

2. Priority Review Report Executive Summary (published on school's website)

2.1 School Context

Cobden Technical School, serves the town of Cobden and its surrounding dairy farming district and is located about 200 kilometres south west of Melbourne. About half of the school's enrolment was drawn from Cobden Primary School and the remainder were bussed from the surrounding districts. As local farms consolidated, school enrolments in the district were declining.

The school's total enrolment this year is 267. The College's Student Family Occupation Index (SFO) in 2016 is .57 which is just below the state average.

Opened in 1969, the school was on a large semi rural site which it shared with the Hampden Specialist School and had extensive playing fields and court areas. The grounds were landscaped and provided undercover and outdoor sitting areas as well as areas for more active recreational pursuits. The core buildings were of a modified Timber Construction style along with a large purpose built trade wing, which had funding allocated for an upgrade. There was also a set of five relocatables which served as the English and Humanities Centre. The school had a relatively new science wing and a dual court gymnasium which was shared with the community and a relocated Primary school building which served as the textiles room.

The curriculum at Years 7-10 was based on AusVELS. In Years 7 and 8, the timetable gave students exposure to all eight key learning areas. The rotating timetable allowed students to experience the full range of arts and technology subjects while in Year 7 and again in Year 8. In Year 9 and 10, students undertook a core of subjects within an elective blocking system with the opportunity for students to undertake VCE subjects or advanced technical units. VCE, VET and VCAL programs operated at Years 11 and 12. The Language other than English (LOTE) was Indonesian.

The school's staffing and leadership profile was a Principal and one Assistant Principal, two Leading Teachers and 21.4 Effective Full Time (EFT) Classroom Teachers. Overall, there were 6.6 Education Support staff members including the College's team of 1.2 EFT Integration Aides.

The school offered an extra curricula program including: instrumental music, camps and excursions, clubs and competitions and inter-school sport. The school had a House system as the basis of its pastoral care program and for intra school activities and competitions. The school had an active student leadership program and a sister school in Indonesia.

The school values were based on the development of the H.E.A.R.T, the head and the hands. The HEART values are Honesty, Excellence, Accountability, Respect and Trust and are posted prominently around the school.

The School Council helped provide diverse viewpoints and skills to shape the direction of the school.

2.2 Summary of the School's Performance

2.2.1 Summary of the School's Performance against the Previous Strategic Plan

VCE Results

The school's target to achieve an All Studies mean at the state mean of 28.5 was not achieved. The school's All Study mean in 2014 was 23.36 and in 2015 was 23.33. The school's highest ATAR was 79.8 and 23.8% of year 12 achieved an ATAR of 50 or better. When compared to schools with a similar student profile, both Student Family Occupation Index Student Family Occupation Index (SFO)



and Remoteness, the school performed significantly below the expected level.

NAPLAN Results

The target to reduce the percentage of Year 9 students below the National Minimum Standard (NMS) in each of the dimensions measured by NAPLAN was not achieved by 2016. Results for 2016 suggested a slight reduction in the percentage of students below the NMS in each of the dimensions.

Relative growth

The 2016 relative learning growth scores, which compare the growth in individual students' learning scores from Year 7 to Year 9, showed that the target of having better than state benchmark results in both high and medium growth was not achieved in any of the dimensions tested.

Student Engagement and Wellbeing

Attendance

The absence report for 2015 showed an average absence rate of 16.05 days per student. This was less than the state average of 18.2 days. The target was met.

Student Attitudes to School Survey

The school did not meet any of the targets it set itself in the previous School Strategic Plan (SSP). When compared to the other state secondary schools, the school's performance on the 2016 student Attitudes to School Survey indicated levels of satisfaction at the lower end of the scale for *Teaching and Learning, Wellbeing and Student Relationships*. The reviewers observed generally friendly, polite, respectful and considerate students in both the classrooms and grounds.

Retention Data

The school's retention rate for 2015 was 54.9% which was its highest percentage in four years and exceeded the state average. This target was met.

Destination Data

In 2014, 63.2% of students who completed Year 12 undertook a Bachelor degree, a diploma or certificate course or an apprenticeship. 15% of students deferred and 15% were employed. This target was not met.

Productivity

Parent Opinion Survey

The school's score on the Parent Opinion Survey placed it in the top 60% when compared to other state secondary schools. This represents a less than ideal view of the school and its programs, by parents.

Staff Survey

The 2015 Staff Survey presented a moderate endorsement of the school leadership and climate of the school. The 2015 overall score placed the school just below the state average.

Staff Budget

The drop in student numbers resulted in not achieving the targeted surplus.

2.2.2 Summary of the review findings against the Terms of Reference

(1) To what extent has the school been aligned with Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)? What evidence of implementation and impact is emerging? (Mandatory FISO Terms of Reference):

The School Self Evaluation assigned FISO ratings of 1 (Emerging) on most elements. This reflects that little progress had been made on the school's improvement agenda as described in the SSP and in the 2016 AIP. The review confirmed through observations, document checks and extensive interviews with staff, that the rating of (1) Emerging was justified.

There was little evidence that progress towards implementing the 2015 – 2018 SSP was made. The impact of continuing with existing practices was that NAPLAN data related to individual student's learning growth declined rather than improved. Observation of classrooms and discussions with teachers revealed little use of data driven planning for differentiated instruction and little use of high impact teaching and learning strategies. The SSE revealed that many starts had been made but observations and interviews confirmed that there was little follow through and negligible accountability for implementing agreed strategies or policies.

(2) To what extent is there a distributed leadership system in place to ensure consistency and quality in classroom teaching practices?

The school rated itself at level 1 (emerging) in the FISO scale on Instructional and shared leadership and the evidence confirms that the rating was appropriate.

The role descriptions for the Principal class leaders suggested a general oversight of the curriculum rather than a strong instructional leadership of the improvement agenda. The main responsibility for implementing the Student Achievement elements of the current strategic plan rested with a newly appointed Higher Duties Leading Teacher. The role description for Learning Area leaders required them to support the implementation of the CTS instructional model but to what extent and in what ways was not clear.

An overall curriculum plan for the school was not available and at a learning area level the quality of documentation varied, as did the extent to which teachers were expected to follow it. The Performance and Development staff review process was in place but was considered by a number of staff to lack rigour.

The line of accountability from the SSP, through role descriptions to performance review, in essence, was not in place.

The reviewers' observations and interviews suggest that failure to follow up and sustain initiatives related to the SSP and AIP, failure to hold staff accountable for implementing the agreed instructional model and a culture of passive resistance amongst teachers has meant that little progress has been made to improve student learning outcomes.

(3) To what extent does the school provide a high level of student engagement, connection and safety?

In 2016, the school introduced a vertical House system and it was gaining acceptance within the school and community. The management of discipline in a consistent and effective way was a major problem for the school's leadership. The lack of differentiated teaching and the non-use of high reliability teaching and learning strategies had contributed to some of the discipline and engagement issues the school faced. Lack of accountability for not adhering to agreed student engagement and welfare policies and procedures, rendered well proven strategies largely ineffective. The House system provided opportunities for role modelling student leadership and an authentic student voice in the running of the school.

(4) To what extent does the current school resourcing support the school's capacity to change and improve?

The current resourcing model had a strong VCE bias which had depleted resources for areas of critical need within the timetable as well as reducing time for key personnel to affect the changes needed to lift achievement, engagement and welfare outcomes. The issue of school identity and purpose needed

to be resolved quickly and planning for 2017 and onwards should reflect the vision for the school. There was a clear need to rebuilding the image of the school in the community.

(5) To what extent do agreed behaviours and protocols support the development of relational trust across the school?

The SSS and staff interviews indicated that, at a personal level, staff relate well and trust and support each other. Policies and protocols to support relational trust were largely in place. However, initiative overload, failure to follow through on initiatives, inconsistency, failure to hold people to account, and failure to recognise and reward discretionary effort have meant that the level of relational trust needed to drive improvement had been diminished.

2.2.3 Key findings: areas for improvement

- Clarify the identity of the school as either a technical school or secondary college.
- An agreed and consistent leadership approach which took responsibility for driving change at the school was not apparent.
- Accountability for the effective implementation of the SSP and AIP from the Principal class leaders through to the classroom teachers was not apparent.
- Role descriptions did not reflect the personal and collective responsibility for the implementation of the School Strategic Plan and the Annual Implementation Plan.
- The Performance and Development Review processes did not reinforce the expectation that the school's instructional model would be followed and that Learning Area Leaders and teachers are accountable for student achievement.
- The school's instructional model or curriculum was not agreed and documented. Learning areas did not develop detailed scope and sequences for their non VCE and VCAL classes that reflected elements of the FISO and the instructional model.
- The school's resourcing model did not ensure that appropriate intervention and alternative programs to meet the needs of particular students could be funded. It also did not provide the resources to build the capability of both teachers and leaders to implement the school's reform agenda.
- Despite implementation issues, the new House system was starting to demonstrate its purpose of building higher levels of engagement and connection and to build authentic student leadership and voice in the school.

2.2.4 Next steps

The school has demonstrated its preparedness to enter its next stage of improvement, including through the establishment of the House system, to build a positive climate for learning and community engagement in learning. By focussing on professional leadership and excellence in teaching and learning the school will enhance the organisational climate and lift student achievement and levels of engagement.