

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Clare High 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 Lia Tedesco Review Principal.

## Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- An online survey linked to the lines of inquiry
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parents
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - The Aboriginal Education team and Aboriginal students
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers

## School context

Clare High School caters for young people from years 7 to 12. It is situated 137kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 539. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 524. The local partnership is Mid North Clare.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 999 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 10% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 young people in care and 24% of students eligible for School Card assistance. Clare High School had year 7 students in their student cohort since 1999.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in her 6<sup>th</sup> year of tenure, 2 senior leaders with a focus on teaching and learning and school operations, 8 B1 curriculum coordinators, 1 B1 Student Learning Support Coordinator, and 1 B1 student wellbeing leader and 3 B1 year level coordinators.

There are 48 teachers (16 part-time), including 2 in the early years of their career and 9 Step 9 teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Build the capacity of all teachers to meet the needs of all students in their classes, through enhanced pedagogical practices, including identifying and stretching highly aspiring students.
- Direction 2** Build the capacity of current and aspiring leaders to drive a cohesive whole-school approach to school improvement that includes sharing of good practice, particularly in the area of assessment.
- Direction 3** Establish a culture of self-review within all teams, where all systems are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness in achieving agreed targets, using a data-informed approach.

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

There has been a positive shift in pedagogical practice across Clare High School since the last External School Review. Teachers are encouraged to trial and reflect on teaching practices which best support learning progress. Explicit practices scaffold learning for students with learning difficulties and there is a recognition that the next step is to focus on extending high-achieving students. The school's engagement in a wide range of professional learning, such as the Department's Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation program provides a sound basis for continuing work on intentional differentiation in task design.

Department's Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation professional learning elevated other approaches to building instructional leadership within the school. Many leaders identified opportunities to engage in programs, such as 'Crucial Conversations', 'Know your Impact' and Covey's 'Habits of Success', as beneficial to their leadership development. The school's shared template for unit overviews and assessment tasks is evidence of the focus on improved assessment practices in the junior secondary

and middle secondary school. Their early work on the role of formative feedback was received favorably by students who appreciate explicit criteria for success and exemplars of quality work. Use of approaches to formative feedback in the drafting process is an area requiring more consistency.

The leadership team developed a highly effective system of linking the school improvement plan (SIP) priorities to teachers' work through creation of school improvement groups focusing on the 3 goals. Each group is led by a B1 coordinator. At the beginning of the year, teachers from across the subject areas nominate in which group they would like to participate. This provides a clear link to their classroom practice and the work of the curriculum groups. The review panel observed these groups in operation during a staff meeting. It is through these groups that teachers reflect on student achievement data in terms of the school's progress towards meeting the SIP targets. Except for maths teachers' use of the learning assessment framework and the use of ABLES in the Disability Unit, there was minor evidence of teachers using finer-grade data to guide their planning. The Principal clarified it as an area where the school is planning more work.

The school is well-placed to continue its improvement journey in the interests of student learning, achievement and wellbeing.

## 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?

Classroom observation plays an important role in monitoring the consistent implementation of agreed classroom practices and the evaluation of their impact on student achievement. It also underpins teacher professional reflection on the effectiveness of improvement strategies. The majority of respondents to the ESR online survey identified their positive experience of classroom observation as evidence of supportive leadership. One teacher commented: “The performance development observations, where a leader provided feedback around an identified learning design focus was helpful. Feedback was also linked to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to assist my growth as a teacher”. The senior leadership team plans to widen the professional impact of classroom observations through supporting all middle managers to develop skill and confidence in this critical leadership role. There is a need for timely written feedback if classroom observations are to be widely valued by staff.

The value of classroom observations in fostering teacher reflection was seen in 2020. The school undertook classroom action research into the impact of low- and high-stakes learning. This was identified as a key literacy improvement strategy. Key features of this successful whole-school initiative were professional learning linked directly to classroom practice, support by all levels of leadership, classroom observation of the trialling of low-stakes tasks, and outstanding organisation by the literacy leader. While described as a ‘learning sprint’, this initial use of the learning sprint methodology was not data-led. Further use of such a methodology in monitoring the impact of a teaching strategy will require the additional role of data to establish the need for a particular strategy and then its impact on student achievement. Learning sprints, or other forms of professional learning communities, can be a forum in which staff can gain confidence and skill in the use of data to inform their planning and teaching. This would enhance the data analysis leaders undertake at a whole-school level.

- Direction 1**     **Build on the effective school improvement groups through data-led ‘learning sprints’ to enable teachers to monitor the impact of agreed pedagogies on student achievement.**
- Direction 2**     **In order to monitor the consistent implementation of agreed pedagogies and evaluate their impact on student learning, strengthen classroom observations with written feedback.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

The school engaged in a range of professional learning over the last few years, and has focussed on evidence-based pedagogical practices to engage and challenge all learners. Some members of the middle management team participated in the Department's Learning Design Assessment and Moderation program and shared their learning with other leaders and staff. This drove the school's commitment to:

- Explicit learning intentions and success criteria
- Formative feedback to guide students in improving their achievement
- Moderation to support consistent teacher judgment in assessing against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards.

Each of these aspects was highlighted by school staff as key levers to progress student learning. The school designed a template for planning both unit overviews and assessment tasks. It outlines expectations for explicit teacher strategies in teacher planning and teaching. Chief amongst these is the identification of learning intentions. The template clearly outlines that the learning intention should identify what students should know, understand and do, as outcomes of engaging in a unit of work. The review panel noted considerable differences in both the understanding of the purpose and design of learning intentions and their important link to success criteria. Many of the unit planners have learning intentions which do not reflect the intended impact of the strategy. So too, is there variable understanding and use of success criteria to surface what success looks like in relation to the learning intention. While rubrics of performance standards are a SACE requirement, there were few examples of the use of assessment rubrics in the junior school in providing formative feedback to students. A lack of consistency in the implementation of these agreed evidence-based pedagogies was identified by leaders in the school and recognised by teaching staff.

## Effective leadership

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high-quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

The leadership team is to be commended for the construction of a model of connected school improvement groups around literacy, numeracy and SACE Improvement goals in the school improvement plan. Staff highlight its effectiveness in linking their classroom work with the school priorities. These groups meet regularly with documented plans and recommendations. The literacy improvement group's learning sprint focused the whole school on strategies to support writing improvement. It was well-organised, and a person commented: "It was so well-organised, we could not fail". Follow-through by leaders to embed the findings of such initiatives is an area requiring more attention.

Clare High School has engaged in professional learning relating to a wide range of evidence-based pedagogies to support effective teaching and student wellbeing. There is clear staff commitment to refining and embedding pedagogies which best support their work with students. However, when asked what were the key teaching strategies that should underpin effective teaching at the school, there was a wide range of responses. Some staff nominated the approaches to literacy and numeracy as outlined in the SIP and the initial work on learning intentions and success criteria. Others nominated the explicit teaching of subject-specific vocabulary. Early work on low- and high-stakes writing also stimulated interest. While this range of initiatives ensures that teachers are kept up to date in their professional learning, there is a widespread view that the school takes on too many initiatives at the expense of embedding previous strategies. This detracts from consistent classroom practice.

There is a place for common agreement about which teaching strategies will continue to be prioritised. This would underpin consistency of practice which is currently not evident. Such an agreement could be captured in a shared definition of effective teaching, which would also provide the basis for the induction of staff new to the school. Staff would also welcome an increased hands-on role by the senior leadership in this curriculum work.

**Direction 3     Senior leaders to lead the development of a shared definition of effective teaching in order to capture consistent implementation of evidence-based pedagogies which best support student learning at Clare High School.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Due to both the Principal's focus on building instructional leadership and the widespread commitment of staff to refining and extending their teaching practices, the school is well-placed to continue its improvement journey. In terms of improvement planning, the School Improvement groups are effective in linking the work of classroom teachers to the school improvement plan. In all school improvement journeys, there is tension between a competing professional interest in new classroom practices and the need to embed existing pedagogical priorities. This is an area calling for the attention of school leadership.

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

- Direction 1**    **Build on the effective school improvement groups through data-led 'learning sprints' to enable teachers to monitor the impact of agreed pedagogies on student achievement.**
- Direction 2**    **In order to monitor the consistent implementation of agreed pedagogies and evaluate their impact on student learning, strengthen classroom observations with written feedback.**
- Direction 3**    **Senior leaders to lead the development of a shared definition of effective teaching in order to capture consistent implementation of evidence-based pedagogies which best support student learning at Clare High School.**

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



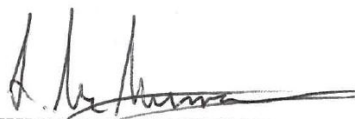
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# Appendix 1

## 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

#### Year 7

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 72% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 75% to 72%.

For 2019 year 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 19% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those year 7 students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 44% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

#### Year 9

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% 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 58% to 75%.

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

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

In 2019, 13% 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

#### Year 7

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 77 to 62%.

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved lower in year 7 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 20% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards from 12% to 20%.

For those year 7 students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 73% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### **Year 9**

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been downwards, from 79% to 69%.

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, 13% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 9, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 9 has been upwards from 11% to 13%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 38% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

### **SACE**

In terms of SACE completion in 2020, 81% of students enrolled in February and 97% 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.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019, 96% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 92% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 62% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2020, 94% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 20% of grades were at an 'A' level and 44% of grades were at an 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for the 'C-' level or higher grade, an improvement for the 'A' level grade an improvement for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages. Between 2018 and 2020, the trend for 'C-' or higher has been upwards, from 93% in 2018 to 94% in 2020.

Seven percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 6 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.

In terms of 2020 tertiary entrance, 73%, or 45 out of 62 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 4 students who were successful in achieving an A+ and 20% received an A grade.

In 2020, the school had a moderation adjustment of 1.0.