

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR YORKETOWN AREA SCHOOL**

Conducted in June 2016



**Government  
of South Australia**  
Department for Education  
and Child Development

### **Review details**

*A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) 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 DECD schools.*

*The framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Kylie Eggars, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

*The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.*

The Principal of Yorketown Area School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

#### **Part 1 Governance Item 8**

The Governing Council works collaboratively with the Principal to monitor the site's policy and practices in relation to student behaviour and monitor site bullying data and trends at least twice per year.

#### **Part 5 Safety Item 5**

The school will develop and implement a Cyber Safety Policy.

#### **Part 6 Site Procedures Item 3**

The school will develop a Records Managements Policy to support the confidential management of student data.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 90.1%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Yorketown Area School, located 230kms by road from the Adelaide GPO, is situated at the southern end of the Yorke Peninsula. The school caters for approximately 243 students from Reception to Year 12. The school enrolls students from localities including Yorketown, Edithburgh, Coobowie, Wool Bay, Port Moorowie, Warooka, Port Turton, Corny Point and Marion Bay. Feeder schools include Yorketown Community Children's Centre, Warooka Primary, Edithburgh Primary and St Columba's Memorial School.

The student cohort consists of approximately 3% Aboriginal or Torrens Strait Islander (ATSI) students, 8% Students with a Disability, 3% Flexible Learning Options (FLO) students, and 30% eligible School Card holders.

The school is serviced by 7 school buses, which transport approximately 60% of the student population.

The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage with an ICSEA value of 986.

The school Leadership Team comprises a Principal in her first year of tenure at the school, an Acting Deputy Principal and three Coordinators.

### **School Performance Overview**

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).*

*Considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making any judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school.*

### Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 7 of the 12 Year 1 students, and 9 of the 15 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Both the Year 1 and 2 results are above the school's historic average. From 2013 to 2015, there was a downward trend from 83% to 58% of Year 1 students achieving the SEA.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that all (8) Year 3 students, 4 of 10 Year 5 students, 11 of 21 Year 7 students and 23 of 41 Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, the results are higher than the school's historic baseline average. The Year 5, 7 and 9 results are below the school's historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system. For Year 3, the school is achieving at the upper end of results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, 50% (4 of 8) of Year 3, 10% (1 of 10) of Year 5, 5% (1 of 21) of Year 7, and 15% (6 of 41) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result is higher than the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 2 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 student remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. Of the 2 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result is lower than the school's historic baseline average. Finally, of the 10 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2009), taking into account arrivals and departures, 5 remained in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that all 8 Year 3 students, 4 of 10 Year 5 students, 10 of 21 Year 7 students, and 28 of 41 Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. For Years 5, 7 and 9, the result shows a decline compared to the school's historic average.

From 2013 to 2015, there is an upward trend evident for Year 3 numeracy. There are no discernible patterns for Years 5, 7 and 9 throughout this period.

In 2015 Year 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system. At Year 3, the students performed above the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, 38% (3 of 8) of Year 3, 0% (0 of 10) of Year 5, 10% (2 of 21) of Year 7, and 15% (6 of 41) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result shows an improvement against the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 2 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 0 remained in the top two bands at Year 5 in 2015. Of the 2 students who achieved in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. Of the 3 students who achieved in the top 2 bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2009), all 3 remained in the top two bands at Year 9 in 2015. The Year 9 result is above the school's historic baseline average.

### SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2015, 7 of 8 Year 12 students who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve their SACE. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In the 2015 SACE results, 90% of grades achieved were C- or higher. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school had improvements in the percentage of students at Stage 1 cross-

disciplinary studies (from 88% to 95%), and a decline in science (from 96% to 85%). At Stage 2, from 2013 to 2015, there were improvements in arts, maths and science.

In terms of the compulsory Stage 1 literacy and numeracy and personal learning plan, 93%, 85% and 100% of students respectively achieved a C or better in these subjects.

There was a declining pattern over the years 2013 to 2015 in the proportion of students using VET towards their SACE.

The Leadership Team is a relatively new team coming together to influence school improvement across the three sub-schools and in the area of student wellbeing. The wellbeing focus of 'Building Resilient Learners' links with the joint priority of schools across the Southern Yorke Peninsula. The school has initiated a number of approaches to build student resilience, student governance and support through mentoring.

The Leadership Team described an increased focus on developing relationships and school engagement with students through home group, pastoral care, community studies (Country Fire Service) and Flexible Learning Options (FLO) sessions. Programming and assessing against the Australian Curriculum (AC) in the Middle School (Years 6 to 9) was described as "a little haphazard at the moment". The staff have just begun to consider the integration of General Capabilities into planning for learning.

Consideration is being given to the preparation of students for further learning. This includes: a review of the school's approach to the PLP at Year 10, the establishment of a whole-school approach to literacy learning across the school, and opportunities to connect learning through subject integration.

The Leadership Team described a need to raise a cultural expectation across the school to engage and challenge students across all learning areas, but particularly in Literacy and Numeracy. They described a need to challenge teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, use data to identify targeted approaches, strategically connect the learning across the school, and strengthen 'student-directed learning' using problem-solving to engage in 'deeper' thinking about learning.

As a result of the above data and the Leadership Team's presentation, the Review Panel explored the Lines of Inquiry below.

### Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Effective Leadership:</b> | <b>To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?</b>  |
|                              | <b>To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?</b> |
| <b>Student Learning:</b>     | <b>To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?</b>  |
| <b>Effective Teaching:</b>   | <b>How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?</b>   |

### To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

The Leadership Team is a mix of relatively new and experienced leaders forming together as a newly established group at the school. Teachers interviewed expressed an openness to focus on improvement in pedagogical approaches and saw few barriers to enacting change.

A student survey focused on 'Building Resilient Learners' was designed and conducted by students in 2015. As a result, a number of emerging themes have begun to be addressed. These include: bullying and harassment, the influence of social media, students as 'researchers' and student voice in learning. The use

of student voice and direct involvement in this initiative was verified through student interviews.

Students and parents confirmed a need to establish higher levels of consistency in the management and communication of issues related to student behaviour. A school behaviour code based on the school values of *Persistence, Trust, Honesty, Responsibility and Respect* was verified through documentation, interviews and class visits. The 'student-influenced' Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy was verified in student conversations and documentation. Staff commented in interviews that they believed management of behaviour was consistent within the subschools, but acknowledged that it may be applied differently across classes.

Staff expressed a need for a clear, structured approach to the management of student behaviour, particularly when it is referred beyond the classroom. Clarity in terms of procedures and communication about decisions and actions taken with behaviour management would further support a positive and focused approach to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment.

Governing Council members acknowledged that the school had worked through some challenging issues and had many fine teachers at the school. The parents saw potential in building the teaching talents across the school to a higher level of consistent practice. Parents also believed that good Year 12 role models had a role to play in creating powerful expectations for other secondary students. The 2015 Annual Report from the Governing Council sought support from parents to: "... contribute to the school in a meaningful way ... changing school culture and morale". There was a written comment from a staff member that captured the view of many: "We need to lift ourselves and our students".

#### **Direction 1**

**Redefine a culture of 'high expectation and high achievement' in partnership with students, staff and parents to maximise the capacities and 'positive intent' evident within the school.**

#### **To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?**

Staff verified that the Principal has generated improvement conversations with staff using data as the basis for these discussions. Staff in the senior secondary have been supported to attend clarifying forums, network with other teachers beyond Yorketown Area School, and undertake SACE marker training in an effort to increase their knowledge base and raise student achievement.

Staff have identified the need to build student writing skills to support the assessment mode most frequently used across the school, partly due to limited bandwidth that restricts learning and assessment through multiple modes. Two teachers have trained in 'How Language Works' to support this initiative and there was evidence presented that writing scaffolds and exemplars are used by some staff (in pockets) to support students. There was evidence of writing genre posters in some classes to aid student understanding. A whole-school genre map was not evident across Reception to Year 10 at the time of the review. The school literacy 'professional learning committee' indicated that this will be a future outcome from its work.

Students, parents and some staff commented on the need to strategically raise the professional capacity of teaching staff by continuing to build their teaching practices and approaches through clear expectations, feedback and accountability for outcomes. Whilst expressing a desire to raising standards in teaching and learning, one parent commented: "My children are lucky to have had the teachers they've had". One parent was keen to add that there were certainly "some good teachers" at the school – ones who know their subjects, communicate well and challenge students – but wants greater consistency from the staff team.

The Review Panel verified the use of the DECD performance planning template and Step 9 professional development plan with staff as tools to support their professional growth as teachers. Evidence was also presented of performance discussions held with staff and written feedback provided to teachers.

The newly forming Leadership Team has an opportunity to work with students, staff and parents to create a vision for whole-school improvement through a strategic focus on curriculum and pedagogical initiatives that create high-level consistency of practice across the school. It was verified that the Australian Institute for Teaching and Leadership (AITSL) professional standards self-assessment tool has been used by staff

across the school. Professional learning and improved teaching practice through collaborative endeavour, monitoring and feedback will leverage this improvement.

**Direction 2**

**Support the implementation of consistent and connected curriculum and pedagogical approaches through performance and development strategies that encompass focused classroom observations and formative feedback for staff.**

**To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?**

A number of student engagement approaches were verified at Yorketown Area School. The school offers opportunities for students to connect with peers through 'Better Buddies', 'Read Together' and 'PALS' (peer mentoring) approaches. Strategic decisions are made to support student engagement through a number of opportunities made available at the school. For example, preschool students connect (transition) to school early through the use of the agricultural block facility; upper primary students connect to the secondary setting through the Technology Centre and placement near Year 8 classes; and senior secondary students connect to Flinders University for e-mentoring and university entry assessment program.

The Leadership Team described a level of consistency by teachers in the use of planning tools to design learning (units of work and integrated studies) for students across Reception to Year 12. Artefacts of planning designs used by teachers were verified during the review. The range and quality of these learning designs varied across the school. Many referenced the Australian Curriculum and made explicit the elaborations, general capabilities, outcomes sought and cross-curriculum links. Some of these documents described the task, work required, learning intentions sought and assessment criteria to be applied. A few of these learning designs expanded 'critical and creative thinking', student inquiry and adjustments for learners as ways to extend and challenge students further. It was verified that staff were provided with time to support this planning approach.

During student interviews, students described challenge in learning as: being given extra topic sheets for homework; different levelled tasks provided in 'Mathletics' (on-line program); given more work to complete; and being given harder questions. When asked about support provided to learners who needed assistance, they commented about some groups being provided easier questions or tasks, more time to complete tasks and teachers/SSO staff sitting and working with students. Students did verify that they liked to 'talk their learning through' with teachers.

Members of Governing Council agree that 'challenge' in learning is an aspect that they would like to see improved, with one parent commenting: "The high end of the academic tree is not valued". Whilst some parents indicated that secondary pathways beyond YAS may be pre-determined by family tradition, others indicated that communication and connection to community offered potential to 'interrupt parent perception' and increase student enrolment and retention at Yorketown Area School.

**Direction 3**

**Strategically embed agreed and defined curriculum and pedagogical approaches that deliver 'challenge and stretch' for all learners across the school to a level of consistency in all classes.**

**How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

A range of verified learning data is collected at the class and school levels: in the primary section - spelling, reading and phonological awareness screening; primary/lower secondary sections - maths, reading and NAPLAN, A-E assessments; and upper secondary - PLP, SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects, A-E assessments. School and Partnership analysis of data, combined with some moderation of tasks across Southern Yorke Peninsula schools, has identified a need to plan and teach for the inclusion of more inquiry, problem-solving and student-directed learning. As stated earlier, these were not evident as consistent elements in planning, language or teaching practice across the school. This was verified in staff, student and parent interviews, documentation and classroom walkthroughs.

Teachers, parents and students expressed varying perceptions about the extent to which teachers knew the personal and learning needs of students. Some students did not feel confident in sharing presenting challenges with teachers – either of a personal or academic nature. There was also a perception presented through student and parent meetings that it was “not cool” to be seen to achieve at a higher level, whether academically or in other pursuits (for example, sporting).

Some staff and some students commented about the ‘shift’ from Year 7 to Year 8 for both Yorketown Area School students and students from feeder primary schools, describing it as a significant change in terms of expectations and relationships. There was verified evidence that the school has implemented some physical (space) and structural (pastoral care) changes to address this perception.

Some staff described the challenge of getting senior students to strive for an ‘A’ standard as a ‘bugbear’, and that the Principal is supporting staff to pursue this through a variety of professional learning opportunities. Some younger secondary students described the expectations of some teachers as being minimalistic, with one student describing it as: “Near enough is good enough”. Parents generally felt fortunate with the majority of their experiences, but did comment that some inconsistency existed in terms of expectations regarding deadlines, challenge for top-end students and shared responsibility in the teacher-student partnership. These divergent views from stakeholders identify a need to re-establish the norms, behaviours, expectations and language of success across the school.

The school has started to ‘up the ante’ for these expectations across the Year 10/11 levels, particularly as it relates to 5-weekly monitoring of ‘on-track’ patterns using the following strategies:

- ‘Traffic light’ system and instigating parent meetings where necessary;
- Mentoring Open Access students and improving communication with staff;
- Considering SACE moderators’ reports to improve task design, particularly in relation to high achievers;
- Pastoral Care Worker supporting 10 students in their Community Studies Project; and
- Establishing a SACE improvement team within the staff to implement some locally identified strategies.

These strategies were discussed with the panel, and staff presented a proactive approach at this level of schooling.

The Review Panel formed the view from presented evidence that a whole-school approach to raising expectations based on quality information, data and knowledge of student capacities, coupled with the design of learning and engagement through varied teaching practices, was further required. The school has already begun to consider the literacy needs of students across all areas of the curriculum, expanding subject collaboration (the Year 10 PLP production was an effective example cited of integrated learning), and establishing support and intervention where required. MiniLit (Reading) for Years 1 and 2, and Quicksmart (Maths) for Years 4 to 6, were verified as two recent intervention programs introduced into the primary section of the school through the support of SSO staff.

A strategic and systematised approach to the use of quality data and information was expressed as a need through staff conversations and written feedback. Class assessment information and ‘Learning Journey’ folders (Reception to Year 7) were verified strategies used for tracking and monitoring student achievement at the school. Staff confirmed a need to consider school-wide and subschool data in a coordinated way to inform the design of learning.

It was evident through staff, student and parent conversations that there is a critical mass of effective teachers across the school to impact further on student learning. A comment that emerged a number of times during the review related to the extent to which staff cooperated compared to a ‘more powerful’ model of collaboration to drive improvement across the school. Some staff commented that they had moved away from collaborative and integrated planning, but acknowledged greater possibilities achieved through a more evenly distributed approach to the improvement work to be undertaken.

#### **Direction 4**

**Expand opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in using and analysing data to support the strategic planning and implementation of strategies that will raise student achievement levels across all year levels.**



### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Yorketown Area School is experiencing some challenges in building a culture of high performance and high expectations for student achievement. The school has a solid basis upon which to build an improvement-oriented school. The students, staff and parent community require a committed, relentless and united approach to consolidate the norms, expectations and attitudes to realise the evident potential to raise learning outcomes. Once established, the Leadership Team should implement processes and strategies to acknowledge, support and challenge alignment with these agreed expectations.

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

1. Redefine a culture of 'high expectation and high achievement' in partnership with students, staff and parents to maximise the capacities and 'positive intent' evident within the school.
2. Support the implementation of consistent and connected curriculum and pedagogical approaches through performance and development strategies that encompass focused classroom observations and formative feedback for staff.
3. Strategically embed agreed and defined curriculum and pedagogical approaches that deliver 'challenge and stretch' for all learners across the school to a level of consistency in all classes.
4. Expand opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in using and analysing data to support the strategic planning and implementation of strategies that will raise student achievement levels across all year levels.

Based on the school's current performance, Yorketown Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2017.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
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Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.



Fiona Haselgrove  
PRINCIPAL  
YORKETOWN AREA SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson