



# Hoxton Park High School

## School profile

- New South Wales
- Metropolitan
- Government
- Year 7 to 12
- Third party Registered Training Organisation (RTO) auspice arrangement and third party RTO external delivery
- Six VET courses offered in Year 11 and 12; two VET courses offered in Year 9 and 10
- 611 students enrolled in 2015

Hoxton Park High School is a comprehensive, co-educational Year 7 to 12 school located about 39 kilometres south-west of Sydney in the suburb of Hinchinbrook, New South Wales. Approximately 72 per cent of students come from over 10 different cultures and have language backgrounds other than English. The school is proud of its multicultural traditions and the values students learn relating to diversity and inclusivity. The learning program caters for all students through the provision of a differentiated curriculum, including academic and vocational education and training (VET) courses, a self-select gifted and talented program, and opportunities to take up School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships in New South Wales (NSW). The school has a comprehensive leadership program and strong links with primary schools.

## Program background

Hoxton Park High School began delivering VET programs in 2009 in an environment where there were limited resources and a low level of interest across the school community in VET as a pathway to further education and employment. The school was faced with the challenge of not receiving funding for facilities and equipment through the Trade Training Centres in Schools Program and strong competition from local private and public schools for students interested in VET. More significantly, students who were not succeeding in academic pathways had been leaving school without achieving their Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (known as Higher School Certificate in NSW) and with no clear pathway to further education or employment.

When the compulsory school leaving age was increased from 15 years to 17 years in 2010, students who did not wish to be at school were staying there longer, and engagement of these students in their studies became more challenging. From 2012, the school's senior executive team reshaped the vision for the school, integrating VET provision into a whole-school pathways model. With the recruitment of a new VET Coordinator, the VET programs underwent rapid expansion and changed the delivery of VET to have a strong emphasis on project-based learning, student engagement and integration across the curriculum and the school community. This resulted in high levels of participation in VET programs and improved retention rates for Year 11 and 12 students.

As many other schools experienced, some parents had initial reservations with students enrolling in a VET pathway. The school has found that when parents gained an understanding of the future prospects for students enrolled in a VET course and their new-found enthusiasm about school work, parents tended to change their attitudes. The school has made a strong commitment to delivering VET programs and include strategic objectives to achieve this in the 2014–2016 school plan.

## Program features

### Course selection and structure

*Courses and qualifications chosen by schools and the structure of VET courses should be informed by an understanding of:*

- *the needs of students*
- *how VET supports career and employment pathways*
- *industry workforce needs*
- *school sector or jurisdictional policies*
- *funding priorities targeting VET towards particular industries or occupations.*

Year 11 to 12 students can enroll in VET qualifications in: Construction (Pathways), Hospitality (Kitchen Operations), Retail Services, Information Technology and Digital Media, Metals and Engineering, and Primary Industries. In 2017 the school will introduce Sports Coaching.

Year 10 students can enroll in Certificate I Hospitality (Food and Beverage), and Year 9 to 10 students can enroll in Certificate I Manufacturing (Pathways).

When selecting VET courses to deliver, the school looks at the interests of students and the number of students selecting a course; almost all VET courses are fully subscribed. Employment opportunity is another key factor in the selection of VET courses to offer. This is monitored through dialogue with business and industry who provide advice about the training required.

For example, Retail Services has been offered for some years, but as a fairly static classroom-based course providing limited opportunity for on-the-job training. Given retail is a growing industry across New South Wales and one of the biggest sectors for employment, the school wanted to provide students with improved delivery and training opportunities. A teacher with a background in corporate retail management was employed and space was identified within the school to establish a shop.

Cafe Hoxton, an engagement and leadership program, was one of the initial VET programs offered. The program provides students with the opportunity to complete units of competency from Certificate I Hospitality (Food and Beverage). Students may also complete barista training in the city with business mentors working with students. Student engagement through the VET programs improves their attitude towards other subjects.

‘The hallmark of our VET programs is how we deliver the programs in order to invigorate and engage students’ in their learning – a key challenge identified was that students in Year 9 and 10 were becoming increasingly disengaged at school’. (VET coordinator)

The school began offering further VET pathways courses in 2015. This includes Certificate I Manufacturing (Pathways) offered in Year 9 and Cert I Construction will be offered in 2017 to students in

Year 11 and 12. Classes have full enrolments, with and there is ongoing demand. The school also replaced the Year 10 Food Technology subject offering students a VET program delivering Certificate I Hospitality (Food and Beverage) to dovetail with the Cafe Hoxton initiative, providing students with the opportunity to complete the full qualification. The school intends to offer Certificate II qualifications as part of the senior secondary certificate of education and support students to transition into a full-time apprenticeship or traineeship.

The school has a range of partners with whom it works closely throughout the year, including a work placement provider and a group training organisation who provide support for students entering into a School-based Apprenticeship in Construction.

Every student at Hoxton Park High School is encouraged to enroll in a VET course to ensure that when they leave school they have a holistic skill set that includes soft skills, employability skills, the skills that will give the competitive edge compared to a student from another school. The school wants students to take these skills with them whether they are taking an academic pathway into further education, a VET pathway or moving into an apprenticeship.

‘The hallmark of our VET programs is how we deliver the programs in order to invigorate and engage students’ in their learning – a key challenge identified was that students in Year 9 and 10 were becoming increasingly disengaged at school’. (VET coordinator)



## Facilities and equipment

*Access to the right facilities and equipment is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed. Identifying required equipment informs decisions about partnerships and accessing external expertise and equipment.*

The school has had to be innovative about how it has developed its facilities and spaces. The school works with business and industry to identify the standards expected in the workplace.

The project to establish Cafe Hoxton was the first enterprise launched with school community support to raise seed funding through barbecues and similar fundraising activities. Established as a business, profits were then directed back into the cafe and into student training, providing a great incentive to other new projects.

The Retail Services course was rejuvenated when a teacher with a background in corporate retail management joined the staff and transformed the training from textbook and video delivery into a practical experience so that students now learn in a hands-on way about pricing, merchandising, selling techniques, and dealing with customers. To provide the practical experience, the school has formed a partnership with a well-known business that results in rebates flowing back to the school, as well as providing a training facility for the school. The Retail Services course is popular amongst students with two full classes.

## Staffing

*Access to the right staffing is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with*

*VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed.*

A VET Coordinator with strong industry connections was recruited to plan and drive the improvement of the VET programs at Hoxton Park High School. Getting the right coordinator has been critical to success, along with the backing of the principal and senior executive team, and a strong and committed VET staff.

To establish a skilled VET team to deliver the newly established VET programs, the strengths and gaps in the existing staff profile were considered, and where necessary personal learning plans were put in place. When it came to recruitment, the school targeted teachers with industry experience and encouraged teachers to mentor others. In addition, a professional learning plan that includes seminars, workshops, and work placement days in industry was put in place to maintain the industry currency of VET staff.

## Working with employers

*Collaboration is a key component of the Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework. Involvement from employers and industry is critical when planning for the implementation, delivery and assessment of VET delivered to secondary students. Working with employers or work placement providers to provide access to quality and relevant workplace learning opportunities enables students to develop skills that are better aligned with workplace needs.*

Another key to delivering sustainable VET programs, according to Hoxton Park High School, is partnerships with business. The school works hard to build relationships with targeted businesses in the surrounding area and beyond, seeking out those that



support their vision and the students' needs and interests. The school tells its success stories and seeks support in-kind, such as mentoring or industry standard equipment that may otherwise be discarded as a result of upgrades.

The school introduced an Honour Code as a commitment to the community that they would only allow students who had the right values and attitudes to attend work experience and work placements.

The school has mentors for Hospitality teachers and students, links with agricultural show organisers, and a partnership with a large farm industry in Parks that supports the goat management program. Industries such as these, and many others, support the school to have up-to-date industry practices.

The school uses a work placement provider that helps build strong relationships with companies who in turn assist students with work experience and work placements, and in a number of cases have offered part-time employment to students. Fifteen Year 12 students are in part-time employment as a consequence of their work placements, a significant outcome given only two students had part-time work in 2014.

## Integrating VET

*VET needs to be integrated into the fabric of schools and the broader curriculum. This may be through:*

- flexible timetabling
- language literacy and numeracy support
- assessment support
- support with other additional matters that students undertaking VET courses might require.

*Each of these options will suit schools in different situations. Whatever the arrangement adopted, schools and employers need to be confident that the RTO has*

*suitably qualified trainers and assessors and access to the industry-standard equipment required.*

The school has a 2.5 hectare farm that was not being fully utilised and was not financially sustainable. A three year plan for 2014 to 2016 addressed these concerns. Teaching and learning activities at the farm were introduced for all year groups and students in Year 7 to 10 study Agriculture with the option to enroll in a Certificate II Primary Industries course in Years 11 and 12.

All activities are focused on project-based learning and previously disengaged students now participate actively, gaining employability skills and practical skills in agricultural crop production and animal care. The farm is an important part of the school community's learning program and the school aims to build partnerships with primary schools and local agricultural business' involved in poultry meat production, chicken egg sales, and seasonal vegetable production.

Other vocational learning opportunities include: 'Breakfast Club', which runs once a fortnight and serves 200 meals each time, and 'Class Chef Program', run in partnership with Cucina 105 restaurant located in Liverpool, in which students take over and run the restaurant for an afternoon working with the head chef and manager.

.....  
All activities are focused on project-based learning and previously disengaged students now participate actively, gaining employability skills and practical skills in agricultural crop production and animal care.  
.....

