



ACT
Government
Education

Alfred Deakin High School

Report of Review, 2022

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Publication and independent Review Team details

Date of School Review: 8, 9, 10 and 11 August 2022

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National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

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Report of Review, 2022 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date 1 September 2022

Overview of the School Review process

Approximately a fifth of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. Reviews provide quality, independent, feedback tailored to individual school contexts. Findings from Review support annual implementation of a school's 5-year School Improvement Plan.

Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

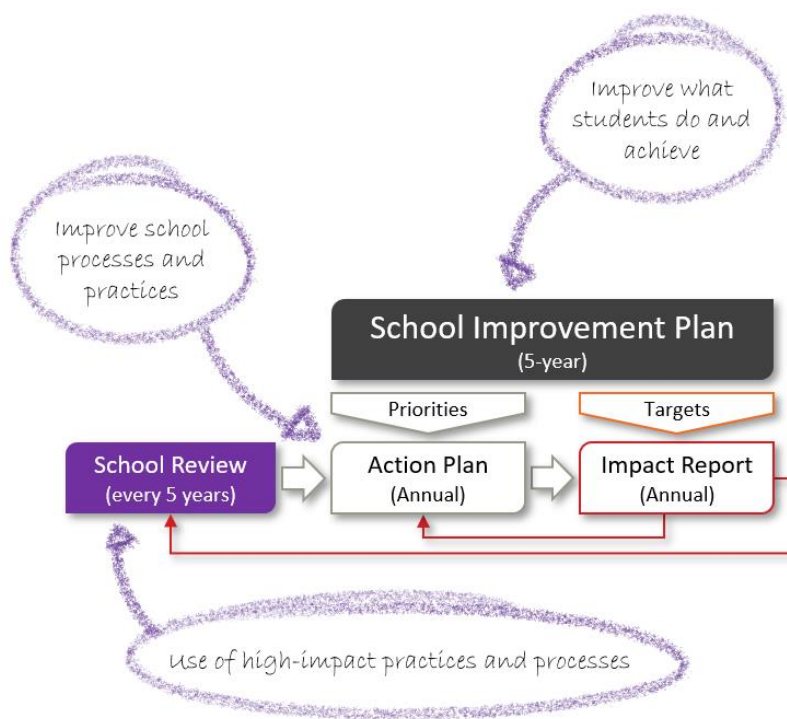
Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students, parents and community members.

Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school communities.

The *Report of Review* includes detailed findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, as well as Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

Where does Review sit within the school improvement cycle?

ACT public schools utilise systematic integration of evidence and data collection, access and analysis to inform sharp and narrow 5-year School Improvement Plans. Annually, all schools utilise a suite of tools to expand, monitor and report on these priorities. Additionally, schools are provided differentiated support and feedback by internal and external experts. School Review is one way that this differentiated feedback is provided and typically occurs at the end of the 5-year school improvement cycle.



What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations

Commendations highlight positive actions the school has taken over its last improvement cycle. Typically, these actions are either complete, or embedded in school practice.

Affirmations

Affirmations verify specific actions being undertaken by the school that are impacting positively on school improvement. These actions are typically either not yet complete and/or not yet embedded.

Recommendations

Recommendations provide the school with evidence-based advice regarding high-value areas for future school improvement efforts. Drawn from the NSIT, recommendations are key to the school effectively implementing its 5-year School Improvement Plan.

NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

Domain descriptor

The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

Findings

- School board members and leaders confirmed their commitment to improving the outcomes for all students.
- School board members confirmed that they had input into the development of school planning documents and that the Board had endorsed the Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022.
- The Alfred Deakin High School (ADHS) improvement agenda is driven by the ADHS School Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 and the Annual Action Plans (AAPs). The 2022 AAP lists two priorities:
 - to provide flexible and personalised learning experiences to maximise each student's growth, and
 - to equip students to be successful members of the community.
- The 2020 Impact Report identifies targets for the improvement of year 9 NAPLAN results and whole school student perception data.
- School targets are general and do not seem to be impacting on the teaching and learning program.
- Initiatives and programs are not yet formally evaluated for effectiveness as to whether they have produced desired improvements in levels of student achievement and wellbeing.
- Through analysis of a wide range of system, school and teacher data, the school has attempted to understand current student achievement levels and how these have changed over time. There is not yet clear evidence of the analysis of achievement levels of specific groups of students.
- School staff are united in their commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. There are pockets of staff who have applied specific strategies for improving levels of student achievement and wellbeing.
- School documents show that the school has some clearly described strategies for improving levels of student achievement and wellbeing, however these are applied inconsistently and there is little evidence of monitoring or evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies. Discussion with staff indicated that there was an appetite within the school to make improvements in this area.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor

A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/ regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.

Findings

- The school utilises data and evidence for strategic planning and decision making through the annual collection and analysis of data. A whole school data spreadsheet is maintained and managed by the data team.
- A school Data Plan and data suite is currently in development along with a plan for ongoing Professional Learning for teachers on its use. A consistent approach to the use of whole school student data across all learning areas is yet to be embedded.
- A data team updates the whole school data spreadsheet annually. This data includes PAT-M, PAT-R and semester by semester grade tracking.
- The annual school climate survey is used to monitor staff, student and parent perceptions as well as to track learning, teaching and wellbeing trends. These longitudinal surveys inform effectiveness of practice and future planning decisions.
- Whole school data is shared by the Executive at staff meetings but is yet to be fully adopted and used by staff in their daily practice.
- Some formative and summative assessments, collected at faculty level, are used to inform Professional Learning Communities (PLC). These communities work to improve teacher practice and student outcomes. PLCs are building a culture of data driven self-reflection to inform pedagogical decisions, interventions and initiatives.
- A Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) dashboard is available to monitor wellbeing and belonging.
- All staff contribute data to the Student Administration System (SAS) to enable tracking of positive and negative behavioural incidents, attendance and student performance and wellbeing data.
- School based surveys and forums are conducted by the Student Executive Group (SEG) to identify and suggest ways to improve whole practices and resources.
- The Student Services team collate and track interventions and supports for students with complex needs (tiers 1, 2 and 3).
- Transition data from Year 6 to Year 7 is collected to identify and place students in targeted extension or support classes such as Unicorn and Gryphon. These include

NAPLAN, CogAT¹, GRIN² and MacqLit³ assessments.

- The Executive team analyse performance data provided by local colleges to inform the school how effectively their students have been prepared for transition to college.
- Some performance and perception data are shared with parents through formal documents such as Annual School Board Reports, annual Impact Reports, and newsletters.

¹ CogAT is a Cognitive Abilities Test is a multiple-choice K-12 assessment that measures reasoning skills
is a multiple-choice K-12 assessment that measures reasoning skills

² GRIN is Getting ready in Numeracy, a program for maths interventions

³ MacqLit is a reading intervention program

NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

Domain descriptor

The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.

Findings

- School documents promote the Alfred Deakin High School's vision statement 'a community that embraces the diversity of its students and celebrates the advantages that this diversity brings to the school'. Documents and signage identify the school's values of excellence, respect, responsibility, and community.
- Parents, staff, and students all spoke of the school's recognition and valuing of the diversity of its students. ADHS is a richly multicultural school which values and celebrates the varying student backgrounds and strives to build the cultural competence within the school. A particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are recognised and are beginning to be embedded authentically in key learning areas.
- The school is implementing a whole-school approach to strengthening a supportive and positive culture for learning, underpinned by Positive Behaviour and Learning (PBL). There are some visual prompts throughout the school promoting core expectations in shared areas. Documentation describing expected processes and practices is also evident.
- The school places high value on student wellbeing and a focus on building relationships as a basis for creating a positive learning environment. Students described that they are a part of an accepting and supportive learning culture.
- The school has recently revisited professional learning and built a shared understanding of restorative practices which is used as a framework for managing and maintaining respectful relationships within the school.
- The school's Student Executive Group (SEG) provides an avenue for student voice. It conducts forums of students which provide the school with clearly collated student opinion and feedback that contributes toward school improvement.
- Staff consistently reported a high level of staff morale.
- Reviewers observed classes where most students were engaged in their learning and staff and students interacted in a respectful and caring manner.
- There is an obvious culture of supporting individual differences and catering for students with diverse needs, including a wide range of voluntary clubs conducted by staff.
- School surveys indicate that parents, staff, and students believe that ADHS is a safe, respectful, tolerant and inclusive school.

NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

Domain descriptor

The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.

Findings

- Available resources are allocated based on school planning and priorities.
- Systems are in place, including testing, teacher observations and parent interviews, to identify students with needs and to supply resourcing to meet these needs. This process occurs during transition to the school from primary school and when students are new to the school.
- Staff are deployed to best meet the needs of students. Examples of this include the employment of learning support assistants and teachers to support students individually, in small withdrawal groups, and in mainstream classes.
- Continual adjustments, including employment of more staff, have been made to administrative staff roles which has enabled the reduction of the workload of teaching staff.
- The school has prioritised the spending of funds to improve physical learning spaces. This has included upgrading dedicated learning spaces (for Gryphon⁴ and Tier 3 programs), breakout spaces, and ICT in classrooms.
- Currently, plans have been approved to improve the functionality of the student wellbeing area and an improved Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) facility. The new suite will cater for students requiring time out of class (and support) and will provide more meeting spaces for staff, students, families, and external agencies.
- Discussion with school leaders confirmed that the school has prioritised the provision of students' services for many years. The school currently comprises both a Diversity Team and Student Services Team that cater for the needs of students.
- The school has resourced the employment of a Diversity Coordinator who leads a team which analyses data to identify students with special needs and coordinates services, plans and resourcing to meet these needs.
- The school allocates time for the release of teachers in various support roles. These roles include: Gryphon coordinator, GRIN⁵ coordinator, four Year Coordinators, Inclusion Support coordinator, Work Experience coordinator, EAL/D and IPS Coordinator, Study-Line Support Coordinator, Sports Coordinator, Student Executive Coordinator, ADVANCE

⁴ A Gryphon coordinator works along with the school psychologist and other staff from the student engagement team to identify students who need support and plan for support

⁵ GRIN is Getting Ready in Numeracy program is an intervention program in maths from Monash University

Coordinator, PANTHERS⁶ and ELEMENTS⁷ Coordinators, Rainbow Club Coordinator and Health and Safety Representative.

⁶ PANTHERS is Providing Adolescent needs Through Health Education Resilience and Sport, a sports leadership program for boys

⁷ ELEMENTS is Educating, Leading, Empowering, Motivating and Encouraging Needs Through Support – It is a sports program to develop these skills in girls

NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

Domain descriptor

The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.

Findings

- The school has a 2022 Professional Learning timetable with some links to school priorities.
- Teachers of all experience levels reported a desire to receive feedback on their practice but stated that as yet there are no consistent or agreed mechanisms in place. They spoke of the desire for more formalised coaching and observation opportunities within and across faculties.
- The 2022 Action Plan identifies the need to develop a coaching model for School Leader Cs⁸ to build leadership capacity.
- There are some mentoring arrangements in place for Early Career teachers, however the structure and timeliness of this varied depending on staff involved.
- Early Career teachers are supported to develop portfolios and apply for full registration. An Executive Teacher leads this process and assists teachers to draw on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to reflect on their practice.
- A 2022 Roles & Responsibilities document outlines various leadership responsibilities staff can undertake. There are multiple avenues for teachers to lead small group or whole school initiatives with time allowances provided.
- The ADHS Staff Handbook is available as an online reference for staff. This forms part of induction processes for new staff.
- A small number of staff are developing portfolios of evidence for certification as Highly Accomplished or Lead teachers. This is supported by an Executive Teacher on an individual basis.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have drawn on Simon Breakspear's Sprint model and more recently adopted Helen Timperley's Spiral of Inquiry approach.
- Participation in Professional Learning (PL) occurs as a whole staff, at faculty level and individually. There is scope for the development of a strategic PL Plan aligned to the school priorities and a more systematic delivery of PL. A formal process is in place via the ADHS Google Site to apply for permission to attend PL. Staff are required to articulate how this connects to school priorities or their own professional development goals.
- The learning support assistants are positioned as valuable members of staff. There is a strong culture for non-teaching staff to assist teachers to support individual students and

⁸ School Leader categories are School Leader A-Principal, School Leader B -Deputy Principal, School Leader C – Head of Faculty, etc.

small groups with complex needs and to communicate with families. These staff feel supported, valued, and an integral part of the school.

NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain descriptor

The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.

Findings

- School documents confirm that the ADHS curriculum is based on the Australian Curriculum (AC). All faculties have scope and sequence documents which detail the school's planned use of the AC. Most scope and sequence documents include not only a schedule for the presentation of topics of work but also identify outcomes to be met (linked to the AC), assessments (including rubrics) and how the general capabilities are embedded. Some of these documents also assure the vertical alignment of the curriculum from year 7 to year 10.
- The ADHS curriculum, in some learning areas, has a growing focus on cross-curricular skills using project-based learning. Projects are focused on local issues, aligned to the AC across the key learning areas, and are supported by community partnerships with the Academy of Future Skills, and external stakeholders such as people in the STEM industry.
- Most teachers share the curriculum with parents and families via email, Google Classroom or curriculum summaries sent home with students.
- Discussion with staff confirmed that some faculties have used PLC meetings to explore with colleagues how best to help students understand assessment rubrics.
- Some faculty areas have included the general capabilities and cross-curricular skills of the AC in planning documents. Year 7 and 8 students take part in cross-curricular skills sessions once per semester. The timetable is modified while students take part in guided cross-curricular activities for example during STEM week.
- Some teachers have prioritised the development of personalised learning which ensures meeting the needs of all students in their class and these experiences are shared with other staff.
- Professional development which builds staff skills in curriculum planning and development is provided in some faculties.

NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain descriptor

The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

Findings

- In 2022, 'differentiation' has been the school priority for improving student learning outcomes. Time has been allocated to teachers for instruction and reflection in pupil free days, staff meetings, and PLCs.
- Comprehensive whole school data sets for all students are available to teachers.
- There is inconsistency between facilities in mapping differentiated learning and assessment in Scope and Sequence documents and day to day teaching.
- The Helen Timperley 'Spiral of Inquiry' model is being utilised by most PLCs to develop intervention or support strategies to improve differentiated learning tasks.
- Professional learning on developing units of work and summative assessments to support the needs of identified students is evident. Staff are building competence and confidence to enable differentiated instruction and assessment. This is most notable in inquiry-based units of work.
- Most assessment rubrics now reflect what must be produced and describe the expectations for achievement levels.
- Up to 25% of the school population have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) or are in targeted extension or support program. Differentiated learning and assessment tasks are an integral part of these programs.
- The school data tool developed to enable mainstream teaching staff to access multiple layers of student performance data is being encouraged to support differentiation. The consistent use of this data was less evident beyond these specialist programs.
- There is evidence that faculty groups are beginning to use both pre- and post-test data to inform learning and teaching. Some teachers were able to demonstrate how they analysed this data for impact of their specific interventions on student learning.
- Timeliness and quality of feedback by teachers to students on assessment has been reviewed in 2021 and adjustments have been implemented in 2022. Further evaluations on impact have yet to be undertaken in 2022.
- Faculties are utilising online software (e.g., Stile⁹, language programs, Read and Write for Google and Cambridge Go) to support differentiated learning.

⁹ STILE is an education service provider that provides interactive science lessons and other content

NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.

Findings

- The ADHS Staff Handbook includes a Pedagogy Plan which describes some general principles for pedagogical practices at ADHS. There is inconsistent knowledge and application of these practices.
- Discussion with the school leadership team confirmed that the school had introduced a variety of pedagogical practices in recent years that have been implemented in ‘pockets’ throughout the school. These include inquiry based learning, visible learning, Dylan Wiliam Formative Assessment, outcomes based planning and the use of action research projects.
- There is a school wide commitment to using a Restorative Practice approach to build and maintain positive, trusting, reciprocal relationships. Students, staff, and parents stated strong relationships are evident schoolwide.
- Staff and students stated that there were high expectations for students. Stakeholder survey data showed that many students would appreciate more consistent and timely feedback on their performance. Feedback to students has been explored and students stated they receive feedback both in verbal and written format. They receive both summative and formative feedback.
- Consistency of pedagogical approaches, such as the Conti¹⁰ approach in the language faculty, are emerging.
- Rubrics are widely used across the school to articulate expectations of student learning. In some areas of the school these rubrics are co-constructed with students.
- The school leadership team have prioritised the implementation of Professional Learning Communities to drive discussions around pedagogical practice. Teachers are engaged in PLC work within and across faculties and see this as an avenue to refine whole school practice.
- Many teachers are self-motivated to continually improve their pedagogy, explore professional learning, and utilise their own networks to research practice they can apply.
- PBL has been implemented for non-classroom specific settings. This is in its infancy and there is not yet school wide understanding of, and commitment to, how this supports student engagement and provides a platform for universal and responsive teaching.
- Pastoral Care programs that support social emotional learning are developed on an ad hoc basis and do not draw on an agreed program or schoolwide PBL data.

¹⁰ The Conti approach is a communicative language teaching approach developed by educational researcher Gianfranco Conti

NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

Domain descriptor

The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school's partnerships.

Findings

- The school has established a variety of connections with the school community and broader ACT community to enhance opportunities for students. These range from opportunistic connections made by individuals, through to local businesses who provide work experience and vocational learning opportunities for selected students. School leaders, including board members, demonstrate an outward focus and are encouraging these connections.
- The school has partnered with the University of Canberra through the Affiliated Schools Program. This initiative includes hosting tutorials and lesson practicums for preservice teachers as well as the establishment of a critical friend relationship with the University of Canberra which has worked closely with the school on building collective efficacy and developing an effective PLC model.
- The school encourages parents to be partners in learning. The school is collating a database of parents who possess specific skills who have indicated that they are willing to contribute to the learning experiences of students.
- Several external agencies have been secured to provide extra-curricular experiences for students. Wellbeing supports include Police and Community Youth Clubs (PCYC) programs and mental health education through Mental Illness Education ACT for selected students.
- The Deakin Deadly Mob has fostered connections with the local community, participating in authentic experiences in a supportive learning environment. These experiences include weaving workshops and plant and food tours 'on country'.
- The school has worked with parents to apply for and win scholarships from the Go Foundation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- The school has made connections with and accessed Education Directorate programs to enhance student learning, such as work in the STEM space with the Future Skills Academy and the Understanding Building and Construction Program for girls interested in the construction industry.
- The school has maintained a long connection with the neighbouring Woden School through the Disability Awareness Program (DAP).
- The school is currently re-negotiating a sister school agreement with Tomioka-Higashi

Junior High School in Japan.

Commendations

Alfred Deakin High School is commended for:

- Collating a variety of 'Big' data sets for its entire student population. These include the annual collection and tracking of PAT-M, PAT-R and semester by semester grades. Transition data for new students from Year 6 to Year 7 (NAPLAN, CoGAT) are used to identify class placement into targeted extension or support classes such as Unicorn, Gryphon, GRIN and MacqLit.
- Formalizing ILPs for approximately a quarter of their students. The plans differentiate individual learning and/or assessment needs.
- Leaders and staff demonstrating a commitment to their students' wellbeing and a focus on maintaining a respectful and inclusive culture for all.
- The large number of staff who willingly give of their time during breaks, after school hours to ensure that all students meet course requirements, support the wellbeing and enrichment of students.
- Prioritising the staffing and resourcing of students to ensure that the individual needs for students are being met.
- Developing a collaborative and supportive school environment which contributes to the high morale of all staff.
- Providing staff with the opportunity to take on leadership roles within the school.
- Developing a safe, caring, and inclusive school environment where relationships are warm and positive, and diversity is valued. The school has a high level of trust across all members of the school community. Students and staff demonstrate strong connections, open-mindedness, and an ability to develop and maintain reciprocal relationships.
- Enabling student voice and agency through avenues such as the school's Student Executive Group (SEG) and clubs (Rainbow Club, STEM Club, ADVANCE Leadership Group, Environment Club and Disability Awareness Program).
- The commitment the leadership team has to improving the outcomes for all students.

Affirmations

Alfred Deakin High School is affirmed for:

- Implementing personalized projects which enable students to have a choice in what they investigate based on their passion or interest. These are now broadly evident across the school. The investigations rubrics are used to outline expectations and the standards required to meet achievement standards.
- PLCs creating forums for professional discussion to identify and test appropriate interventions or support strategies. PLCs are building the data literacy of staff and to track student improvement or growth.
- Developing scope and sequence documents, in all faculties, based on the Australian Curriculum.
- Identifying and beginning to implement a whole-school PBL approach.

- Improving the physical and learning environment of school to better cater for shared teaching areas and small group learning.
- Exploring rubric and feedback mechanisms with students to provide clarity around learning.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Alfred Deakin High School:

- Develop an explicit improvement plan that:
 - is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning
 - provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes
 - incorporates explicit targets for student achievement and wellbeing
 - is monitored regularly and
 - is evaluated for effectiveness.
- Create a data plan that:
 - Identifies the most appropriate data sets to measure student progress
 - incorporates the full range of school data
 - outlines the responsibilities for analysis, use and monitoring of data at individual, cohort, and school-wide levels
 - builds leadership and staff data literacy skills and
 - develops the school's understanding of the needs of priority groups of learners.
- Develop a whole school professional learning plan that:
 - aligns with the school's improvement agenda and focuses on individual staff performance enhancement including observation, feedback, mentoring and coaching
 - references the implementation of agreed and explicit, evidence-based teaching and learning strategies across the school and
 - references the relevant professional standards for staff.
- Clarify and establish an explicit and agreed position on the research-based teaching practices that:
 - needs to be evident in every classroom
 - supports teachers in their understanding and implementation of effective teaching methods subscribed to by the school and
 - ensures that there is consistency of practice evident in every classroom.
- Develop formal agreements with community partners which include:
 - the purpose and objectives of the partnership
 - roles and responsibilities of each partner and
 - monitoring, evaluating and reviewing of the partnership.