

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Wirreanda Secondary School

Conducted in June 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 Rebecca Moore and Peter Kuss, Review Principals.

## Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits, including the Disability Unit and the WAVE flexible learning centre
- Attendance at staff professional learning meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parents
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers
  - ATSI, Inclusive Education and Wellbeing teams.

## School context

Wirreanda Secondary School caters for young people from year levels 7 to 12. It is situated 13kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 1099. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 890. The local partnership is Panalatinga. The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 950 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 12% Aboriginal students, 14% students with disabilities, 3% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% young people in care and 55% of students eligible for School Card assistance. Special Options for students with verified disabilities consists of a Disability Unit (2 classes), and 2 Special Classes. Wirreanda Secondary School was a year 7 to high school pilot school, with year 7 students commencing in 2019 before the statewide move in 2022. The school is a special entry specialist sport school.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of tenure, Deputy Principal in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of tenure, senior leader middle school (3<sup>rd</sup> year of tenure), senior leader senior school (2<sup>nd</sup> year of tenure), senior leader FLO/WAVE (10<sup>th</sup> year in second tenure), senior leader strategic operations (2<sup>nd</sup> year of tenure) and senior leader future focused learning (acting in a one-year tenure), and 17 Band 1 leaders responsible for specific learning areas and leadership of middle school/senior school. There are 76 teachers (including 22 leaders), with 21 teachers in the early years of their career and 21 Step 9 teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1 Deepen teachers' pedagogical practices to provide explicit instruction, effectively differentiate and personalise learning, to make learning intentions clear, and to use formative assessment practices to effectively plan and respond to students' learning needs**
- Direction 2 Develop the systems to provide data and evidence, and the capacity of staff to analyse and use data, to enable more targeted teaching and interventions at a student, year, faculty, cohort and program level.**
- Direction 3 Build the capacities of leaders to support and lead pedagogical shifts within their teams, analyse and use data, and think and act strategically.**

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

Wirreanda Secondary School has attended to the directions from the previous external school review with focus and fidelity. In response to deepening teachers' pedagogical knowledge to respond to diverse student learning needs, the school developed professional learning structures, which provide access to evidence-based pedagogies. These teaching strategies were effectively employed in what the school calls the 'Anatomy of Learning Blocks'. Learning in these longer lessons is chunked and supported by consistent routines. 'Smart Starts' to lessons focus student attention on learning and include clarification of learning intentions and success criteria. Other features include 'brain breaks' and a plenary and exit cards to monitor understanding.

All teachers are expected to prepare learning slides for lessons on a template covering these aspects of effective teaching. They are accessible by students on DayMap and are displayed in classrooms and regularly referenced. Students confirmed that these strategies are used by most teachers. The quality of these classroom improvement strategies is supported by professional learning and opportunities to revisit their effectiveness.

The school made clear headway in building teachers' data literacy and confidence in using this data to identify barriers to and opportunities for learning. The school has developed a data platform to support teachers to access a range of student achievement data. At the beginning of each semester, time is allocated for staff to construct a context spreadsheet for each of their classes. The review panel observed teachers developing such spreadsheets and then identifying responsive teaching strategies. Some teachers added hyperlinks to One Child One Plans. In this way, data reaches the classroom and influences curriculum planning and teaching. The Principal invested time and resources to build the data literacy and pedagogical knowledge of her leaders and teachers.

Wirreanda Secondary School is a cohesive community of staff, students and parents who are proud of their school and its focus on improvement.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

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

The school's recognition of the role of data in improvement is evidenced by the attention given to monitoring student achievement at a whole-school level by leaders, and by teachers at a classroom level. The school developed a platform for teachers to easily source and use student achievement data to reflect on the needs of their students and frame curriculum planning and choice of teaching strategies. This database provides access to NAPLAN and PAT data, as well as school-based grade-point averages and attendance data. The school allocates time each semester for teachers to build a context spreadsheet for their classes. In this way, teachers are supported to know their learners.

The review panel observed a professional development session in which teachers constructed a spreadsheet for their new classes and were guided to reflect on both students needing support and those who are high-achieving. The session was differentiated to accommodate the needs of those teachers who are confident in analysing student achievement and those needing support. The data analysis was followed by consideration of intentional teaching strategies to support and extend the range of learners. This process addresses the need expressed by some teachers in an online survey for more time and mentoring in understanding the link between student achievement data and classroom practice.

Student perception surveys are used to monitor the extent to which teachers are implementing agreed practices. This feedback is used by teachers to reflect on their classroom pedagogies. Further school improvement would benefit from closer monitoring of the impact of agreed teaching strategies. While steps 4 and 5 of the school improvement plan (SIP) are well-documented, much of the data is 'process data' and not 'outcomes data'. The next step is to use finer-grained achievement data to measure the impact of intentional teaching strategies over shorter periods of time. This requires structured opportunities for teachers to monitor the impact of agreed pedagogies through data-led collaborative classroom research.

**Direction 1 Monitor the impact of agreed pedagogies in improving literacy and numeracy achievement by developing formal structures for collaborative data-led classroom research.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

An unwavering focus on inclusive and effective teaching drives all aspects of school decision-making, from curriculum planning and professional learning to the design of learning spaces. “Inclusive” is the word used by school captains to describe the school. The Principal reinforced this when she said: “We can cater for any student who arrives here to enrol”.

Effective teaching and learning are supported by quality professional learning and clear structures for the extended learning blocks across years 7 to 12. The document, ‘Anatomy of Learning Blocks’, draws upon research-based pedagogies and provides agreed processes for learning routines. While the review panel observed variable quality in the implementation of these structures, all lessons were characterised by ‘Smart Starts’ to switch students on to learning, clarification of learning intentions and success criteria, an overview of key information, brain breaks and opportunities for student feedback. Outstanding attention to these learning routines was observed in a range of mainstream classes, in the Disability Unit and the school’s WAVE program for students needing more flexible learning pathways.

Teachers unanimously highlight interdisciplinary learning as the major driver of pedagogical improvement at the school. Curriculum planning in interdisciplinary learning is driven by clear statements of what students will know, understand and do. Interdisciplinary approaches are aligned to the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and General Capabilities. One year 10 student observed that the emphasis on the General Capabilities prepares students for success in SACE.

The school’s inclusive commitment to high expectations for all learners would be furthered through closer attention to differentiation. Some high-achieving students across years 7 to 10 do not feel challenged in their learning. Planning for teaching and learning would be strengthened by a shared definition of differentiation, inclusive of high achievers seeking challenge in their learning. Such a focus would contribute to higher band achievement in the SACE years.

**Direction 2     Support and extend all learners, including high achievers, through differentiated task design and pedagogies, guided by a shared definition of differentiation.**

## Effective leadership

### How effective are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes in building teacher capacity?

There is a clear line of sight between the challenges of practice in the school's SIP and agreed expectations of classroom practice. Implementation of these expectations is supported by the synergy between performance and development plans, professional learning and classroom observations.

The school supports teacher access to both whole-school and differentiated professional learning. While the Governing Council reported an initial push-back from sections of the parent community to the idea of late starts once a week for professional development, they continue to support this decision because they see the impact on the quality of teaching. Professional learning in these short sessions underpins consistent implementation of agreed pedagogies. The effectiveness of this improvement strategy was witnessed by the review panel, with differentiated processes resulting in engaged teachers and learning that builds a repertoire of effective teaching practices. The session on 'Know your Learners' was led by teacher leaders. Such instructional leadership by teachers provides evidence of the school's focus on building leadership capacity. Such whole-school professional learning is complemented by 30-minute early morning 'huddles' when teachers choose between a range of topics ranging from inclusive education strategies, high-impact teaching strategies and Google Classrooms. End-of-term 'TeachMeets' provide a forum to share effective classroom practice and professional learning accessed outside of the school.

Staff at Wirreanda Secondary School are proud of their school's well-earned reputation as a place of innovation. Leaders developed a culture of trust in which teachers are confident to trial new research-based approaches and receive instructive feedback from authentic classroom observation. There is widespread recognition that it is time to refine and embed the innovations pioneered over recent years. This is also important to ensure that teachers newly appointed to the school, including the incoming year 7 teachers, are inducted into agreed classroom practices.

**Direction 3      Widen the consistency and quality of agreed teaching practices across the school by maintaining the current foci of professional learning.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Wirreanda Secondary School is marked by the professionalism demonstrated by all members of the school community, including leaders, staff, Governing Council and student leaders. Staff professionalism is evidenced in their focus on high expectations for all learners, improving the conditions for student learning, sophisticated use of demographic and achievement data along with a regard for performance feedback. There are 2 key foundations of the school's commitment to school improvement processes: tracking of pedagogical shifts in the school since 2014, and teacher access to quality professional learning. As a result, there is well-earned school pride.

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

- Direction 1 Monitor the impact of agreed pedagogies in improving literacy and numeracy achievement by developing formal structures for collaborative data-led classroom research.**
- Direction 2 Support and extend all learners, including high achievers, through differentiated task design and pedagogies, guided by a shared definition of differentiation.**
- Direction 3 Widen the consistency and quality of agreed teaching practices across the school by maintaining the current foci of professional learning.**

Based on the school's current performance, Wirreanda Secondary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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# 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 51% 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 42% to 51%.

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

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved lower 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 an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 29% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% 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 49% to 50%.

For 2019 year 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

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

In 2019, 2% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy 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 numeracy, 8% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 49% of students enrolled in February and 99% 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 94% in 2018 to 99% in 2020.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2020, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 80% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 98% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 5% of grades were at an 'A' level and 43% of grades were at an 'B' level. This result represents little or no change for the 'C-' level or higher grade, a decline for the 'A' level grade and an improvement for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages.

Sixty-eight percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 40 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance, 53% or 48 out of 91 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.

In 2020, a total of 37 grades from Business and Enterprise, Technology, Mathematics, the Arts and Health & Physical Education were adjusted down at moderation by an average of 9.9%.