ALFRED DEAKIN HIGH SCHOOL

Review Report 2017

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Contents

Introduction: Overview of the External School Review process

As part of the Australian Capital Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) are required to participate in an External School Review every five years. This document captures the findings of the External Review Panel during this cycle of school review.

In broad terms, the panel sought to determine, through evaluation against the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT), the extent to which the school is meeting its agreements, achieving its priorities, and addressing its challenges in the context of a continuously improving educational environment.

The External School Review was conducted over three days and involved a wide variety of data-gathering approaches, including desktop review, observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the NSIT to inform the affirmations, commendations and recommendations for this school improvement cycle.

Section A: School context

Alfred Deakin High School is a year 7–10 school located in the suburb of Deakin. The school was established in 1966 and has a current enrolment of 891 students, supported by 87 staff. The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage value has remained steady over the life of the strategic plan at around 1129.

Alfred Deakin High School is a high demand school with 54 percent of students in 2017 enrolling from out of the Priority Enrolment Area. This percentage will decrease over the life of the next plan due to an increase in area population growth. The school draws students from more than 40 different cultural backgrounds and values the diversity of its population and celebrates the advantages that this diversity brings to the school.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students has remained steady over the life of the plan. Twenty-five International Private Students are enrolled at the school, a significant increase on previous years. The school has a Learning Support Centre (E-Study) that caters for 16 identified students, and an additional 19 students are accessing integration support.

The school promotes the development of the whole child through a broad range of learning experiences and opportunities. This includes a core and elective curriculum, academic extension and a gifted and talented program. Programs are centred on building wellbeing in students with a focus on restorative practices.

The current principal has been at the school since 2011 and is supported by two School Leader B staff who have also been at the school for some time. There are 64 teachers and 17 non-teaching staff. The school has a stable team with less than 10 percent turnover of staff each year.

Student attendance rates in years 7 and 8 meet the Directorate's target of 92 percent. Year 9 and 10 attendance rates fall slightly below at 90 percent.

School suspension rates are low.

Section B: School performance

Performance in NAPLAN against the ACT, national and like schools

Across the life of the strategic plan, Alfred Deakin High School has achieved high-level results in student learning data for National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The school has equalled or exceeded the national and ACT system means in all five domains for both year 7 and year 9 over the past four years.

Directorate set targets for numeracy were exceeded in both year 7 and year 9 across the four-year improvement cycle apart from year 9 in 2015. Directorate set reading targets were met or were within the identified range in year 7 and year 9.

The school has met or exceeded targets in 2015 and 2016 in the percentage of year 7 and year 9 students achieving proficiency. The panel noted that the number of students at or below national minimum standards when commencing school in year 7 in 2014 reduced significantly when these students sat the testing again in 2016.

When analysing student performance across the life of the plan, the panel noted consistently high percentages of students in the top two bands, equal to or exceeding the ACT percentages for both years 7 and 9. The percentage of year 7 students in the top band for reading and numeracy is well above the ACT percentage over the past three years. The percentage of year 9 students in the top two bands in all three domains of reading, writing and numeracy are equal or higher than ACT percentages.

Student gain

In reading, the school shows significant value-add to other like schools and for those students with the same starting scores nationally in 2013–15 and 2014–16. In the 2012–14 cohort, student gains were similar to students with the same starting scores nationally but below like schools.

In writing, the school had consistently lower starting points than other like schools but demonstrated significant value-add over the three cohorts compared to those with the same starting scores nationally. Growth compared to like schools is similar for the 2012–14 and 2013–15 cohorts but significantly better in 2014–16.

In numeracy, the school had consistently lower starting points than other like schools but demonstrated significant value-add over the three cohorts compared to those with the same starting scores nationally. Growth compared to like schools is above in the 2013–15 cohort but close to 2012–14 and 2014–16.

When comparing the school's growth with ACT and the South Weston Network, Alfred Deakin High School is trending higher in numeracy in average scaled score growth. This has been consistent over the life of the plan. Revision of the maths curriculum in 2014 was reflected in results in NAPLAN for year 9 numeracy in the years 2013–15 showing a significant proportion of students achieving equal to or better than expected growth. Similarly, the introduction of explicit reading time into the year 8 English program has assisted in achieving growth in year 9 reading in 2015.

School grade distribution

Over the last three years, a key focus of the school has been to gain consistency in grade distribution under the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.

Alignment between A to E performance and NAPLAN outcomes has been mapped for each student. This data has been used to triangulate student performance versus potential and check for variations in student achievement. The school awards A to E grades solely on a student's demonstrated achievement against the Australian Curriculum standards.

Stakeholder perception data

The school's perception data from its staff, students and parent community is generally high and consistently above the ACT average. In 2016, 87% of parents and carers, 97% of staff, and 86% of students at the school indicated they were satisfied with the education provided by the school. This compares with the 2014 results, where 81% of parents and carers, 94% of staff, and 80% of students showed increasing levels of confidence across the life of the plan.

The school's focus over the past four years on increasing student voice, formative assessment and providing timely feedback has been reflected in stakeholder perception results over the life of the plan. The school opinion item, 'My school takes student opinions seriously', has steadily increased from 47% in 2013, 55% in 2014, and 63% in 2015 to 67% in 2016.

The school opinion item, 'Teachers provide me with useful feedback about my work', has also shown improvement from 59% in 2013, 58% in 2014 and 67% in 2015 to 70% in 2016.

The school's focus on restorative practice and respectful relationships between staff and students has also been reflected in survey results, with parent and carer responses over the past four years sitting above the ACT mean. 'Student behaviour is well managed at this school' had response growth from 69% in 2013 and 71% in 2014 to 80% in 2015 and 80% in 2016.

Evidence cited

- School Satisfaction and School Climate surveys 2013–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- My Schools website
- Annual Action Plans 2013–17
- School Strategic Plan 2014–17
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority areas

Alfred Deakin High School (ADHS) identified two key priorities for the 2014–2017 Strategic Planning cycle. These are to:

1. enhance growth learning outcomes for students
2. enhance and improve ADHS community wellbeing (revised 2015).

These remained the priorities for the school for the life of the plan. In support of these priorities, the school leadership team identified a number of key improvement strategies and attendant actions for each. Targets for the two priorities were set each year, although these targets did not remain consistent across the life of the plan.

Strategic Priority 1: Enhance growth learning outcomes for all students

The performance measures for this priority were:

- the proportion of year 9 students achieving better than expected growth in reading, writing and numeracy, inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- the proportion of students who have a voice in matters that affect their learning.

Key Improvement Strategy 1: Continue to develop high quality teaching practices

The school has introduced teacher observations, along with a significant focus on differentiation and formative assessment over the life of the plan, to build the capacity of teachers. These actions were informed by the work of Fullan, Hattie and Wiliam.

Frameworks including the Quality Teacher Model, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Essentials Skills have been used to support teacher observations. Peers observe each other at mutually arranged times and this has supported the building of a culture of self-reflection. The panel noted that not all teachers had been observed as often as required.

A further focus was the building of staff capacity in providing regular high quality feedback to students so that students are empowered to be leaders of their own learning. Whole-school professional learning was developed around formative assessment to ensure that quality feedback was provided at regular intervals. A formative assessment audit was conducted by faculty leaders to check progress in this initiative.

Targeted professional learning throughout the life of this plan has supported the school's improvement agenda. Through professional learning community meetings, professional learning in: differentiation and formative assessment; teaching students with English as an additional language or dialect in mainstream classes; Creating Engaging Classroom Discussions; Writing PEEL paragraphs; and Engaging the Disengaged Writer has occurred. Humanities and social sciences (HASS) and English have begun an audit of written assessment tasks to allow for cross-faculty focus on written text types with plans to map other faculty areas and to further encourage staff to work cross-faculty.

The shift to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and the significant focus on Google Apps for Education (GAFE) and other information and communication technology (ICT) tools in education has been a game changer in both pedagogy and student access to learning. Students complete two introductory programs in ICT at the start of year 7 to ensure they have a good understanding of the Google suite of applications and the use of technology as a tool in their learning.

The development of the student information database has enabled staff easy access to student achievement data from a range of sources for each of their classes. The data included cognitive testing, PAT-Reading and PAT-Maths testing, NAPLAN, Individual Learning Plans and Personalised Learning Plans (Achievement Learning Framework for Real Educational Difference, or ALFREDs), data on students with English as an additional language or dialect and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and other evidence of the social and emotional needs of students.

Key Improvement Strategy 2: Increase community partnerships in student learning

The school has developed a range of communication strategies including parent forums, parent–teacher evenings, the Deakin Digest, email and individual parent meetings. Several parent forums have been held over the life of the plan, with very high rates of parent attendance and engagement. These forums were specifically targeted to educate parents on a range of school initiatives and programs, for example, GAFE, BYOD and Digital Citizenship. Additional parent forums were held to discuss transitions to college, to report and manage student attendance through the use of the app, Appsence, and to assist parents to become familiar with learning at ADHS through the experience of their child. Collectively, these forums were attended by approximately 1000 parents each year.

A web based Parent Portal was developed to strengthen communication with parents along with increased frequency in posting events on our social media platforms – Facebook and Twitter. New information tabs were added to the portal to further assist parents view student learning portfolios, course outlines, elective options and process, preferred devices and the Education and Training Directorate's policies regarding the use of ICT in schools.

Key Improvement Strategy 3: Enhance opportunities for student voice in learning programs and learning environments

Student forums conducted in both 2016 and 2017 have led to improvements in the school environment and to improvements in learning programs. Twelve student forums have been held across years 7–10. Follow up meetings have also been held with students for a deeper discussion on particular topics with the principal.

These forums have led to several significant changes at the school. These include:

- changing the Pastoral Care and Hour of Wellbeing program
- more lunchtime activities
- improved outdoor facilities
- moving the newsletter to a digital platform
- sustainability ideas for the school.

The improved student responses in the school satisfaction survey are an indicator of the success of this strategy.

The school set a target in its 2014 Annual Action Plan of 95 percent of year 9 students achieving better than expected growth in reading, writing and numeracy. This target was not achieved. In the second year of the plan the target for this was set at 75 percent and was achieved in reading and numeracy but not in writing. For the next two years, no numerical target was set although the panel noted that the school did not achieve similar growth to the previous year.

A target in relation to students having a voice in matters that affect their learning was set at 53% for the 2014 Annual Action Plan and this target was not reached but was close to at 52%. The target was raised to 60% in 2015 but this target was not met. No numerical targets were set for the final two years of the plan. The panel noted that the proportion of students having a voice in matters that affect their learning did increase to 63% and therefore exceeded the 2015 target.

Strategic Priority 2: Enhance and improve ADHS community wellbeing

The performance measures for this priority were:

- the proportion of students who agree to an excellent standard in the Student Relations aspect of the school climate survey
- the proportion of students who agree to an excellent standard in the Emotional Engagement aspect of the school climate survey.

Two key improvement strategies were identified across the life of the plan:

1. to develop programs and practices to support student wellbeing through a 'Healthy Hub' to enhance understanding and practice of wellbeing across the community.
2. to increase and deepen opportunities for student voice in the corporate life of the school.

Underpinned by the belief that teaching and learning is deeply affected if the social and emotional needs of students and staff are not well supported, the school has developed a range of programs and practices across the life of the plan to support wellbeing. The school's 5 Ways to Wellbeing (Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, Take Notice and Give) underpin the community wellbeing philosophy of the school.

How the social and emotional wellbeing needs were being identified and addressed became an area of focus for the school during this planning cycle. A student engagement team uses a triage approach to managing referrals and links with a range of agencies to ensure a suite of services are available to support need. This team uses multiple approaches of communication to inform staff of how best to support the needs of identified students and interventions are documented electronically.

The school has also invested in creating a 'Healthy Hub' in the school. Infrastructure projects including the Garden to Plate in horticulture, the mountain bike track, fitness lab and a yoga/meditation room, have helped create this hub that was envisioned in the early life of the plan.

The school's Pastoral Care program was revitalised (now referred to as PCHOW - Pastoral Care and Hour of Wellbeing). Students have the opportunity to engage in recreational activities with students and staff with similar interests once a week as well as engaging in a targeted social and emotional learning program. The school has invested in professional learning for staff to enhance their understanding and practice in social and emotional learning.

A number of club and lunch time activities, a broad suite of co-curricular activities and the Week of Wellbeing all contribute to a healthy learning environment. The creation of the LEAN (Lifestyles, Education and Nutrition) learning area, which draws together an integrated focus on health and nutrition, also contributes to the building of skills in young people to live a healthy lifestyle.

Staff wellbeing has also been a focus and the leadership team model a life-work balance and offer a range of social and wellbeing activities to support staff in the workplace.

The design, development and implementation of Personalised Learning Plans (Achievement Learning Framework for Real Educational Difference, or ALFREDs) for all students is another example of the school's focus on social and emotional learning. Students reflect on and capture thoughts about their strengths and weaknesses in learning and wellbeing. The panel noted that how these plans are used by students and staff will need to remain a focus to ensure that they become an integral component of the school's vision to support the needs of all students.

The school has worked to increase and deepen student voice in the life of the school. Student forums conducted in both 2016 and 2017 have led to improvements in the school environment and learning programs. Students also regularly complete short surveys created by their teachers about teaching in the school. This not only provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice, but also supports student perceptions that their opinions are important. Student perception survey data in relation to students reporting that they have a voice in matters that affect their learning increased from 43 percent in 2013 to 63 percent in 2016. This result is evidence of the focus on improving student voice on governance, learning environments, infrastructure and safety.

The school set two key targets in relation to this priority from 2015 to 2017:

1. to increase the percentage of students who agree to an excellent standard in Student Relations
2. to increase the percentage of students who agree to an excellent standard in Emotional Engagement.

In the first year, a numerical target of 40 percent was set for each, however the school did not meet either of these targets. In 2016, the target was articulated as a proportion rather than as a percentage. The school, in 2016, did increase the percentage by 3 percentage points from the level achieved in 2015 for Student Relations and the increase was 5 percentage points for Emotional Engagement.

In the 2014 Annual Action Plan a target was set of 100 percent of teachers demonstrating an understanding of social and emotional learning. The school was unable to report against this target other than to use staff conversations as evidence of this target being met. The school also set a target in the 2014 plan of a 10 percent increase in the proportion of students who

can address with a staff member concerns around the misuse of information technology. The school exceeded this target.

Reflections

The school leadership team has worked to maintain an alignment between the two strategic priorities, the key improvement strategies and attendant actions across the life of the plan. Although the school may not have reached some of the targets set for this priority area, the leadership team reflected with the Review Panel that the targets set were wide and not closely aligned to the key improvement work. Though relevant opinion items from the student and staff perception surveys show some good improvement across the life of the plan, evidence that the initiatives implemented have had impact.

Evidence cited

- School Satisfaction and School Climate Surveys 2013–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- Annual Action Plans 2013–17
- School Strategic Plan 2014–17
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16
- interviews with staff, students and parents
- classroom observations
- use of ICT to improve learning outcomes paper (school authored).

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

Alfred Deakin High School's leadership team has used the National School Improvement Tool to conduct annual self-evaluations. In preparation for the school's External School Review, the leadership team led staff in an evaluation of each domain. During a meeting, staff were grouped and each group self-assessed the school's practice against one of the domains. Staff responses were compared to those of the leadership team to develop a final evaluation.

National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)

DOMAIN 1: An explicit improvement agenda

- *The school has developed an agenda for improvement in partnership with parents and the community and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student behaviours and outcomes. This agenda is communicated in staff meetings.*

- *There is a strong and optimistic commitment by all staff to the school improvement strategy and a clear belief that further improvement is possible.*

- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*

- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. This is reflected in an eagerness to learn from research evidence, international experience and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*

- *There is evidence of a school-wide commitment to every student's success and staff of the school tell stories of significant student improvement.*

- *Targets for improvement are not specific.*

Comments and findings

- The Alfred Deakin High School (ADHS) Strategic Plan 2014–17 identifies two key strategic priorities: enhance growth in learning outcomes for students and deepen and broaden students' social and emotional skills. The second priority was revised in 2015 to 'enhance and improve ADHS community wellbeing'. These priorities have remained the focus across the life of the plan, evidenced in annual actions plans. Plans contain specific targets for improvement in 2014 and 2015, although in 2016 and 2017 no numerical targets were set against the two priorities.
- Teachers identified a number of key strategies for improvement including: wellbeing, student voice, formative assessment, feedback and the use of ICT.
- Teachers do not readily identify with targets set in strategic planning documents or make a clear link to the changes in practice required to meet these. Because of regular discussions about school performance they are aware of the progress the school has made, particularly in relation to the targets set for the second priority.
- Student perception survey data opinion items about the 'useful feedback' they receive

from teachers and 'that their opinions are taken seriously' (two key improvement strategies) show improvement across the life of the plan.

- Analyses of whole-school data performance over time are evident and this occurs in annual leadership conferences and weekly leadership meetings. Board members report that the performance of the school is regularly discussed at meetings, and as routine practice, whole of school performance data is presented and discussed with staff.
- The school's participation in the Progress to Proficiency Analysis (Hattie) reflects a strong desire to learn from research evidence of best practice on how to measure growth. The school leadership team has drawn on research by Fullan, Hattie and Wiliam to inform the improvement agenda.
- There has been a strong focus on improvement in numeracy, the success of which is reflected in the 2013–15 NAPLAN results.

DOMAIN 2: Analysis and discussion of data

- *The principal and other school leaders clearly articulate their belief that reliable data on student outcomes are crucial to the school's improvement agenda.*

- *A high priority has been given to professional development aimed at building teachers' and leaders' data literacy skills.*

- *Teachers are given test data for their classes electronically and are provided with, and use, software to analyse, display and communicate data on individual and class performances and progress.*

- *There is a school plan for the annual collection of data on student achievement and wellbeing.*

- *One or more members of staff have been assigned responsibility for implementing the annual plan, analysing the full range of school data, and summarising, displaying and communicating student outcome data for the school. The school has ensured that appropriate software is available and that at least these assigned staff have been trained to undertake data analyses.*

- *Time is set aside (e.g., on student-free days and in staff meetings) for the discussion of data and the implications of data for school policies and classroom practices. These discussions occur at whole-school and team levels. The school can illustrate how data have been used to identify priorities, take action and monitor progress.*

Comments and findings

- Targets for NAPLAN set by the ACT Directorate have been met across the life of the plan and the school is consistently equal to or above national means in all five domains.
- The school collects and analyses a wide range of data sets including NAPLAN, attendance, perception surveys, social and emotional wellbeing, school developed student surveys, A to E academic performance, and diagnostic tests. The school leadership team triangulates data sets (for example, NAPLAN and A to E academic performance) to ensure that student progress against potential is checked regularly.

- Executive leaders meet regularly with line managers to discuss the academic performance of their faculty. Data discussion is a regular practice in faculties.
- A student information database has been developed as a tool to centralise school data and provide ready access to data sets for classroom teachers. All teachers interviewed can describe how they use this data to identify the needs of their students and express their appreciation that this information is centrally located and easily accessible.
- Although a whole of school documented data plan has not been developed, embedded routines and processes are evident for the collection, distribution and discussion of whole of school, cohort, class and individual student data.
- The conversations of the school leadership team reflect a very sophisticated understanding of data concepts.

DOMAIN 3: A culture that promotes learning

- *The school ethos is built around high expectations and a commitment to excellence. There is an expectation that every student will learn and achieve positive outcomes. Classrooms are calm but busy and interruptions to teaching time are kept to a minimum.*

- *Interactions are focused on the learning and wellbeing of students and on continually improving the school's ability to meet the needs of all students. There is a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school.*

- *There are very few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems and behaviour management takes up very little, if any, time of school leaders and classroom teachers.*

- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully, in their own ways and at their own pace. Individual talents are valued. Class 'busy work' is kept to a minimum, and an attempt is made to ensure that all students are engaged in challenging, meaningful learning.*

- *Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact and in the language they use in both formal and informal settings.*

- *Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school and are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. There are agreed guidelines on such matters as greeting visitors, taking messages, and responding to queries promptly and respectfully.*

- *Staff morale is generally high.*

Comments and findings

- There is a very strong sense of belonging and a sense of pride felt by all stakeholders at Alfred Deakin High School, which has a long standing excellent reputation in the wider community. The school draws from a wide range of feeder primary schools.
- A highly inclusive environment is evident. Students encourage and support each other and the school celebrates its diversity.
- Alfred Deakin High School has implemented a restorative justice approach to managing behaviour. The panel observed a calm and focused learning environment. In

stakeholder (perception and school climate) survey data, staff, parent and student confidence in how behaviour is managed at this school is consistently above the average for the ACT.

- Parents have a very high degree of confidence in the school evidenced in the parent opinion survey data, which is consistently above the ACT in all opinion items. Student and staff perceptions from these surveys also reflect this high regard.
- Improved student voice has been a priority for the school and a range of student forums have been held to capture student feedback on a range of topics. Students interviewed reported that they appreciate the opportunities the school is providing to give them a voice. Student leadership opportunities have been extended across the life of the plan.
- Community wellbeing was identified as an improvement area for this planning cycle, underpinned by the belief that teaching and learning is deeply affected if the social and emotional needs are not well supported. A student engagement team provides high levels of support and intervention and is closely monitoring student wellbeing. Initiatives including a revised pastoral care and recreation program, a Week of Wellbeing, lunch and club activities and wellbeing activities for staff reflect the school's strong focus in this area.
- The values of excellence, respect, community and responsibility are well embedded.
- A number of parent forums are held each year focussed on key school initiatives and processes and these are well attended. The school has been a case study for the ACT in how it engages parents.

DOMAIN 4: Targeted use of school resources

- *School records of individual student needs, achievements and progress are maintained centrally and shared across year levels.*

- *The principal and other school leaders have introduced programs and strategies to identify and address the needs of students in the school and are sourcing and applying available resources to meet those needs.*

- *The school has developed processes (e.g. systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs.*

- *Programs to meet individual learning needs (e.g. programs for gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students for whom English is a second language, Indigenous students, refugees) are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget.*

- *Technology is used effectively to maximise student learning.*

Comments and findings

- Cognitive and diagnostic testing (PAT Reading, PAT Maths) occurs for year 6 students and is used to determine class placement in the schools Unicorn (gifted and talented) extension program and mainstream classes for english, maths, science and humanities and social sciences (HASS).
- The school provides a very wide range of co-curricular and extension activities to encourage students to pursue their interests and talents. There is a very strong focus on meeting the needs of the most abled students. A gifted and talented coordinator

has recently evaluated the school's approach to gifted and talented education seeking feedback from key stakeholders in order to determine how to best meet the needs of these students.

- The student engagement team uses a triage system to identify and respond to students with wellbeing needs.
- the language learning needs of students with English as an additional language or dialect are supported through a targeted literacy program as well as being supported in meeting the language needs of all their subjects.
- Students with verified disabilities have Individual Learning Plans that outline their learning goals and expected adjustments. The school is adjusting the approach to developing these with a greater emphasis more personalised learning goals. These plans are readily available and being used by teachers to make appropriate adjustments.
- Every student in the school has a Personal Learning Plan (Achievement Learning Framework for Real Educational Difference, or ALFREDs). Students reflect on their areas of strength, what they need help with and set some goals for learning. Students are not yet placing value in these but they have the potential to be used highly effectively.
- The school has invested significant financial resources to support improved infrastructure and access to devices in technology; the refurbishment of school facilities including the horticulture learning environment and the mountain bike track.
- The Gryphon program supports students with literacy and numeracy learning needs.
- Programs such as Elements (all girls) and Panthers (all boys), Youth leadership, Advance and Disability awareness programs supports student leadership development.
- There are some areas in the school where physical spaces are used creatively and others that are used traditionally.

DOMAIN 5: An expert teaching team

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert and coherent school-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for all students.*

- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the school-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff who find it difficult to commit to the school's improvement agenda.*

- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*

- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues, although there may not be formal mentoring or coaching arrangements in place.*

- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*

Comments and findings

- Developing high quality teaching practice has been an improvement strategy in each of the school's annual action plans. There is an expectation that teachers will participate in classroom observation three to four times a year and that staff have flexibility in who they observe or receive feedback from. The panel found that the number of classroom observations occurred varied from teacher to teacher. Teachers are open to and appreciate feedback provided. Critique of practice that supports professional growth is emerging through the school's focus on observation and feedback.
- To support the development of a professional learning culture, whole of staff meetings focus on building staff capacity aligned to the school's improvement priorities, for example, formative assessment. A differentiated approach is evident with a range of professional learning opportunities offered regularly. Faculty-based professional dialogue supports the school's focus on the building of an expert team.
- Mentoring arrangements are in place for teachers in their beginning years and an induction program to familiarise new staff with the school is in place. New teachers to the school report that the induction process is very effective.
- Students provide feedback to teachers through teacher developed surveys to support their professional growth.
- The senior leadership team coaches and mentors faculty heads to build capacity. Staff are encouraged to take on leadership roles and are well supported.
- Teacher performance and development plans have been implemented across the school.

DOMAIN 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

- *The school's curriculum delivery plan identifies curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements. The curriculum delivery plan reflects a shared vision (by the school's governing body, principal, school leadership team, and teachers) for the school, and provides a context for delivering the curriculum as detailed in the Australian or other approved curriculum and, where relevant, system curriculum documents.*

- *A strong alignment has been achieved between the overall curriculum delivery plan, term and unit plans, classroom teaching and the regular assessment of student progress in relation to curriculum expectations.*

- *Considerable attention has been given to ensuring 'vertical' alignment of the curriculum so that there is continuity and progression of learning across the years of school, with teaching in each year building on to and extending learning in previous years.*

- *The school curriculum plan and curriculum delivery (including the time allocated to particular learning) balance requirements to address all learning areas, to give priority to English, mathematics and science, and to embed the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking in all school subjects.*

- *The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains a focus for discussion among, and collaboration between, teachers and that the curriculum plan is the reference against which flexible delivery is designed, assessment tasks are developed and student learning is reported. Curriculum delivery is designed to meet the needs of the*

range of students within each year level as well as those with disabilities and other particular needs.

Comments and findings

- Planning documentation is aligned to the Australian Curriculum in all Key Learning Areas. Teachers work collaboratively to develop and refine the curriculum. Quality long- and short-term planning documents are evident including Scope and Sequences, year/term and unit planners. Processes are in place to map the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
- Common assessment tasks are evident and the use of Australian Curriculum work samples supports moderation practices.
- There is a clear alignment between curriculum, assessment and reporting. The school reports against the achievement standards.
- The school is exploring opportunities for interconnectedness of curriculum across faculties. Innovative integration is already evident in the LEAN (Lifestyles, Education and Nutrition) faculty, which skillfully integrates the design technology and health and physical education learning areas.
- Alfred Deakin High School works with a cluster of schools sharing best practice in curriculum planning and delivery.
- A range of flexible learning options are evident including: work experience, independent study programs, electives (example.g. four languages and access to vocational education).
- The school's Pastoral Care program shows alignment to some of the relevant general capabilities.
- An audit of writing tasks is supporting the school in refining common approaches to assessment genre.
- Supporting teachers to strengthen their capacity in using the general capabilities as active learning streams, and the refinement of the curriculum to calibrate the balance between content and skills, has been identified by the school as their next focus.

DOMAIN 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

- *School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness. This includes the systematic use of assessment instruments (standardised assessment tasks and teacher developed assessment tools) to establish where individuals are in their learning and to identify skill gaps and misunderstandings. Teachers also are encouraged to respond to differences in cultural knowledge and experiences and to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.*

- *Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, and how multiple opportunities to learn are provided, including multiple pathways for transition to external studies (e.g., apprenticeships) for students in years 10-12.*

- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*

Comments and findings

- Across the life of the plan there has been a very strong focus on the use of formative assessment to better understand the learning needs of individual students, identify and address gaps in learning and provide explicit feedback. The panel found evidence of the use of formative assessment in all faculties.
- Class groupings (Unicorn, Extended, Mainstream) are used to support student learning and curriculum planning shows how the needs of each of these targeted groups are being met. Differentiated teaching strategies, for example, more or less scaffolding, deeper exploration and personal projects are evident in these groups.
- Negotiated curriculum and assessment tasks, repeated opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding and skills (particularly in mathematics) support the school's focus on meeting individual student learning needs.
- Students are actively encouraged to participate in an extensive range of enrichment (co-curricular) opportunities.
- Acceleration opportunities are provided, for example, access to the next year level for all subjects.
- Staff allocations are made for targeted support for students during literacy and numeracy lessons. There is evidence that individual needs are catered for in Inclusion Support and Gryphon programs.
- EAL/D teachers support students in the classroom who might have language difficulties.
- Teachers are encouraged and strive to cater for individual differences in their classes. All teachers interviewed access the data available to them about their classes to better understand the needs of their learners. A number of teachers are highly skilled in differentiated practice.
- The use of Google Classroom supports teachers in providing differentiated learning experiences for students.

DOMAIN 8: Effective pedagogical practices

- *School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school and expect team leaders and teachers to identify ways of doing this, although the principal and other senior leaders may not themselves have clear positions on the kinds of teaching they wish to see occurring across the school or be 'hands on' in driving improved teaching practices.*

- *Clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do, high expectations of every student's learning, explicit teaching of content and individualised attention as required are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

Comments and findings

- Alfred Deakin High School has a designated leadership position to support a coordinated approach to building staff capacity.
- There is a strong commitment to improvement in pedagogical practice by all school leaders, including a whole of school focus on building the capacity of staff to use

formative assessment and technology effectively; differentiate for the learners and meet the literacy requirements of learners.

- An explicit definition of the expected practices in the teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and science is not yet evident.
- Student surveys are developed and conducted regularly by teaching staff and this feedback supports teachers in reflecting and making adjustments to their practice.
- Students report that unit outlines provide clarity of understanding about what they are expected to know and do.
- In discussions with teachers, the panel found clear evidence of a range of strategies being employed by teachers to provide regular feedback to students, oral and written. Some teachers have developed their own tracking tools/processes to ensure that feedback is timely, detailed and personalised.
- Students report that the quality, frequency and level of feedback varies across the school.

DOMAIN 9: School-community partnerships

- *The school has established one or more partnerships with families, local businesses and/or community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students.*
- *There is evidence that the school's partnerships are being implemented as intended.*
- *The student needs that partnerships are designed to address may not be made explicit and, rather than being carefully planned, individual partnerships tend to be opportunistic in nature. Communications between partners are largely unplanned and infrequent.*
- *No plans exist to systematically review the effectiveness of partnerships, which typically are very dependent on the efforts of a small number of individuals and so have limited sustainability.*

Comments and findings

- The school works closely with primary feeder schools and senior colleges through regular communication, joint activities and targeted visits to build strong connections, ensure a smooth transition and better understand the needs of future students. The years 4/5 Titans program for maths and sciences, conducted with four schools, is an example of this.
- Through Google Apps for Education, the establishment of a Parent Portal, regular parent-teacher interviews and frequent email contact, parents are encouraged to partner in their child's learning.
- The school has a long standing partnership with The Woden School through the Disability Awareness Program.
- The school received a grant to work in partnership with Deakin University to implement the It's Your Move program. The effectiveness of this program was assessed by the university with evidence of improvement in student wellbeing.
- Faculties actively seek community engagement opportunities.
- The student engagement team is connecting with a very wide range of agencies to

support student wellbeing.
- The school has an International Private Students program and has developed international links with sister schools.

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

Alfred Deakin High School completed a comprehensive formal reflection of the schools practices using the National Safe Schools Audit Tool. The self-evaluation process commenced with a consultative process within the student engagement team (SET) before input was sought from the executive team who mapped where they saw the schools current practice. Once there was a consensus for the rating scales, areas for further development were identified.

Key areas of strength (where all statements are rated as 'mostly true' or 'definitely true') are:

- **Leadership commitment to a safe school.**
  The school has allocated significant human resources to ensure it remains a safe school for all students.
- **Supportive and connected school culture.**
  As evidenced by climate and satisfaction surveys, the school has created a healthy culture that emphasises connectedness.
- **Policies and procedures.**
  The school has reviewed internal guidelines in line with the Safe and Supportive Schools framework.
- **Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum**.
  The school has developed a range of engaging curriculum opportunities to address student need.
- **A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership.**
  Processes, professional learning and timetable structure reflects a strong emphasis on student wellbeing and student voice.
- **Early intervention and targeted support.**
  Students with special needs, learning difficulties and mental health challenges are identified through a range of processes and resources and structures are well established to support these students.
- **Partnerships with families and community.**
  The school actively seeks community engagement opportunities.

Two key improvement priorities have been identified by the school for the future:

- **Professional learning.**
  The inclusion of non-teaching and casual, specialist and visiting staff in relevant professional learning opportunities.
- **Positive behaviour management.**
  A restorative approach that emphasises behavioural education has contributed to the schools climate. Additional work is needed in supporting new educators and some new staff in Restorative Practices.

Section E: Affirmations, commendations and recommendations

Affirmations

The External Review Panel offers the following affirmations for Alfred Deakin High School.

1. The review panel affirms the strong focus on supporting parental engagement in the school. High attendance at the school's parent forums, the use of Google Classroom to connect parents to their student learning, the establishment of a Parent Portal and multiple communication (print and digital) modes are examples of the school's push to ensure that parents and families are integral members of the school community and partners in student learning.

2. Alfred Deakin High School is affirmed for its coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery well aligned to the Australian Curriculum and for the work within the South Weston Network to build a shared understanding and practice.

3. The school is affirmed for the focused professional learning aligned to its strategic priorities and the way in which it is encouraging a culture of collaboration and teamwork. The school is providing opportunities for teachers to work together and learn from each other's practices through the professional learning community, faculty team meetings and peer and leader observations.

Commendations

Alfred Deakin High School is commended for the following:

1. The school is well served by a highly committed and professional staff, who bring a wealth of experience and expertise. Members of the board and parents have high levels of faith in the principal and staff of the school.

2. Its school-wide analysis and discussion of whole-school performance data. Analyses reflects a sophisticated understanding of student assessment and data concepts. The school has developed a centralised data base for the collection and distribution of individual student performance and wellbeing data. This database is readily available for teachers to enable them to understand their students' abilities, needs and starting points for teaching.

3. Its continued focus on student and staff wellbeing over the life of the strategic plan. This is underpinned by a whole of school belief that social and emotional needs are key to successful learning and teaching. Initiatives such as a Week of Wellbeing, the Pastoral Care and Hour of Wellbeing program, student lunch and club activities and staff wellbeing activities, reflects the school's strong focus in this area. The formation of the LEAN (Lifestyles, Education and Nutrition) faculty has also proved successful under this vision.

4. Alfred Deakin High School is a highly sought-after school, with a long standing reputation of excellence in the community. A highly inclusive environment is evident and there is a very strong sense of belonging and pride felt by all stakeholders. Students and staff encourage and support each other and the school celebrates its diversity.

5. The school has modelled best practice in the implementation of Google Apps for

Education and Bring You Own Device in the classroom. This is embedded across the curriculum and is being used in innovative ways throughout the school. The school is commended for how technology is used effectively in classrooms to maximise student learning.

6. The school is commended for its strong academic performance over time.

7. The continued focus on increasing student voice over the life of the school strategic plan has led to improvements in the school environment and to improvements in learning programs. This has also been reflected in the student satisfaction and climate survey results over the past four years.

8. The school has a wide range of strategies in place to meet the needs of its diverse learners. Well embedded programs for gifted and talented students, those with learning difficulties, and students for whom English is a second language ensure these students are well supported. The school has a strong focus on providing flexible learning options and extensive co-curricular opportunities to provide a very rich learning program for all students.

Recommendations

The External Review Panel recommends Alfred Deakin High School pays attention to the following opportunities for school improvement during the next planning cycle.

1. Develop a plan for improvement that has a narrow and sharp focus on core learning priorities, expressed in terms of specific rather than general improvements sought in student performance. Develop realistic but challenging targets. Consider initiating targets at a classroom level that are then established and owned at a faculty level. Subsequently, these can be incorporated into school-wide targets to support teachers in understanding and taking responsibility for changes in practice required to meet the targets.

2. Document a data plan and timetable for the annual collection, communication, analysis and use of student performance data to monitor progress to proficiency. Continue to grow a culture of using data to inform teaching with a particular emphasis on the comparisons of pre- and post-test data.

3. Continue to build a culture of self-reflection in the school through the school's peer and leader classroom teaching observations program. Ensure that the feedback provided includes both affirmations and constructive critique to stimulate this self-reflection. Implement accountability processes to ensure these practices are embedded. Consider how coaching arrangements can support teachers in building their capacity to improve in the areas identified from feedback.

4. Review curriculum planning and delivery to ensure that a high priority is given to developing the capability of students to apply knowledge and skills confidently and

effectively. Build the capacity of teachers to apply the continua to the understanding and explicit teaching of these general capabilities at the appropriate level.

5. Continue to develop a pedagogical framework for learning and teaching that articulates the evidence-based practices expected of all Alfred Deakin teachers. Ensure best practice evidence-based teaching, assessment and feedback strategies identified for the school are a regular feature of all teachers' work. Continue to provide multiple opportunities for these practices to be shared enabling teachers to learn with and from each other.

6. Regularly review current strategic partnerships to evaluate whether these are having the intended impact in improving outcomes for students, are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school and partnered organisations.

Section F: Record of school review process

The following people were members of the External Review Panel for Alfred Deakin High School conducted on 7–11 August, 2017.

Name: Christina Rogers   External Review Panel – Chair

Name: Gai Beecher   External Review Panel – Principal Member

Amaroo School

Name: Kate Marshall   External Review Panel – Principal Observer

Mount Stromlo High School

I, Christina Rogers, as External Review Panel Chair endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the External School Review process.

Signature: **Date:**   13/09/2017

I, Belinda Bartlett, as Principal of Alfred Deakin High School accept this Review Report on behalf of the school community.

Signature: **Date:**   13/09/2017