



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Gooseberry Hill Primary School

2017

Review Findings



Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Patrick Bourke
Board Co-chairs:	Mr Kevin Boots Mrs Novak Drazevich
School Address:	24 Ledger Road, Gooseberry Hill WA 6076
Number of Students:	454 at the time of review
ICSEA¹	1075
Reviewers:	Mr Bill Gibson (Lead) Mr Rod Baker
Review Dates:	15 and 16 May 2017
Initial Review Year:	2014

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the Department of Education Services' independent review is to provide assurance to the principal and school community, the board, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education of the extent to which the school staff and board have met the commitments of the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA). The review verifies the degree to which there are effective processes in place bringing about improved student learning.

¹ The Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale of socio-educational advantage that is computed for each school. It allows for comparisons to be made between schools that are matched according to their socio-educational advantage, allowing fair comparisons of NAPLAN results between schools with students who have a similar ICSEA. The median ICSEA value is 1000.
<http://www.acara.edu.au/resources/Fact Sheet - About ICSEA.pdf>

Review Methodology

Underpinning the review methodology is the understanding that the principal is required to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the DPA are met; school performance and student improvement targets and priorities, as detailed in the school's business plan, are assessed, reviewed annually and an annual report made publicly available. The review seeks to determine the extent to which these commitments have been met.

In doing so, the principal forwarded the school self-review conclusions to the Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The Department of Education Services' reviewers supplemented the information provided by the principal with information on the school's achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which included:

- the *My School*[®] website
- the Department of Education's School Performance Monitoring
- Schools Online reports.

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation to verify achievement of the DPA and business plan commitments, and developed lines of inquiry where further in-school verification was required.

An agenda for the site visit was negotiated with the principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made in the school self-review statements. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students where required. Where the school belongs to an Independent Public School cluster of schools the review considers whether the purpose of the cluster has been met and the benefits to the school.

The evidence provided by the principal, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visit, was used as the basis for judgements made in verifying how well the school staff and board have met the commitments of the DPA and business plan.

Business Plan

How effective was the business plan in responding to the school's context and improving student learning (progress, achievement and engagement)?

Gooseberry Hill Primary School, located in a natural bushland setting in the Kalamunda Shire, was opened in 1972. The original classrooms, constructed to provide an opportunity for open area teaching, continue to cater for the primary year levels with additional buildings for Kindergarten, Pre-primary, library resources and administration added in the intervening period.

The school maintains its very positive image and reputation within the local and wider community, with the families of many of the present student enrolment, and some staff, having links extending back over many years. A reputation for providing a strong academic focus together with quality programs in music and art, supported by effective pastoral care and a range of activities linked to the environment, has seen a significant increase in enrolments in recent years to the present high of 454 students. Many students come from outside the school's local-intake area, travelling either with parents or making use of public transport.

Findings

- The business plan is a comprehensive document, easy to read and supporting the intent of the school's vision of 'striving for excellence in all we pursue by motivating, challenging, supporting and assisting our students to reach their full potential, in partnership with teachers, parents and the wider community.' The plan has three priority areas, the first 'Excellence in Teaching and Learning' having a focus on the work of teachers and the performance of students with six targets and supported by a broad range of strategies. The second priority area is 'Safe and Supportive Environment' with six targets and giving attention to the range of management strategies in place ensuring a positive and safe school climate, while the third area, 'Strong, Sustainable Partnerships' includes four targets and details the way the school wishes to work with its community.
- Discussions with members of the school board confirmed the board plays a significant role in the development of the business plan. The priority areas, which include a strong academic program but also ensure that the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of students are attended to and that consideration is given to environmental factors where possible, are clearly of importance and reflect the expectations board members have of the programs that the school offers.
- The Department of Education Services' 2014 Independent Review Findings Report provided the school with two recommendations to be considered, one

relating to student behaviour and the other to leadership structures. It is evident the Managing Behaviour policy has been given considerable attention, the actions taken forming several strategies in the second priority area, A Safe and Supportive Environment. Four of the six targets in this priority area relate to behaviour and safety. Further to this, discussions with staff, students and parents included constant and unsolicited reference to the positive learning environment and the additional care taken to cater for the needs of individuals. It was evident the leadership structure recommendation has also been addressed resulting in a distributed leadership model that ensures a range of opportunities for staff at all levels. These vary in complexity from middle management responsibilities, where teachers lead phase of development teams, through to learning area responsibilities and cost centre management.

- The business plan is available to the community through the website and in the form of a hard copy.

Areas of strength

- The clarity of the business plan which links the three target areas to the community's expectations of its school, supported by a broad range of strategies.
- The additional leadership opportunities now provided for staff.

Teaching and Learning

How has the quality of teaching improved and sustained student learning (progress, achievement and engagement)?

Findings

- Longitudinal data shows that student performance improved in 2013, the school leaders believe as a result of participating in the Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership (ILNNP). This was combined with an acceptance by staff that action needed to be taken to raise performance to a level commensurate with system expectations and that the work of teachers would be critical to making significant progress. While the ILNNP program funding is no longer available the school continues to follow many of the strategies that were introduced and teachers continue to be highly focused, ensuring overall performance continues to sit within the expected range of 'like-schools.'
- Ongoing progress was highlighted in an email from the Communications Manager, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in March 2015 that advised 'Based on My School data your school has been identified as demonstrating above average National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) gain compared to schools with similar students. The gain is deemed to be statistically significant and worthy of highlighting and acknowledgement.'
- There is an established process of student performance monitoring with the principal and deputies having an active role in observing classrooms in operation. It is evident that high expectations for students sits at the forefront of the work of both administrators and teachers and a range of assessment processes are used to determine progress, identify areas of weakness and guide the implementation of new strategies. Classroom assessments are carried out in accordance with the school's assessment and moderation/work sample schedule with data from tests and samples of work providing the basis for discussions on school performance and the achievement of targets. Teachers take pride both in the progress of their students individually and where the school sits in comparison with 'like-schools', particularly those in the local area.
- The assessment of the targets linked to each of the three key priority areas of the business plan has been a thorough process involving a range of staff members. In the first priority area of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the six targets related to performance in NAPLAN in Year 3 and Year 5. The school concluded that while two targets had been partly met, the other four had not and it was unlikely that they would be fully achieved by the end of the present planning cycle. An analysis of the overall performance shows the school sits comfortably within the range of 'like-schools' and gains in student progress evident in 2012

have been maintained, suggesting the targets may have been a little optimistic and have not provided the school with the opportunity to report on the good work being done. Failure to meet the targets has already led to healthy debate within the staff about the construction of future academic targets and whether they should be simplified or maintained. The reviewers would encourage strong consideration being given to adopting targets that are achievable and that, if necessary, could be recalibrated during the life of the business plan.

- The conclusions drawn by the staff, that the six targets in the second priority area of a Safe and Supportive Environment and the four targets in the third priority area of Strong Sustainable Partnerships, were either fully met or partly met, and will be fully met by the end of this planning cycle, were well substantiated. It was also evident that board members had been presented with similar performance data and discussed the information at length before endorsing the conclusions of the staff.
- The school is organised in teams with links to a Phases of Development (POD) with each POD having an aspirant as the team leader who is provided with support by one of the administrative team. POD teams meet at least five times each term with meeting agendas having some common elements. Through the POD structure leaders ensure a consistent approach in the way each teacher operates, with each class required to allocate time to the literacy and numeracy blocks. Timetables are arranged so that teachers have the opportunity for collaborative time with their colleagues working in the same developmental phase. Teachers collaborate willingly with a number speaking positively of the opportunities to share in the preparation of lessons for use with interactive white boards and the opportunities this provides for consistent teaching in year levels.
- The reviewers saw evidence of the performance management processes in place for both teaching and support staff. Teachers meet with one of the leadership team, often in teaching pairs, with the focus of their actions linking to one of the key areas in the recent Department of Education's Focus document. While not being part of the formal performance management process, teachers are also engaged in peer observation and feedback in teams of three with the understanding that this will become more focused and critical in the near future. Support staff members expressed satisfaction with their supervision being handled by the manager corporate services.
- The programs provide students with a broad range of pathways leading to future success and employment. In addition to a strong academic focus, highly effective specialist programs in art, music and Indonesian are part of the curriculum offerings for each student, these dove-tailing with programs being offered at Kalamunda Senior High School. Staff and parents spoke proudly of the links the school has with the environment, a contributing factor in the decision of many families to live in the local area. Activities are on offer to students, in both class and after-school activities, to participate in programs such as the Solar Model

Boat Challenge, care of a nature reserve, assisting injured native animals and raising plants from seeds which are then planted at Whiteman Park.

Area of strength

- The strong focus on the collection of data and the way it is used to assess overall school progress, identify strengths and weaknesses in classroom programs and those individual students who need support, and guide the implementation of the next stage of improvement.

Area for improvement

- Develop challenging but more achievable targets which can be recalibrated during the life of the business plan if necessary.

Student Performance Monitoring

How well established are the school's self-assessment practices in accounting for school improvement?

Findings

- Two very comprehensive collaboratively developed documents the Whole School Assessment Framework and the Assessment and Moderation/Work Sample Schedule underpin a thorough self-review process that identifies the assessment tool, assessment timeframe and personnel responsible.
- In addition to an examination of system level evidence from NAPLAN, On-entry assessment, Student Achievement Information System and surveys analysis includes evidence from the Australian Early Development Census, Australian Council for Educational Research Progressive Assessment Testing in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6, Brightpath writing in Years 3–6, Letters and Sounds in the early phase and moderated teacher judgements among others to inform judgements. Of concern to the leadership and board was the response rate to the most recent parent survey with only 11 responses available for consideration. The self-review process will be enhanced by an increase in the number of responses to the parent survey and it is recommended the school and board work collaboratively to encourage greater community engagement in the process.
- The commitment to the establishment of longitudinal evidence is highlighted by the decision to track student progress in the early years by conducting whole cohort On-entry assessment at the conclusion of Pre-primary, Year 1 and Year 2 with the data analysed to determine both the effectiveness of intervention and phase of development teaching strategies.
- The board endorsed annual reports published on the highly regarded school website provide evidence the self-review process is ongoing and reported on annually. Annual reports include consideration of progress against business plan targets, detailed summations of performance in all NAPLAN domains including 'like-schools' comparisons and school performance in non-academic areas. The report includes a statement outlining future directions and the commitment to improvement. While reports include a commentary on other learning areas it would be contextually beneficial if the reports included outcome focused statements in each learning area as parents interviewed emphasised the significance of all aspects of learning.
- Conversations with leadership, curriculum and POD leaders verified classroom teachers utilise a wide variety of monitoring tools to inform teaching, learning and reporting with Education Assessment Reporting Software and school assessment tools used to align teaching to identified points of need.

Areas of strength

- The commitment to the collection of longitudinal evidence to support teaching and learning judgements in the early years.
- The comprehensive documents that underpin the thorough self-review process developed in collaboration with staff.

Areas for improvement

- Future annual reports include summarised teacher judgements in all specialist learning areas.
- The school and board work collaboratively to encourage greater community engagement in the parent survey process.

Program Delivery

How well has the school performed in providing education programs that promote learning and wellbeing for all students?

Findings

- An examination of literacy and numeracy operational plans, conversations with learning phase and curriculum leaders together with visits to classrooms verified the school delivers learning programs that are aligned with the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline and Department of Education policies. The commitment to alignment is evidenced by the 2016–2017 Operational Plan: Literacy, which includes explicit links to School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), the curriculum support NAPLAN planner, the Early Years Learning Framework and the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines.
- First Steps literacy and numeracy strategies, literacy and numeracy blocks, SCSA and school developed scope and sequence statements supported by carefully researched commercial programs such as Letters and Sounds and Paul Swan numeracy strategies guide a whole-school approach to teaching and learning.
- Child safe and friendly practices are commendable. They are incorporated into all aspects of school operations with activities such as excursions and tours that carry an increased level of risk. Planning is thorough. The upcoming tour to Sydney and Canberra by 60 students has been a significant focus of the principal and leadership team with safety and welfare given priority in accordance with Department of Education policy. Further verification of child safe practice is evidenced by the collaboratively developed Policy for Finding Asbestos Containing Material on Gooseberry Hill Primary School Premises document that details roles, responsibilities, training and understandings for the school community.
- The commitment to embedding acceptable behaviours is evident with the Traffic Light System for Classroom Management and associated Good Standing positive acknowledgement approach scaffolding student behaviour. Reviewers observed students moving around the site in accordance with the Expected Behaviour Code Matrix, the Health Plan 2016 and the positively focused Behaviour Code which is published in both the Parent Information Handbook and the 2017 Student Diary. Achievement of the business plan target 'Ensure 80% of students consistently achieve the Gooseberry Hill Primary School Expected Behaviour Code' verifies both an effective response to the Department of Education Services' 2014 Independent Review Findings Report recommendation and the provision of a safe and orderly environment.

- The commitment to evidence-based programs and strategies including the Positive Parenting Program, the community based Act-Belong-Commit campaign, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, Buzz social skills enrichment program, discussion circles and Rainbows to support student wellbeing is commendable. A meeting with parents and the board highlighted the significant benefit of the chaplaincy program with parents glowing in their praise for the contribution of the highly regarded chaplain.
- The commitment to cross curriculum priorities is exemplified by the development of a high quality and well-resourced Aboriginal cultural awareness framework and operational plan to guide practice and behaviour throughout the school.
- A meeting with representatives of the early phase of development team verified the response to the National Quality Standard in the seven quality areas as reported in School Performance Monitoring. An external audit will be completed prior to the commencement of the next DPA with findings informing planning culminating in full implementation of the standards.

Areas of strength

- The thorough planning, incorporating child safe and friendly practices, in all aspects of the school's operations and activities that carry a heightened level of risk such as excursions and tours.
- The commitment to evidence-based programs and strategies to support student wellbeing.

Resourcing and Support

How well has the school established systems to monitor and review the allocation of resources to meet strategic and operational priorities?

Findings

- The school has a detailed assessment schedule that all teachers follow. Data obtained from the schedule is used to assess the school's overall progress, the success of particular teaching programs, where targeted initiatives are required to ensure the progress of individuals and cohorts, and the resources that will be needed to enable effective teaching to continue. Leaders also confirmed that they use this data to ensure the most effective use of teacher's skills. This evidence is applied when allocating teachers to classes for the commencement of a school year or on appointment to the school following a merit selection process.
- The principal has developed a workforce plan that outlines the expected movement of staff in the foreseeable future and the anticipated recruitment opportunities that may arise. While it is evident staff tend to remain on the staffing establishment for lengthy periods and few changes are expected, one that is known is the retirement of the principal early in Term 3, 2017 with the selection process to find a replacement now under way. The strong position that the school finds itself in at present would suggest this change of leadership is unlikely to negatively impact teaching and learning.
- It is evident that careful planning with a view to future needs is in place. In addition to the financial resources obtained through the Department of Education's normal channels, the school has been very well supported by an active Parents and Citizens' Association, which has contributed significantly to identified initiatives. Parent contributions form an important part of revenue with 79% of parents having made the voluntary contribution at the time of the review. While not presently involved in any sponsorship arrangement the possibility of entering into one with the Bendigo Bank is being considered. Classrooms are well resourced with each having an interactive whiteboard or interactive television and the necessary resources to enable the establishment of a stimulating environment. Staff members have the opportunity to apply for funding to support professional learning linked to the school's priority areas.
- In recent years the enrolment has increased significantly bringing additional funding and allowing a number of specialist programs to become well established. While well placed to sustain present programs, there is some concern within the leadership and board that enrolments may suffer because of the construction of a telephone tower 400 metres from the school's boundary and

the discovery of asbestos containing material within the grounds. These two issues have caused anxiety within the community with a number of parents indicating their intention to withdraw their children. The principal and board have, on behalf of the school community, been active in attempting to get more clarity about each issue, although without much success at this stage.

Area of strength

- The effective use of student and whole-school performance data to determine the allocation of resources.

School Board

How effective has the board been in carrying out its functions, roles and responsibilities?

- An examination of board minutes, a meeting with members and a conversation with parents enabled reviewers to verify the thirteen-member board has provided stable governance for the duration of the DPA. Six parents and two community representatives work collaboratively with the principal and four staff members to fulfil obligations outlined in the DPA.
- Two parents co-chair the board. Conversations with the principal and board members provided reassurance that regular communication and consultation between the co-chairs together with a defined distribution of responsibilities enables the board to operate effectively.
- The collaboratively developed Overview of School Board Function 2017 statement provides alignment between board operations and responsibilities as defined in the DPA. The co-chairs and principal use an embedded understanding of the separation between governance and operations to negotiate and clarify the agenda for each meeting.
- Active parent and community representation characterised by wide ranging skill sets and experience and contextual understanding supports board oversight of school improvement is commendable.
- The board continues to make a valuable contribution through insightful analysis of student achievement and survey feedback, policy development and ratification of the business plan, budgets and annual reports. Contextual clarity and community alignment has enabled the board to support the school to navigate some logistical challenges including the management of asbestos containing material and bushfire risk to ensure the educational benefits of the unique natural bush setting are optimised.
- The board provides regular updates to the community through the website with the available members in attendance at many school activities.
- Conversations with parents and board members confirmed the school vision continues to reflect community expectations and values. Educational expectations are guided by the understanding that student performance should compare favourably with 'like' and local schools with priority given to the development of the whole child. Members emphasised the significance of the highly regarded music and visual art programs and the developing focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics on sustaining enrolment trends and the resultant capacity to sustain high quality teaching and learning opportunities.

- A recently conducted board effectiveness survey indicates that, while all community and parent members have a strong contextual understanding, not all have clarity of their role and responsibilities. It is recommended the board continue to explore opportunities to support members including those newly elected, to enhance confidence in their capacity to contribute to the governance process.
- Collaboration between the co-chairs and principal, board engagement in the selection process to appoint a new principal and multiple nominations to the vacant parent representative position provides confidence the board will remain strong, strategic and decisive in its governance role.

Areas of strength

- The strong leadership provided by board co-chairs in consultation and collaboration with the principal.
- The contextual understanding of members that supports informed board oversight of school improvement.

Area for improvement

- The board continues to explore opportunities to avail members including those newly elected, of training opportunities to further enhance their capacity to contribute to the governance process.

Conclusion

The Gooseberry Hill Primary School community has established a safe, caring and inclusive environment in which students feel valued and are confident to learn.

A committed leadership team, engaged and supportive staff and proactive board work collaboratively to connect with families and the community and to deliver contextually appropriate teaching and learning for all students. Highly regarded programs including visual arts, Indonesian and music enhance student learning and support community engagement.

Valid data is interrogated to determine progress towards the achievement of academic and non-academic targets, to guide resource distribution and to inform teaching focus. While yet to achieve all targets, staff and the board are encouraged by recent strong student performance when compared to local and 'like-schools' and they are confident strategies currently being implemented should provide sustained improvement in student outcomes.

An embedded distributed leadership structure together with informed board engagement in the selection of the new principal provides the school community with confidence recent improvement will be sustained through and beyond the principal transition process.

Declaration

We confirm the information provided is, to the best of our knowledge, true and correct, based on the verification of the evidence provided by Gooseberry Hill Primary School for the Department of Education Services' independent review.

The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



Mr Bill Gibson, Lead Reviewer

26 June 2017

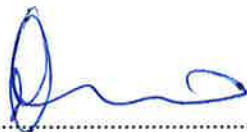
Date



Mr Rod Baker, Reviewer

26 June 2017

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

30/6/17

Date

