

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mount Gambier High School

Conducted in March 2020



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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Maxine McSherry, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Aboriginal Community Education Transition Officer (ACETO)
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Mount Gambier High School caters for young people from year 8 to year 12. It is situated in Mount Gambier, 450 kms from the CBD. Enrolment in 2020 was 767 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review in 2016 was 934.

The school is classified as Category 3 within the Department for Education's Index of Educational Disadvantage and has an ICSEA score of 964.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 5% students with a disability and 7% of students with English as an additional language or dialectic (EALD) background. The school has 4 young people in care.

The principal is in the 1st year of their second tenure at the school. In addition, the leadership team comprises of a deputy principal, 3 senior leaders and 15 coordinators. There are 55.6 FTE teachers including 15 step 9 teachers and 4 in the early years of their career.

The previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** **Expand on the current collegial support to ensure all teachers are responsible for challenging and engaging all students in their learning, and are collaborating in the development, and innovative delivery, of the Australian Curriculum and SACE.**
- Direction 2** **Develop a consistent approach to the planning, documentation and implementation of years 8 to 12 curriculum and other school processes, including involving all school leaders in a professional learning program.**
- Direction 3** **Develop and implement a plan for the efficient provision and use of data to inform practice at the team and class level.**
- Direction 4** **Improve communication and administration through accessing and using the full capacity of DayMap.**

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

Directions 1 and 3 formed the Lines of Inquiry explored during the 2020 ESR and will be discussed against those aspects in this report.

Evidence was sourced to confirm that some work regarding the planning, documentation and implementation of curriculum has been undertaken. In 2019, the leader and teachers in the technology faculty combined the professional learning community (PLC) and faculty meeting forums to focus solely on curriculum design. Informed by the learning outcomes in the Australian Curriculum, the group rewrote their curriculum planning document to focus more closely on what students can say, make, do and understand. Observations in the 'tech' class, and comments from some students, made apparent the effective learning students access in this area.

Parents with whom the panel spoke reported that they believe communication has improved at the school. They discussed the availability of teachers and their willingness to make regular contact with families. Parents appreciated the modes that teachers use including, phone, email, text and DayMap.

Students also reported that DayMap is used to access tasks, performance standards and to submit drafts. Both parents and students agreed that DayMap timelines and information need to be kept up-to-date to be valid and valuable.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

The school's priority to improve students' writing skills and understanding has been informed by NAPLAN data which showed low Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) over a 5 year period, and declining grade achievement in year 8 to 10 English. Most staff are able to articulate this priority. Whilst two faculties have attended Brightpath training, the actions to progress students' ability to construct text or explore vocabulary are not clear or evident. An opportunity to be specific regarding *how we teach students to write* is apparent.

The systems that build teacher and SSO capacity to implement agreed actions operate with varied impact. The principal has conducted observations for all teachers over a 3 year period providing written feedback, and including the line managers in the process. However, limited evidence was found to confirm that this had impacted teacher practice. Performance and development processes were discussed with varying levels of commitment and enthusiasm from both teachers and some leaders with line management responsibility. Whilst informal conversations and spontaneous walkthroughs were reported, an intentional, systematic approach to performance and development processes that target improved practice was not evident. There is an opportunity to upskill leaders and ensure they have the capabilities and understanding to work effectively with teachers, and to implement coherent and effective performance and development processes. A shared commitment and consistent approach across faculties, year levels and special programs will produce unity and collegiality.

Learning sprints were adopted as the model for PLCs in 2019. The panel acknowledges the plan, trial, evaluative approach to improving practice collaboratively, whilst agreeing that evidence of impact across the school was not highly apparent. PLCs are in the early stages in 2020. The panel attended staff meeting and observed PLCs in action. Whilst some PLCs presented as organised and focused, others demonstrated a lack of clarity or understanding of expectations and process. PLCs will benefit from greater certainty regarding purpose, roles and leadership. The importance of scaffolding leaders to conduct consistent, structured faculty meetings and PLCs is key in ensuring targeted and coherent action across the school. A dedicated and intentional design of PLCs, convened through strategic leadership, will ensure greater consistency and maximise impact.

Direction 1 **Ensure school goals are achieved through methodical implementation of systems that build the capacity of teachers, SSOs and leaders to implement agreed actions.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Evidence of some pedagogical implementations that engage students and encourage greater influence in their learning was sourced. Year 9 maths students had informed the learning agenda and were engaged with numerical thinking in real life situations. Students in tech classes also reported opportunities for choice, not just of product, but process. In the special education class, students have specific learning goals to which they refer to for monitoring their progress. The panel notes the targeted teaching that supports students in the Flexible Learning Options program. High yield practice operates alongside other practices less likely to engage students that allow limited opportunities for inquiry or collaboration. The concept of students' tendency to demonstrate inappropriate behaviour was commonly reported during the review. The panel agrees that learning which connects with students and inspires thinking is less likely to result in distracting behaviour.

Teachers report that a variety of pedagogical concepts and approaches have been introduced through professional learning across the years. However, there is no agreed pedagogical approach operating within, and across, faculties. Students endorse this position. Entrepreneurial education affords some students opportunities to engage with critical thinking, planning and designing. The limited access to this program is evident. One comment indicated that there is an intent to introduce entrepreneurial strategies across faculties, yet structures and plans to do so are not in place. The opportunity to establish an agreed, collective position regarding how we teach at Mount Gambier High School is apparent.

There is a wealth of data collected at the school, which is shared with the Governing Council. Some documents provided to the panel indicated that analysis of the data has been undertaken. However, evidence of the diagnostic use of data to inform differentiated planning was limited to a few examples for students with disabilities. The analysis of SACE data was reported diversely with one staff member discussing a deliberate and analytical response to refine moderation and internal assessment, whilst other teachers did not think the data was used in 2020.

Teachers did discuss the intent to meet the varying needs of their students, and cited relationships and getting to know learners as key in this. Some spoke about accommodations they implement to allow students to access the learning: longer completion time, changing the mode of presentation or reading questions to the student. Identifying and then addressing the actual miscue the student is experiencing was not apparent. The intent of the leaders to bring about a more responsive use of data across the school is timely.

Direction 2 **Better meet the learning needs of all students by building the capacity of teachers and leaders to analyse, understand and respond to data to inform more intentional, differentiated planning.**

Direction 3 **Motivate greater student engagement through the collective development of an agreed, evidence-based pedagogical approach and establishing systematic scaffolds that enable teachers to consistently implement expected practice.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

At Mount Gambier High School, some examples of intentional leadership and effective teaching practice is evident. The leader's work to observe and provide feedback to teachers provided the potential to further develop contemporary practice. The work of the Flexible Learning Options program has been instrumental in bringing about change for many students at risk. In some faculty areas, a more purposeful and inspirational approach to learning design is implemented. Many parents speak highly of the commitment of teachers, leaders and SSOs, particularly in supporting students with significant wellbeing needs. The panel heard many reports regarding the leader's intent to bring about a culture of belonging which is something students value.

The directions in this report are designed to bring about intentionality and greater efficacy regarding the school's capacity building systems and pedagogical practices.

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

- Direction 1 Ensure school goals are achieved through methodical implementation of systems that build the capacity of teachers, SSOs and leaders to implement agreed actions.
- Direction 2 Better meet the learning needs of all students by building the capacity of teachers and leaders to analyse, understand and respond to data to inform more intentional, differentiated planning.
- Direction 3 Motivate greater student engagement through the collective development of an agreed, evidence-based pedagogical approach and establishing systematic scaffolds that enable teachers to consistently implement expected practice.

Based on the school's current performance, Mount Gambier High School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Andrew Wells
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS



Chris Edmonds
PRINCIPAL
MOUNT GAMBIER HIGH SCHOOL



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 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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, 8% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. 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 reading, 18%, or 9 out of 50 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 7% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. 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, 32%, or 6 out of 19 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.


SACE

Regarding SACE completion in 2019, 54% of students enrolled in February and 92% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE, did go on to successfully achieve SACE.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019, 81% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 82% 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 2019, 93% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 18% of grades were at an 'A' level and 39% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents a decline for the 'A', and 'B' level grades, from the historic baseline averages.

Nineteen percent of students completed SACE using VET and there are 75 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2020.



In terms of 2019 tertiary entrance, 68%, or 52 out of 77 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There was also 1 student who was successful in achieving a merit.

In 2019, the school had a moderation adjustment of 2.1%.