The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Bowden Brompton Community School

Conducted in October 2018

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education is to improve the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.

The purpose of the External School Review is to support schools to raise achievement, sustain high performance and to provide quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.

The overarching review question is "how well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This report 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lorna Fenech, Review Principal.

School context

Bowden Brompton Community School ("BBCS") provides specialised education for young people from years 6 to 13 who have been unable to access education effectively in mainstream schools. The school is classified as Category 2 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school is not given an ICSEA score.

The school is situated across 3 campuses, and is part of the Inner West Partnership. The Torrens Road campus is 5kms from the Adelaide CBD, and caters for students in years 7 to 13. The Beach campus is 33kms south of the Adelaide CBD, and caters for students in years 7 to 13. The Little Para campus is 21kms north of the Adelaide CBD, and caters for students in years 6 and 7. The total enrolment in 2018 is 130 students. Total enrolment is capped at 150 students, 32 at Little Para, 32 at Beach and 86 at Torrens Road. In 2018, an 'integrated program' has been trialled. Up to 16 Bowden Brompton students in years 7 to 9 are attending a class that has been set up on the Para Hills High School campus. This class works closely with the Beafield Education Centre which is co-located on this high school campus. The integrated program has been successful this year and, in 2019, a program for students in years 10 to 12 called 'gateways' will commence.

The current school population includes 28% Aboriginal students, 27% students with a verified disability, 80% families eligible for School Card assistance, 1% students of EALD background and 20% students in care. Students come from all areas of Adelaide. The majority of students have experienced significant trauma in their lives. 'Trauma' refers to complex family breakdown issues, mental health issues, child protection issues, and welfare, social and juvenile justice complexities. Bowden Brompton Community School students are dealing with intersecting complexities in their lives that alienate them from traditional mainstream schooling models. Many have been identified with learning difficulties or disabilities. A significant number have a child protection social worker. Bowden Brompton Community School students are at risk of not completing their schooling, so engagement and retention of students is of major importance.

The principal is in his 1st year of current tenure, and in his 7th year as principal at the school. There are 3 Band 3 leaders (deputy and 2 assistant principals), and 5 Band 2 leaders (coordinators). There are 18 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career and 3 Step 9 teachers.

Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Student Learning: **How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?**

Effective Teaching: **To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**

School Community Partnerships: **How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?**

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

There is a strong evidence-based learning culture. This keeps student learning central to the mission of BBCS. Student learning growth is checked regularly. Individual goals are set, checked mid-term, and reviewed and reported against each term. This is done with the student and the family as equal partners with teachers. There is a need to review and address the consistency, quality and effectiveness of goal-setting across all campuses.

The school is continuously evolving in how it tracks and monitors student learning growth, and recognises that, whilst systemic assessment tools are rarely useful when students enter BBCS, students may need to undertake PAT or even NAPLAN tests later in order to reflect the gains they make in their learning. However, the process of these standardised assessments do not necessarily connect with students due to emotional barriers to assessments and failure.

Staff continue to monitor student growth even when learning is off-site, such as through community learning. Students may transition in and out of the school and staying connected with the school is critical.

Student growth and achievement is displayed in classrooms so that students can have a visual of their growing success over time. Some students reported dramatic growth in learning, such as now being able to read and write. The panel found evidence in every campus from all stakeholders that higher-level learning opportunities for stretch and challenge are done less well, especially in maths and for students with high-level reading ages.

Lack of social and emotional self-regulation in schooling environments is the greatest obstacle to learning. Much of the teaching and learning focus incorporates the development of social and emotional self-regulation. The school is aware that these capacities develop in students the longer they stay at BBCS. However, the school finds it difficult to demonstrate and reflect growth in learning, with students only attending the school for short periods. The school is continuing to look for and trial appropriate assessment tools.

Each campus uses a daily staff debrief about student learning, highlights and issues. This regular, whole-school staff sharing includes data, and means all are informed about student learning growth. Debriefs are carefully documented, so very detailed records of student growth and needs are kept and followed-up. The school has developed its own model for classifying students according to their level of complexity and need for support to emotionally engage in learning. Students in the highest category (wave 4) often need community-based learning programs. The school works tirelessly to engage and improve students' connectness to schooling.

The school is tracking student growth effectively and using an evidence-base to regularly report learning achievements to all stakeholders, and to collaboratively plan strategies for improvement. Such work is complex for this demographic of students due to their generally low entry levels of literacy and numeracy, and avoidance of testing. However, the school works cleverly and tirelessly with assessments in order to identify tools and to develop fit-for-purpose data practices. Most students also come to the school with critically low levels of social-emotional self-management in learning. A next step for the school is to provide more effectively for those students who are atypical in this demographic, and those who may make rapid gains in fluency in the effective learning environment of the school.

Direction 1
Ensure learning stretch and challenge for all students, including those with higher level literacy and numeracy skills.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

The school's shared mission is to re-focus students on learning in order to provide a pathway to a successful future. A staff member said: "The school has the potential to get kids on a healthier, safer pathway. Success is when they take ownership of their lives, they become self-determining. Success in learning is very valuable for students". Students describe teachers as flexible, approachable, positive, supportive and understanding. Aboriginality is proactively recognised and celebrated. Students report constant teacher support to 'have a go' and engage in learning.

Staff relationships with students are critical to the school's success. A staff member said: "Staff having the trust of students is everything. You have always to be 'on' and 'present' for them. So much depends on it, as you can undo things quickly with these kids. You always have to be listening and responding at a very high level". Staff value strong collegial support and quality leadership as they work daily with students. Staff said that the daily debrief is critical to their wellbeing and value the proactive way that leadership support their mental health. The principal and deputy are valued in all campuses, and are seen by staff and students as highly present.

The panel found that teaching is highly individualised. Each student has an individual program for daily core learning for literacy and numeracy growth. These programs are informed by testing and continuously intentionalised through regular assessments. The employment of the speech pathologist and social worker is providing ongoing expertise in supporting individual student needs. This expertise can result in the identification of learning disorders and disabilities. The speech pathology expertise is enabling strategic improvement initiatives to be more successful, for example, having access to an expert to inform and support the development of student vocabulary and language for academic learning.

In 2018, professional learning teams (PLTs) have become campus-based, which is effective, as it enables teachers to regularly collaborate and focus on the needs of their cohort and student individual needs. In 2018, a learning sprint model of professional development has been led and implemented. Teachers, in their PLTs, have been supported to target a small issue of need, to trial strategies for improvement over a 4-week period, and then to check for impact. This work is fully evidence-based and is impacting strongly on the effectiveness of teaching practice.

The school pays attention to its subject choice program, ensuring choices are attractive to students and based on their current interests and passions. Also, the school uses these choice subjects to ensure that students are meeting accreditation requirements for SACE. Parents spoke strongly about the success of the individualisation of learning for their young people. It has made them want to come to school and seen them enjoying school. Parents worry less about their children's futures and value the quality of home-school communication, both formal and informal. There is improved parent self-esteem around schooling and parents value being informed on positives about their children. Parents also value the way students are recognised and rewarded.

The 2018 introduction of the integrated class has been very successful. It provides an option to learn in a supported way for students who are more emotionally and socially self-managing in learning (wave 1).

The nutrition program is valued both for the authentic learning opportunities it provides, and for the positive impact it has on students' physical and emotional wellbeing. This also develops a sense of community in the school and strengthens students' 'belonging'. Teachers value the whole-school protocols to orientate students for learning (check-in, check-up, check-out, and primer activities).

Inappropriate behaviours are recognised as the 'tip of an iceberg' of many other problems for a student. Younger and new students have obvious lower levels of metacognition about learning. The school

recognises that sometimes extreme behaviours in students can negatively impact on the sense of safety and emotional wellbeing of other students. Little Para teachers identified a need to develop and use a common approach and narrative for the development of social-emotional self-management. "People come and go, things get picked up and dropped", said a teacher. Agreements get 'watered down' and need to be regularly revisited and inducted.

Students value someone always being around to talk to. Students trust teachers to be their learning experts and have faith in what teachers tell them about the importance of learning. Students and parents mentioned that some students' behaviour interferes with learning. Parents said there were not enough quiet withdrawal spaces for students, and the panel saw examples of how 1 student's behaviour disrupted the learning and teacher recognition of other students' needs. Students were critical of the work ethic of some of their peers. It can be very disruptive when new students come into a class group.

The school provides specialist education for those students who have been unable to access schooling effectively in mainstream settings. The school works in highly individualised, effective ways to provide its students with educational success. Such work is complex and demanding and the school must accommodate much problematic student behaviour in its efforts to develop students' social and emotional self-regulation. It is important that the school balances the need for a safe and supportive learning environment against the need to make allowances for behavioural complexities in individual students. Monitoring this balance must be done in an intentional, continuous, ongoing way as it is highly situational and dynamic.

Direction 2
Strengthen whole-school consultation processes to more frequently monitor and review the quality of learning environments.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Students are involved and given agency in all aspects of their learning, including goal setting, assessment and tracking of growth. The panel found that many students have high levels of meta-cognition about their own and each other's learning. Developing meta-cognition about learning is critical to students becoming self-determining and independent in their learning. Many students reflected that the quality of their learning outcomes is ultimately in their hands. One student said: "I'm really starting to cooperate with teachers in these last 2 terms. All the teachers reckon I've matured now".

Students recognise that they can influence their choices program and understand the processes to do this. Students strongly value the timetabling of core literacy and numeracy in the mornings with choice subjects in the afternoons. Choice is dependent on completion of core learning.

The school recognises the value of students getting accreditation for all the work they do. The school works hard to support students to achieve Stage 1 SACE so that they can be more independent in Stage 2.

Students are motivated when they understand learning's links to real-life, and how mastery of particular skills and abilities can contribute to success and access to life options and the workforce. In the secondary campuses, teachers always make strong links to real-life learning, and students mentioned knowing about and being motivated by this.

The school recognises the value of providing students with quality experiences outside of the school environment. Students are able to learn about their strengths and capacities through access to high-

quality/high value camps and excursions (such as the Falls Creek snow camp). These opportunities enable staff to support student goal-setting, and for students to have success in reaching high-level personal and social goals. Such experiences can be life-changing and transformative for this student demographic.

Students appreciate the short courses that are offered to help secure jobs. These jobs support them with earning money to move into their 'dream' and aspirational careers, such as being a 'gamer' or 'Youtuber'.

Student input has influenced the school to be more digitally inclined. Students want to work digitally, and the school employs a youth worker with skills in film-making who is successfully supporting this. Digital literacies are highly engaging for students and access to the specialist SSO provides authenticity and challenge. There is a need to maintain the industry standard that the school has developed for digital literacies.

Structures and processes around all Bowden Brompton students are highly effective. The school is strongly managed by a leadership team that works collaboratively and is well-regarded by staff, families and students. Induction of new staff needs to be carefully attended to, as well as regular in-service training for existing teachers. Additionally, the school is well-placed to regularly consider its allocation of resources between campuses, and for students of different ages and maturity, to ensure that each sector of the school is able to always operate in optimum ways.

Direction 3
Ensure that each campus is being provided with training and development, staff induction and resourcing equitably and fit for purpose for the needs of their student cohort.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Bowden Brompton Community School.

Through digital literacies, students become creators of knowledge and are given high agency in their own learning. Teachers use digital learning to develop literacy and numeracy skills, and support students to master related skills of which a digital literacy project may be comprised. As well, digital literacy work enables staff to observe how students are using social media and to be more proactive in protective interventions.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Bowden Brompton Community School shared vision, strategic planning, actions and interventions are data informed and sustained over time. There are sustained high expectations and a culture of improvement. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.

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

1. Ensure learning stretch and challenge for all students, including those with higher level literacy and numeracy skills.

2. Strengthen whole-school consultation processes to more frequently monitor and review the quality of learning environments.

3. Ensure that each campus is being provided with training and development, staff induction and resourcing equitably and fit for purpose for the needs of their student cohort.
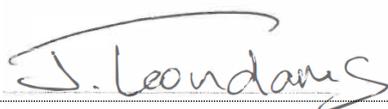
Based on the school's current performance, Bowden Brompton Community School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

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DIRECTOR

REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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PRINCIPAL

BOWDEN BROMPTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.
The school attendance rate for 2017 was 48.3%.

Significant issues in students' lives not only result in high transience, but also contribute to significant non-attendance. Students who are dealing with complex health and welfare issues have fluctuating school attendance. As such, case management forms a major component of the work of Bowden Brompton Community School, and all staff have significant roles in liaising and meeting regularly with parents/carers, agencies and other community related services associated with individual students.

Appendix 2

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).

Often students refuse to comply with NAPLAN standardized testing, resulting in a large proportion of incomplete or blank test results. These factors impact on the validity and reliability of the data collected. The same is true for the PAT-R and PAT-M testing results, which are often partial and do not reflect a true and accurate evaluation of the students' academic performance.

PAT Maths 2017: 69 students were not tested. Of those tested 34% met the SEA.

PAT R (Comprehension): 79 students were not tested. Of those tested 8% met the SEA.

Testing using the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – Second Edition (KTEA2) indicates that, on average, students are achieving 1 year growth for 1 year of schooling. Where students have not shown this level of improvement there is correlation between poor student attendance and/or disengagement from learning tasks. In instances where students have attended regularly there has often been greater than 1 year of academic growth and in some cases almost 2 years of growth for 12 months of schooling.

KTEA2 testing has indicated that student reading from year 8 and 9 is at a year 4 level (4.5). KTEA2 data also identifies that in numeracy, the year 8 and 9 level is within the year 3 band (3.5). For senior students, average reading is at year 7 (7.8), and numeracy is at year 3 (3.6). This highlights that, by and large, all students need multiple years of improvement to reach the SEA year level achievement standard.

SACE

SACE subject completions increased in 2017, with a total of 28 SACE subject completions, up from 12 in 2016. Senior students completed Stage 1 subjects in 2017 in the Personal Learning Plan (PLP), Essential English and Essential Mathematics. Students achieved SACE Community Learning through Operation Flinders and the Duke of Edinburgh programs. Students also achieved Stage 1 Community Studies with an arts focus. SACE Stage 1 compulsory subjects underwent the moderation process again this year to confirm Stage 1 grade C standards. Students who were assessed in 2017 produced work that met this state-wide SACE standard.

Students engaged with Certificate level VET courses are able to claim 'credits' for SACE. The school had a number of students engaged in certificate level courses in 2017 but only 3 claimed SACE Credits: 1 at a Certificate I level and 2 at a Certificate II level. The majority of the students will carry over their VET studies to 2018.