges

- There has been a strategic focus on improving student attendance. Unexplained absences have dropped from 22% to 11% and overall attendance has increased to over 90%.
- The school has recently refocused on the successful implementation of the existing school values, embedding them into everyday life at the school. Students could recall and explain the values and why they are important.
- The positive recognition strategy that identifies students who are engaging positively with the new school values has been another area of focus. This is beginning to influence the culture of the school and improve student engagement and behaviour. However, higher achieving students are finding it difficult to receive positive recognition for their consistent, positive achievement and behaviour, and feel excluded from this initiative.
- An effective and highly supportive transition program for year 7 students has been developed. Data from the feeder primary schools is used at the beginning of the year to identify and support the individual needs of students.
- There has been a recent focus on improving the student transition process as they progress through the school. This continues to be a work in progress as the school moves to a sub-school model of operation. However, while there is clear and positive evidence that there is improving consultation and collaboration between sub-schools, there remains an opportunity to further develop strategies that support the development of a seamless transition between year levels in organisation, curriculum, pedagogy, learning expectations and wellbeing for learning.
- The staff induction program reflects the school values and has a strong focus on welcoming and supporting new school community members. Coaching and mentoring of early career teachers is a priority focus.
- The school wellbeing team has been expanded recently and has a strong focus on inclusion. Daymap enables students to connect quickly with a wellbeing leader, resulting in positive outcomes. Students who are dis-regulated in class, visit the learning support room. An opportunity exists to develop teacher capabilities to respond effectively to the wellbeing needs of students in the class, particularly around regulation.
- Aboriginal student support is highly valued by staff, students and parents. The Aboriginal Education Team supports teachers with educational strategies and in class. This is improving inclusive education practices and effectively supporting the education of Aboriginal students. Students feel welcomed, valued by staff, safe and comfortable in class.
- Teachers and students have noticed an increase in low level behaviour that is disrupting the learning of others. A school wide review of behaviour education is currently underway. There is an opportunity to frame the behaviour approach around positive learning dispositions, school values and pedagogical strategies that engage and challenge students.
- The entrepreneurial classes focus on concepts and thinking that challenges students with interesting, current, global and future global issues. Dynamic conversations, teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving are key components of this engaging approach. Opportunities exist to embed these practices across the school.
- Extended care group lessons are focused on a variety of topics that are designed to support students in their social, emotional, academic and wellbeing needs. Developing a year 7-12 extended care group scope and sequence could provide continuity of learning and further develop students as effective learners.
- Wellbeing and engagement data indicates that cognitive engagement in learning in most year levels is lower than like-schools. This may be connected to student concerns around high expectations and challenge. Students believe that most teachers have high expectations of them, however, this varies across the school depending upon the teacher. High achieving students complete most learning tasks with ease. Challenge in some classes consists of more difficult worksheets. An opportunity exists to plan for greater stretch and challenge by including high impact teaching strategies.
- There are few opportunities for teachers to engage with good teacher practice outside of their learning area. There is also limited recognition of skilled teacher practice. The school has some exemplary teachers who have the skills to assist in building the capabilities of others. This could be a catalyst for the development of a coaching and mentoring program that builds the capabilities of teachers. An opportunity exists to identify teaching staff to be assessed as lead or HAT teachers.
- Teachers indicated that the Professional learning community (PLC) structure is not as effective as it could be. Administrative tasks, including reporting back from leaders meeting, take most of the time. Defining and enhancing the PLC process to improve collaboration and sharing of good practice would assist in building teacher capabilities and improve student learning outcomes.

Potential next steps

- Identify teaching staff to be assessed as lead or HAT teachers to drive high expectations in teaching and learning.
- Review the professional learning community structure to ensure clarity in purpose and expectations.
- Develop a seamless transition between year levels with a focus on high expectations and achievement.

Opportunity for improvement 3

Review the professional learning community structure to ensure clarity in purpose and expectations.

Review Summary

A positive ambience is evident in classrooms and the yard. The pristine grounds and modern facilities create a positive and conducive environment for teaching and learning. Students are respectful and courteous. Staff and students are proud of their school and very welcoming.

The school is currently focused on regrowing the international student programme, following Covid-19, which enhances the cultural diversity. There is a comprehensive international support programme at the school, with a strong focus on wellbeing, inclusive education and academic opportunities. Students involved in this program are very appreciative of the opportunities provided.

Parents appreciate the school’s approach to student wellbeing for learning and value the communication and support from leaders and teachers. The focus on inclusive education including Aboriginal education, additional support and genuine efforts by staff to support all students is highly valued. Parents value the access to immediate and direct information on their child’s progress through the parent student portal and view their child’s development as a partnership between home and school.

The principal’s student leadership forum is providing students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills in solution-based problem solving around real life school issues. The students provide the principal with the opportunity to gain an insight into student thinking and issues that affect the student body. The revamped school values are a recent example of this unique collaboration.

The school’s comprehensive strategic plan has a strong focus on collectively developing a pedagogical framework that will guide the improvement journey and build the capabilities of leaders and teachers to provide successful learning outcomes for all students.

The Opportunities for improvement provided by the ESR Report process are intended to provide practical next steps for expert teaching, school leadership, and conditions for optimal learning.

Opportunity for improvement 1	Develop a whole-school agreement to ensure high quality questioning becomes an integral part of learning design.
Opportunity for improvement 2	Develop and implement a process of observation and focussed learning walks in line with the AITSL standards.
Opportunity for improvement 3	Review the professional learning community structure to ensure clarity in purpose and expectations.

Phil Garner

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2024

