



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

South Halls Head 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.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Janette Workman
Board Chair:	Ms Tania Gigg
School Location:	38 Karon Vista, Halls Head WA 6210
Number of Students:	623
Reviewers:	Mr Keith Newton (Lead) and Ms Megan Phillips
Review Dates:	4 and 5 April 2016
Initial Review:	2012

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?

South Halls Head Primary School, located in the housing estate of Seascapes in Mandurah, 82 kilometres south of Perth, opened in 2008 with around 200 students and grew rapidly to a peak of 680 in 2014 before settling back to 623 as it stands today. Due to the demand for places, the school has been unable to accept 'out of area' students since 2012. This has moved some parents to make a deliberate choice about which house to rent or purchase to ensure their child(ren) are entitled to enrol.

The parents/caregivers and community at large demonstrate a strong sense of ownership towards the school and have a commitment to the 'village' concept that has been a part of the school since its inception. There is a belief that the school provides the opportunity for the all-round development of all students in an environment of trust and respect.

The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is 1022 (Schools Online). The school caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 6 and had an overall attendance rate for semester one 2015 of 93.5%, which is on par with like schools (93.7%) and marginally above that of all Western Australian public schools (92.7%). The attendance rate for Aboriginal students, which makes up 2.3% of the enrolment, was 90.6%, which is well above that of like schools (87.6%) and all public schools (81.2%). In 2015, 80.3% of students attended regularly; 14.7% were indicated as having 'at risk' attendance; 3.9% were indicated as moderately 'at risk' and 0.9% were indicated severely 'at risk', all of which outperform the rates for all Western Australian public schools and are a significant improvement on the school's rates for 2014. The transiency rate is 16.4%. Seven per cent of students have a language background other than English and 9.3% of all students have special education needs.

The school has a teaching staff of 33 (30.5 FTE) inclusive of four (3 FTE) school administrators and a further 17 staff (13.3 FTE) in support roles. Leave liability is low with only two staff members having long service leave of more than 66 days outstanding. Absenteeism and resignations are within normal expectations.

The School Board comprises 12 members inclusive of the Principal, and is made up of parents, staff and community members, including a business owner, a mining and resources representative, a resilience, drug and road safety consultant and a member of the Western Australian parliament. The composition of the Board has been relatively stable since inception with only one change of Board Chair. The Board works closely with the school administration to set and maintain the 'village' vision which includes providing outstanding educational opportunities for all children attending the school.

The school is resourced through the usual funding arrangements without any additional program funding from either the Department of Education or outside sources.

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?

South Halls Head Primary School, engages in a rigorous ongoing self-review process. This is based on contemporary data-based evidence that is collected at the individual student, classroom, phase/year, and whole-school level.

At the classroom level, teachers maintain detailed records of student progress using up-to-date checklists, school-developed common assessment tasks and teacher-designed tests based on the school's scope and sequence curriculum charts. At the school level, progress is tracked against commonly accepted benchmarks and standards information. This data, along with teacher judgements, is analysed internally and against like schools on a regular basis to ensure appropriate progress has been made for each student.

Data sets include; National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN); PAT Reading, Spelling and Mathematics; PM Benchmarks; attendance; behaviour, and teacher judgements in music, art and physical education, along with student, parent and staff ratings of school satisfaction.

Staff are heavily engaged in the review process, including target setting and the development and modification of operational plans to maintain a focus on optimal levels of achievement. Within this process, careful consideration is given to identifying key issues and required changes in practice, all of which are acted upon as early as possible once substantiated by triangulated data. Staff are also given every opportunity for professional learning to ensure they have the relevant skills and knowledge necessary to implement the designated strategies.

The staff, in conjunction with the Board, has taken note of and implemented changes in accord with the areas identified for improvement in the 2012 Department of Education Services' review. They have also undertaken an extensive self-assessment against the 2013-2015 DPA, which along with evidence identified through this review, indicates that all provisions are being met.

The extent of achievement of student performance and other targets of the Business Plan is reported to the Board regularly and published in the school Annual Report. Further, the Board is very active in holding the school to

account for the performance of the students and in setting the direction and standards for the school to achieve.

The transparency of the school's self-review process ensures a high degree of accountability for the quality of inputs across the cognitive, social-emotional and physical spectrums of learning outcomes. The decision-making process incorporates a cycle of planning, monitoring and review.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The school's rigorous self-review in each year of the 2013–2015 Business Plan indicates that 77% of the targets were met, with most others very close to being met. More specifically, all 2015 targets set for English were met, other than at Kindergarten, where 1.6% of students fell short of the target and at Pre-primary where 18.6% fell short of the target. For mathematics, all the targets were met other than for Kindergarten where 15% of students fell short of the target, and at Year 3 where the target of at, or above like-school mean, was not achieved. Similarly, the school's target of maintaining 'A' and 'B' grades at or above like-school averages in science was met (39.7% compared to 22.5% for like schools), but the target of 8% or less students in Year 3 receiving a 'D' grade fell short by 2.1%.

All targets for music, visual arts and physical education were met, however, none of the targets for society and environment were met, especially the target of decreasing the percentage of students in Years 4, 5 and 6 receiving a 'D' grade to 6% or less. This actually increased to 20.5%.

Longitudinal NAPLAN data indicates that the school was able to improve student achievement to at, or above other Australian schools in all aspects of the tested areas. Further, the NAPLAN progress and achievement data for the 2013 to 2015 period indicates higher achievement and higher progress for numeracy, grammar and punctuation, writing and spelling compared to like schools, with reading in the higher progress but lower achievement category. A similar pattern can be found when compared to all WA public schools and to all Australian schools, although the difference between each and the school was lower than that for like schools.

On a comparative basis, students are achieving as expected in all aspects of literacy and numeracy assessed by NAPLAN for both Year 3 and 5, with Year 5 achieving above expectation in grammar and punctuation, and numeracy.

Staff closely monitored and evaluated student achievement on a sub-group basis against curriculum expectations set out in the school's comprehensive scope and sequence charts.

As a consequence of the above, staff have from time to time renewed focus and changed practices as appropriate to improve student achievement. Further, there is a strong commitment by staff toward collaboration and the school's articulated direction. This is reflected in time allocated to professional learning, and staff having embraced the importance of whole-school strategies and the need to implement these in their classrooms. Regular program and year-level meetings reinforce desired pedagogical approaches and allow for staff to engage in moderation and professional coaching and mentoring activities. The dispersed leadership model centres on curriculum and phase/year-level teacher leaders who provide ongoing impetus for improvement.

In order to promote student social and emotional intelligence, the staff is implementing the Positive Behaviours strategy. It was evident from the information supplied by staff, students and parents that the values-based inclusive culture within the school is helping to meet the social and well-being learning needs of all students.

The affective domain area of student performance is important to teachers. The staff work assiduously to improve student and community attitudes to learning and measure the progress made.

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?

The reviewers were able to verify that documentation outlining the development of the concept of a 'village' culture is an authentic 'lived experience' at South Halls Head Primary School. Embedded in the community aspects of this concept promote student learning and attainment of the school vision.

Whilst being a relatively new school with large numbers of students with varying cultural, social and educational needs, the inclusive culture has seen the creation of an environment in which everyone is valued and supported. That the school not only promotes itself as a 'school of choice' in the Mandurah district, but is identified as such by parents who have made decisions on the purchase of their family home based on the reputation of the school, is testament to the successful strategies and programs in place to support the learning and well-being of all students.

Regular assessment provides information that identifies individual, group and year-level learning strengths and weaknesses; with deployed strategies and resources provided to support student learning, engagement and well-being. Interrogation of data from testing and assessment tasks across the main learning areas of literacy and numeracy and research into which strategy would best suit the learning needs of the students has resulted in the school adopting an explicit teaching model.

The whole community has embraced the 'I do: We do: You do' mantra and teaching staff, parents and students were able to identify the way in which the strategy enables and assists all students to achieve to their individual capacity, always striving for excellence and to reach their personal goals as they also pursue achievement of set targets.

The development of a positive attitude towards the shared vision of the 'village' concept was noted during the daily fitness activities run across all year levels. This commendable innovation sees the four Year 6 classes take it in turn to run the fitness program under the guidance of their class teacher. During these sessions, senior students get to know the younger students and provide leadership modelling for the younger students.

A distributed leadership model is employed across the school and all interested staff are offered opportunities to develop their own leadership potential. One of the strategies developed by leadership staff is the comprehensive scope and sequence documentation supporting the operational plan. This tool has raised the confidence of classroom teachers, enabling them to plan and provide for ongoing programming within the requirements of the WA Curriculum, whilst still endeavouring to meet the targets set for individual students and year-level whole-school targets. Compliance with the scope and sequence content and attention to ongoing assessment is monitored and supported by the phase team and curriculum leadership.

Parents are supportive of the programs in place and are confident they are kept informed of their own child's needs and progress. The two 'Challenge' classes are highly thought of and comprehensive communication with the whole parent body has ensured that student placement in these two classes for students (including some high functioning students on the Autism spectrum) whilst highly sought after, is understood and accepted.

Parents verified that communication with the school is well established, with their engagement in the life of the school welcomed and fitting well within the notion of the school's culture. Parents commented upon the friendliness and opportunities to help other families when the need arose, as being strengths of the community; and further, commended the Principal, and staff in general, as being the ones who led by example in this area.

Reviewers were able to verify that the level of parent satisfaction is extremely high, with the opportunity to raise concerns and the prompt manner in which these concerns were acted upon being seen as further evidence of the care and well-being that underpins the nature of the school village concept.

Effective partnerships with parents, the community, and external agencies have been developed and continue to form an essential part of the success of the South Halls Head Primary School teaching and learning experiences and programs for students. Parents assist in classrooms on a regular basis and sporting teams are supported with parent coaching and management of school teams in the wider community. An impressive music program with established strong links to the Mandurah Performing Arts Community and ongoing school participation in internal and regional art exhibitions and competitions further enhance and provide students with experiences and

opportunities to support their learning in areas other than more formal areas of the curriculum.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Whilst there is a strong focus on NAPLAN preparation and targets set to achieve results above the expected cohort results; a range of other formal testing, informal assessment and rigorously monitored teacher judgements and moderation strategies are also in place. Along with individual education plans (IEPs) for funded students with diagnosed learning problems, English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), children in the care of the Department of Child Protection and Family Support and Aboriginal students; class teachers provide individual learning plans for those students achieving at the lower end of class expectations. The reviewers were, however, made aware that the intensive induction and professional learning processes associated with the school's explicit teaching model had waned in recent years. Further, there appeared to be some misunderstanding by some staff about the purpose and structure of IEPs in relation to the school's approach to differentiated learning.

Students who need intensive assistance are withdrawn from the classroom for one-on-one tutoring during the 'You do' part of the lesson, or receive individual re-teaching by the class teacher or education assistant where individual teaching and follow up is available three to four times a week. Embedded self-review practices that analyse the learning of all students to identify areas for improvement form part of the ongoing whole-school assessment of progress being made towards meeting the set targets in all areas of the curriculum.

Governance processes that strategically oversee and provide critical reflection on school performance and the cycle of self-review are clearly present within the Board itself; however, there is a dearth of knowledge within the wider community of the role and nature of the Board. In discussions with the reviewers, this lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the School Board was present not only among the parent body, but also amongst members of the teaching staff.

Strong collaborative leaders foster continuous growth across all learning areas with the school's priority given to maintaining and enhancing the students' NAPLAN performance. Aiming for achievement at such a high level in the core learning areas in order to meet set targets is well balanced by the

high level of planning, target setting and maintenance of excellence in the non-academic learning areas. Parents, students and staff appreciate this strong balance across the holistic program of teaching and learning at South Halls Head Primary School.

Staff have the capacity to implement processes and procedures effectively, as they are supported with time for cooperative discussion and target setting. Due to the collaborative nature of the teaching and learning program, the clarity of the scope and sequence documents and the building clusters, the staff of phase-of-learning teams regularly make the most of all opportunities to have professional dialogue. Staff work together in cohesive groups, moderating and discussing teacher judgements to ensure scope and sequence topics and content can be shared and to prepare and develop activities and ways of presenting their 'I Do: We Do: and You do', sessions of explicit teaching.

Reviewers verify that human, physical and financial resources are available and appropriately sourced in order to sustain current programs and support future initiatives.

Specific and detailed planning that sets targets to improve student learning is in place, reviewed and altered as necessary at which time alternative strategies and timelines are determined.

The school workforce plan indicates a flexible approach to the management of a current transient situation with several staff members on maternity leave and long-service leave requirements to be met. Recruiting staff willing to take on the school's explicit teaching model and experienced to deal with the management of students with varying learning disabilities and cultural differences, continues to require astute management.

The challenges for sustainability of the School Board have been recognised. A recruitment drive is planned which focuses on developing a membership with a skill set to enhance efficacy of the governance processes.

Conclusion

South Halls Head Primary School staff use a comprehensive, iterative, data-driven self-review process to analyse performance against the priorities and targets in the Business Plan and to meet obligations under the DPA. Formal self-review documents include detailed conclusions about performance against targets, standards of student achievement, progress made and actions to be taken for improvement.

Detailed self-reflective practices ensure the school is involved in a continuous improvement process.

The school provides an effective learning environment for all students where decisions are evidence-based and grounded in contemporary research.

The school is held in high regard by staff, students, parents and the wider community. The professional knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff in creating quality learning and teaching programs to maximise the educational opportunities for each student was evident throughout the review. This, along with effective school leadership, has resulted in the school having an excellent reputation in the local community.

The school has a well-informed and capable Board that sets the strategic direction, oversees implementation and holds the school to account for its performance. This, when aligned with the team of competent staff, effective partnerships and targeted use of resources, ensures the school's vision, purpose and values are evident throughout its operations.

The school is serving the learning needs of its students and meeting the aspirations of the community.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the 'village' culture that is supported and fostered both with the school and local community
- the shared ownership and commitment of all staff to the explicit teaching model adopted by the school and their willingness to engage in ongoing professional learning to further develop and apply their knowledge and skills
- the embodiment of the school's ethos and culture through the daily fitness program led by senior students
- the promotion and support extended to the visual arts, music and physical education programs to ensure all students receive balanced educational experiences
- the opportunity extended to students to advance their learning through the two challenge classes
- the growth and development of the Board's understanding and implementation of its governance role in supporting the school.

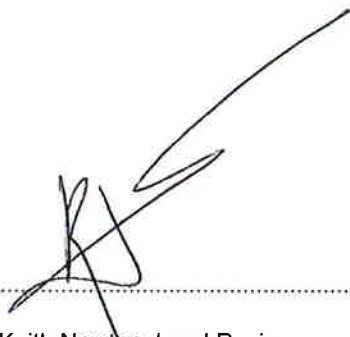
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- reinvigorate the induction process and professional learning related to the school's approach to explicit teaching for newly appointed staff
- ensure all staff have a common understanding of the purpose and structure of individual education plans in the school's approach to differentiated learning
- enhance community awareness of the membership and role of the Board.

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 South Halls Head 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.



Mr Keith Newton, Lead Reviewer

3 May 2016

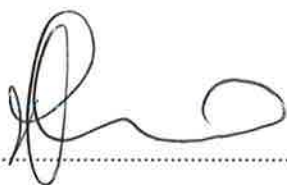
Date



Ms Megan Phillips, Reviewer

3 May 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

24/5/16

Date