



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Duncraig Primary School

2016

Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

Disclaimer

This document reports the findings of the Department of Education Services' review and verification of the school's self-review. The school's self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The findings of the independent review are forwarded to the School Principal, the Board Chair, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

The Department of Education Services does not endorse any commercial organisation, product or service mentioned in this report.

The Department of Education Services can only guarantee the authenticity of original documents. This document is uncontrolled once printed.

To help people with disabilities obtain access to information, this document can be provided in alternative format on request. Please contact ips@des.wa.gov.au with specific requests or telephone 08 9441 1900.

School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Lisa Tucker
Board Chair:	Mr Luke Halden
School Location:	21 Roche Road, Duncraig WA 6023
Number of Students:	375
Reviewers:	Ms Cris Sandri and Dr Susan Hall
Review Dates:	14 and 15 September 2016
Initial Review:	2013

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education on the extent to which the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) and associated business plan.

The focus of the review is on:

- how well the school has implemented self-review
- how well the school has improved student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes learning and student well-being
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Review Methodology

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake annual self-assessments of its performance. The outcome of these assessments formed the basis for the school's self-review. The school sent its self-review documentation to the IPS review team, Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The IPS reviewers supplemented the information provided by the school 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 School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.

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

An agenda for the review visit was subsequently negotiated with the principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visits, was used as the basis for the verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in the DPA and business plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.

School Context

What are the important features of this school's context that have an impact on student learning?

Duncraig Primary School opened in 1975 and became an Independent Public School in 2011. The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1091.

The student population, though slightly increased, has remained relatively consistent over the past three years, with 375 students enrolled from Kindergarten to Year 6 at the time of this review. There is little transiency in the school community and student attendance rates are above those of statistically similar schools and Western Australian public schools. Seven Aboriginal students attend the school.

Staff stability is a feature of the school. Although some new appointments have been made in recent years, a number of staff have been part of the school community for many years. At leadership level, however, Duncraig Primary School has recently undergone significant change. The principal and deputy principal positions became available in 2015 after 10 years of stable leadership. The new principal and deputy principal were initially appointed in fixed-term positions, now permanent. A second deputy principal was appointed in 2016, expanding the leadership expertise to include early childhood and English.

At board level, a new chair was elected for 2016. The Board acknowledged the work, commitment and support given by the retiring chair, Dr Jeremy Shaw, as board chair since Duncraig Primary School began operating as an Independent Public School in 2011. New board leadership has led to a focus on the overall health of the organisation including not only student achievement, but the school infrastructure and the conditions of buildings and grounds.

The kindergarten program previously located at Marri Road has now been relocated onto the school site. A successful pre-kindergarten program was trialled in 2016 with significant interest and demand from parents for its continuation.

Discussions with staff, parents and board members confirm the school is strongly community orientated. A robust partnership between the board and

Duncraig Primary School

the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) is raising the profile of the school and providing it with additional resources. The local community is supportive of the staff efforts to develop the 'whole child' and improve learning outcomes.

The board is strongly committed to support the school in providing high-quality education and care for all students and staff.

The School's Self-Review Process

How effective was the school's self-review in accounting for its performance during the period of the DPA and Business Plan?

During this second review cycle (2014–2016) evidence presented suggested a strong commitment to responding to the needs of the local community and to the recommendations of the 2013 independent review.

The 2014–2016 Business Plan was developed in consultation with the staff and endorsed by the board. In reflecting the school vision that 'every day in every classroom, every child is learning and achieving', this business plan identifies five key focus areas: Learning: success for all; Teaching: sound teaching; Leadership: a shared approach; Relationships: safe and caring learning environment, and Resources: the physical and natural environment. Each focus area has a set of improvement targets and a complementary set of improvement strategies and milestones as indicators of achievement. The document incorporates 10 targets and 22 improvement strategies across the five focus areas.

The school's self-review framework guides the annual cycle of self-assessment and ensures the process is clear, manageable and embedded in practice. Yearly overviews identify progress and analysis against targets and strategies. A variety of data is available to the staff through the assessment schedule, and is used to inform and determine standards of student achievement. Through the school self-review, areas of strength and areas for improvement have been identified to inform the next business plan.

Improvement targets in the areas of teaching, leadership, relationships and resources were met. The 2016 semester one data indicate that all strategies and accompanying milestones have either been met or are in the process of being met.

The National Quality Standard (NQS) for early childhood education and care began in the school in 2014. The leadership team and K–2 staff completed a comprehensive self-audit against the NQS in 2015. The staff rated progress as working towards the achievement of all quality areas except Quality Area 5—Relationships with Children, which the staff felt they had met. Self-audit ratings were verified by the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning. A dedicated early years operational plan is in place. This plan requires staff to continue reflective practices through disciplined dialogue in

regular team meetings to establish common understandings and interpretations of the requirements and pedagogical philosophies of NQS and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The plan also informs staff performance management and is linked to whole-school planning.

The leadership team expressed a desire to more closely align the business plan to Department of Education planning, school operational planning, classroom planning and accountability requirements.

School Performance—Student Learning

How well has the school performed in improving learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students?

The reviewers verified the claims in the school self-review 2014–2015, that two of the three learning targets were met. The first target, to perform equal to or above statistically similar schools in NAPLAN numeracy and literacy results, was met. The second target, to achieve an improving trend for Year 3 students in NAPLAN numeracy and literacy results was also met.

The third target, to reduce the percentage of students achieving at or below the NAPLAN national minimum standard in numeracy and literacy was not met in Year 3 numeracy, nor Year 5 reading, spelling nor grammar and punctuation. Above expected levels were achieved in Year 3 reading, spelling and grammar and punctuation, and in Year 5 numeracy, and writing.

The fourth target, to increase the percentage of Year 5 and 7 students in the top 20% of science was not measured due to the discontinuation of WAMSE testing. Although uniform, whole-school testing was not in place for science the HASS (humanities and social sciences) coordinator had begun developing moderation tasks from the School Curriculum and Standards Authority guidelines with staff. Plans were in place to expand the HASS committee in 2017.

The NAPLAN data shows that although absolute student achievement trends remains unchanged over the duration of this business plan, overall relative achievement has improved and remains within the expected range for statistically similar schools. Comparative performance data indicated student performance is within the expected range, being within one standard deviation of the predicted school mean, though in negative deviation from the predicted mean in some areas. Longitudinal data shows progress above Western Australian public schools in all areas in both Year 3 and Year 5.

Academic progress, however, was significant. NAPLAN literacy and numeracy progress showed an upward trend against statistically similar schools, Western Australian public schools and all Australian schools. Year 3 progressed significantly in 2015 to achieve at or above statistically similar schools. Student progress data compared against Australian standards in literacy and numeracy achievement was higher in most Year 3 to Year 5 domains from 2014–2015.

In response to NAPLAN results, writing, spelling and numeracy were identified as priorities for 2016. The Duncraig Instructional Model as a whole-school approach to the delivery of literacy is in place. The *Third Wave Writing* program began in Semester 1, 2016 for identified students from years 3–6, and although no formal assessment had been made at the time of the review, classroom teachers reported noticeable improvement.

In 2015, the numeracy block model was introduced to implement a consistent teaching approach across the school. The operational plan includes a focus on problem solving and the staff undertook an action research project into numeracy improvement.

Collation of student data based on semester reports on attitude, behaviour and effort, indicated that most students, across all year levels, achieved 'consistently' or 'often' in all aspects. All achievements and progress in the academic and non-academic areas were published in the 2014 and 2015 annual reports.

On-entry diagnostic assessment of essential literacy and numeracy skills and understandings indicates students present above Western Australian public school results, particularly in numeracy.

The aspiration to achieve at or above like schools in literacy and numeracy was identified as a priority area for improvement in the next Business Plan. More consistent whole-school policies and procedures are being developed and implemented for monitoring, assessment and reviewing student performance.

A Year K–6 assessment schedule is in place to denote school-wide data collection. Other assessments are designed as cohort diagnostic tasks. When comparing NAPLAN results with teacher grade allocation, however, data indicates that teacher judgements of student achievement do not align. Though moderating within the local schools' network has assisted staff in making student achievement judgements, the leadership team has identified this professional learning need. The executive leadership team has further identified that the percentage of students in the top 20% of NAPLAN scores can be further increased as students are challenged to recognise and apply their strengths.

School Performance—Quality of the Learning Environment

How well has the school performed in creating an environment that promotes learning and well-being for all students and the attainment of the school vision?

Parents expect a high standard of education for their children. 'Endeavour' has been the school motto since the school opened in 1975. In 2014 and 2015, the board reviewed this motto for relevance to current students and after community consultation, the motto was retained as is. This then forms the platform for encouraging students to do their best and achieve their personal goals.

The executive leadership team, staff and community are embedding a culture that promotes student learning and also reflects the school vision 'Every day, in every classroom, every child is learning and achieving'. The very positive culture is evidenced in actively engaged students, positive student and parent survey participation rates and feedback, enthusiastic staff and a proactive school leadership team.

The leadership team, staff and community have achieved a safe and inclusive environment with a strong community spirit that makes new families feel welcomed. Everyone is valued and supported. This was evidenced in meetings with students, staff and parents and supported in the survey results of all three groups of the school community.

The leadership team and staff have identified and are deploying specific strategies and resources to support student learning, engagement and well-being. This includes the refinement of the infrastructure of the organisation to support a more developed distributed leadership model to include a fully representative leadership team, learning area teams, curriculum teams, student services team working in partnership with the school executive team, and the board. Clear roles and responsibilities are documented, as staff engage in collaborative, professional critical dialogues enabling a proactive whole-school approach to devising and implementing key initiatives.

A case management process has been implemented to identify students at educational risk and to provide ongoing support for teachers in developing intervention plans to address the learning needs of students. The student services team consisting of the deputy principals, nominated school leaders, chaplain and school psychologist provides initial assistance for classroom

teachers to analyse relevant student performance data in order to identify students at educational risk and to produce and manage documented intervention plans and strategies. The *KidsMatter* framework is used at a whole-school level to support student mental health and well-being. The support of the chaplain, buddy classes, *Numero* club, and the celebration of special days such as Harmony Day, are some examples of school activities that support and promote well-being in the school. In an effort to develop meaningful relationships with organisations outside the school, a strong initiative being developed is the 'service component' and commitment to appreciate the global responsibility initially with students supporting the *Manna Perth* organisation.

Whole-school approaches have been noted by staff as contributing to increased staff teamwork, a shared and common direction, evident enthusiasm among staff, and improved students' results. Operational plans for English, mathematics, early years, social emotional learning and ICT are in place. Operational plans for HASS, science, music, art, languages, physical education and STEM subjects are being developed in 2016 in readiness for the 2017–2019 Business Plan. Team leaders reported that the school's instructional model in numeracy and literacy teaching blocks has created more integrated learning experiences for both students and staff. The staff's active involvement in these blocks is included in performance management.

To build staff capacity in the effective and consistent use of technology in the classroom, the ICT operational plan was implemented in 2016. This plan focuses on a sequential development of ICT skills from Kindergarten to Year 6 as students develop functional and critical ICT skills.

All classes have access to a variety of technologies including interactive whiteboards, lap top computers and iPads. The degree and use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool varies between classes.

Opportunities are in place for students to develop skills and participate in leadership roles. Student councillors are elected and have a variety of duties including supporting and setting an example for other students, mediating in playground issues and providing a valued student voice in discussions with staff leaders. Faction captains and vice captains assist with the organisation and smooth running of the sport program, carnivals and management of sporting equipment. Students were very proud and vocal about the high quality of sportsmanship among the students in the school.

The school executive and staff have very successfully established communication with parents and engaged them in the life of the school. Meetings with parent class representatives, parent surveys, annual reports, students' reports and school newsletters are ongoing successful means of communicating with parents. Survey results, however, indicated that in some cases communication between teachers and parents at the classroom level could still be improved.

Parents assist in the school in a variety of ways, including facilitating learning programs such as: before-school *Numero* club, kitchen garden, assisting in the classroom and school events, and supporting and helping the P&C. Students, staff and parents expressed pride in their inclusive and vibrant school community. Parent survey results affirmed this, as do the well-attended parent forums which are held through the school year. The very active and productive P&C and activities such as parent participation in the school's 100-strong student and parent running club further attested to this level of engagement.

Active partnerships have been developed with parents, other schools and Western Australian education agencies. Partnerships with parents are very well embedded in most classrooms and staff purposefully liaise with other schools in the Duncraig network and wider northern education region.

School Performance—Sustainability

How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance into the next planning cycle?

It was evident that the school leadership, with support from the Board, is refining and developing systematic whole-school approaches to curriculum delivery, and the critical analysis of student learning. Whole-school learning area overviews are being developed with complementary operational plans including describing commitments and expectations to pedagogy, assessment, monitoring, delivery and achievement levels of students and staff.

An effective board is in place with several members completing consecutive terms. Three new positions on the board became available between 2015 and 2016. As a result, the board is well balanced with experienced and new members. Members are committed to being fully and more closely engaged in their governance role and strengthening their positive engagement with the school leadership and staff.

As the school moves into its third DPA, the board indicated an enthusiasm to build its capacity, further refining and significantly increasing its functionality, and becoming more publicly accountable.

The ongoing self-review process identified a number of potential improvements in student learning and staff development as well as possible future directions that reflect both State and national education trends and school community feedback. These will be used to inform the next business plan.

The leadership is strongly unified with clearly stated roles and responsibilities. Leaders are committed, knowledgeable and explicit about the improvement and development agenda and focused on creating a highly effective professional collegiate environment. Leaders are aware of the change process and the importance of not only supporting the development of sound practices but also embedding them. Parents and board members commented on the quality of the leadership across the school and the positive impact it was having on the school.

To foster continuous improvement, a distributed leadership model has been implemented to not only empower staff, but build capacity and guide and support staff knowledge, skills and contemporary research-based pedagogical

development. The building of staff capacity in whole-school pedagogies is intended to support significant improvements in student learning and reinforce a strong collaborative and collegial approach to learning.

Staff are committed and enthusiastic about refining and further developing their capacity and data literacy to achieve the best possible outcomes for students.

A strong community continues to support the school with resources, curriculum assistance, grounds and playground improvements, and encouragement. Discussions with parents and board members confirm a strong commitment to supporting the school in providing a quality education for all students and ensuring that the school and its achievements are well respected in the community. Duncraig Primary School is well placed to sustain achievements and provide for future improvements into the next planning cycle.

Conclusion

With new leadership, the focus at Duncraig Primary School has been on building upon the strength of the previous leadership, highlighting the school's strengths, progressing the areas that still require improvement and developing whole-school collaborative evidence and research-based processes that ensure practices are sustainable.

As a result, staff and leaders have continued to develop a whole-school curriculum focus and a strong collegiate culture that is intent on quality learning and teaching.

While identifying areas for future school improvement, the community is focused on raising the status of the school. A sense of anticipation of moving forward, of progress and of inspiring and aspiring to high expectations and achievement is evident.

Duncraig Primary School is an effective school. As the school moves into its third DPA, the board, school leadership and staff are committed, united and enthusiastic to achieve school improvement. They are equally inspired to engage in critically examining, refining, and embedding strategic and operational processes and strategies.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the positive school culture with strong community orientation
- leadership commitment to whole-school explicit improvement and development
- creating a highly effective professional collegiate environment within a model of distributed leadership
- community confidence in the school leadership
- embedded process of regular staff collaboration meetings to establish collective understandings, skills and practices within a whole-school focus
- The leadership team and staff for creating a safe and inclusive environment where everyone is valued and supported.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- governance processes be further developed and refined by the board to maximise effectiveness
- more alignment between Department of Education planning, the school's business plan and operational planning, classroom planning and accountability requirements within a whole-school focus
- the early years staff continue their critical reflection of NQS and EYLF to establish common interpretations.

Declaration

We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Duncraig Primary School as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



Ms Cris Sandri, Lead Reviewer

21 November 2016

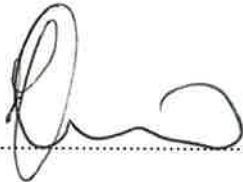
Date



Dr Susan Hall, Reviewer

21 November 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

6/12/16

Date