

# Executive Summary

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This section provides a summary of key review findings and areas of focus.

## Key findings on student outcomes and school practices

In term 4, 2025, Colac Secondary College (CSC), located 150 kilometres south-west of Melbourne completed their four-yearly school review to inform development of the next School Strategic Plan (SSP). The review was facilitated by an independent, external school reviewer with input from the school's senior education improvement leader and three challenge partners. The principal, school council president, and key staff members were also part of the school review panel.

The following provides a summary of the review's key findings regarding student learning and wellbeing outcomes and supporting school practices.

- The 2021-2025 school SSP goal to improve student learning growth and achievement through a focus on literacy and numeracy was mostly achieved. Two targets were mostly achieved, one target was partially achieved, one target was not achieved and two targets were unable to be assessed due to changes in the performance measures. The panel found that student literacy and numeracy outcomes had improved significantly with most students at or above expected levels of achievement. Student learning growth in Reading and Writing improved significantly and growth in Numeracy was stable. Students needing additional support could access tutors and education support staff. Students performing above expected levels would benefit from more support to extend their learning.
- The 2021-2025 SSP goal to create a whole-school positive climate for learning was partially achieved. One target was fully achieved and three targets were not achieved. The panel found that appropriate strategies were in place and although the aspirational targets were not achieved, all stakeholders agreed that the school developed a positive climate for learning.
- Leadership collaboratively developed a whole-school instructional model and classroom management strategy that were progressively implemented from Year 7. The instructional model incorporated explicit instruction and responsive teaching. The classroom management strategy established clear routines that supported a safe, orderly and learning-focused environment. The panel found that both models were consistently implemented across Years 7-10 classes.
- Leadership collaboratively developed a tiered approach to student wellbeing with teachers providing the first level of support. Further support was provided by the wellbeing team that included wellbeing officers, nurse, and doctor. The team had access to external specialists to provide a full range of wellbeing supports. Students reported that the team was accessible and provided strong support.
- Leadership strengthened professional learning for all staff including education support staff. Early career and new teachers received targeted induction to enable them to quickly adapt to the CSC way of doing things. Literacy and numeracy specialists provided coaching and ongoing support. External consultants provided specialist expertise in trauma informed practice, Koorie cultures and histories and classroom routines.

- Learning stream teams enhanced teacher efficacy through collaboration in curriculum planning, lesson plans and assessment. Moderation within these teams improved consistency of teacher judgements. Data-informed planning was in its infancy and the panel recommended that data literacy be a focus of the next strategic plan.
- In 2024, 93% of students who enrolled in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) satisfactorily completed the certificate with a school median study score of 23. The panel found that the recent teaching and learning and pathways initiatives were likely to further strengthen VCE results. The panel recommended continued focus in this area.
- The introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM) was well-received with completion rates rising from 56% for the final Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) cohort in 2022 to 93% for the VCE VM in 2024. The panel recommended continuing the successful practice in this area.
- The strengthened pathways program began at Year 8 with careers education followed by strength profiling in Year 9, industry excursions and university visits. Improved course counselling supported Years 10 and 11 students. The success of the program in its first year, 2024, was indicated by the fact that 92% of Year 12 students exited to positive destinations with 60% choosing further education, exceeding similar schools.
- Student absences of 20 or more days remained comparable to similar schools but above state benchmarks. That level of absence equated to one day a fortnight or four weeks of the school year. Leadership strengthened engagement and wellbeing strategies to improve attendance but the absence rate, included unapproved absences, remained high. Parents and students suggested that lack of awareness of the community about the importance of school attendance influenced absence rates. The panel recommended strengthening partnerships with parents to increase school attendance.
- Student voice was strong with leadership opportunities including school and house captains, the Student Representative Council (SRC) and representatives on school Council. School captains led school assemblies and events. Leadership sought student input on school improvement, such as the new uniform and survey feedback. Students initiated events like Book Week and contributed to policies including anti-bullying strategies. Learner agency was evident in some classes where students contributed to topics, selected the products that demonstrated learning, and peer- and self-assessed. The panel recommended strengthening learner agency.
- Stable leadership fostered confidence and cohesion among staff and students. The focus on instructional practice and positive classroom culture drove significant growth in NAPLAN and VCE VM results. Parents and students expressed pride in the college community, facilities and opportunities, and recommended greater public celebration of the college's achievements.
- School community highlights included: the significant improvement in learning outcomes for both literacy and numeracy; the biennial school production that exemplified inclusivity and diversity through involving many students in performance and backstage support. The production was well supported by the local community. Also a highlight were the community partnerships developed with a range of organisations to support students and place the school as an integral community resource.

## **Focus areas for the next School Strategic Plan**

The school review panel recommends the following areas of focus be prioritised in the next School Strategic Plan:

- Literacy and numeracy
- Learner agency
- Attendance, in particular reducing unapproved absences
- Senior school curricula and VCE study scores
- Learning engagement
- Community engagement in learning, with a focus on parents and carers as partners.