Bletchley Park 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 Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Cristopher Partington
Board Chair:	Ms Sharmini Pasha
School Location:	Balfour Street, Southern River WA 6110
Number of Students:	1025
Reviewers:	Ms Su Wilson (Lead) and Ms Megan Phillips
Review Dates:	15 and 16 March 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?

Bletchley Park Primary School is in the suburb of Southern River, located 23km south of Perth. Established in 2008 with an initial enrolment of 190 students, it became an Independent Public School (IPS) in 2010.

Modern facilities include open-plan teaching blocks and classrooms designed to support a collaborative and cooperative culture for staff and students, although intense growth is now impacting on this, evidenced in the use of a wet area as a classroom.

The current three-year review period has seen, despite the departure of Year 7 students to high school and the recent completion of Harrisdale Primary School, student numbers grow from 935 to 1025. As a consequence of the unprecedented growth, a restructure of classes is anticipated. Transiency is 9.0%.

The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1046 and socio-economic distribution of 16% of students in the lowest quartile, 30% and 31% in the middle and 24% in the top quartile, although the Principal shared his belief with reviewers that this figure seems high given the changing population. This view is supported by AEDC scores which show numbers of students considered developmentally vulnerable or developmentally at risk, ranging from 16.9% to 33.8% across the five domains.

Approximately 30% of students are identified as having English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), with numbers falling predominantly in early childhood classes where the percentage is closer to 40–45%. Countries of origin include South-East Asia, Africa and Afghanistan.

Additionally, there are 33 students receiving Disability Resourcing Services support, three of whom have applications pending, and three children in the care of the Department of Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS).

The enrolment also includes a significant number of students with parents employed as fly-in fly-out workers.

The student attendance rate in 2015 was 94%, matching like schools and higher than WA Public Schools (92.7%).

The school offers specialist programs in science, music and physical education, and has a growing focus on the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to support the learning program.

The school's *Workforce Management Plan 2013–2015* deals mainly with the impact of enrolment fluctuations on both teaching and support staff during the course of the DPA. Growing numbers have allowed the school to consolidate and maintain an appropriate balance of staff, attracting those with specific knowledge and skills where deficiencies exist. Future planning for the workforce can now be expanded to ensure additional factors such as experience, expertise, gender and age align with work fraction, appointment term and coordinated leave. This, together with strategic planning for the professional growth and capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff, specialist roles and leadership opportunities, will maximise effectiveness of the school's workforce in meeting the needs of students.

The Board, under the capable leadership of a parent chairperson, operates in accordance with required procedures, with membership currently consisting of three staff members, five parent representatives and one community member. The Board is committed to meeting the compliance requirements of the DPA, exercises oversight of student performance, resource management and policy formulation, and is investigating opportunities to strengthen the part it plays in planning for future improvement.

Parents are supportive of the school and staff, contributing to the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), school activities and fundraising events.

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?

The emphasis of the school's process of self-review has been on assessing performance against targets and milestones identified in the 2013–2015 Business Plan. Evidence of progress against the deliverables relevant to each responsibility of the DPA was provided through documented evidence-based planning and discussions with staff.

Targets measure students' performance through comparisons with schools at National levels in the National Assessment Program— Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and via attendance data. Working through the process of self-review has identified the importance of distinguishing between targets and milestones when seeking to measure improvement. This should lead to the development of targets which are more purposeful in measuring the impact of programs and strategies to inform future planning.

The school's self-review has been enhanced by a Whole School Audit, a process which outlines specific strategies to monitor and assess students' learning progress across the key areas of literacy and numeracy using tools other than NAPLAN.

A schedule specifying strategically-timed data collection using a variety of assessment tools, underpinned by a timeline for testing, analysis and reporting of findings, has been developed and is soon to become embedded practice throughout the school. This information is considered along with valid data obtained from additional sources including teacher developed assessment and tracking tools, Teacher Assessment of Communication (TAC), Screen of Communication Skills (SOCS), moderated teacher judgement, EAL/D Progress Maps and student attendance data, to determine standards of achievement and learning progress. Resulting analysis then guides evidence-based planning at whole-school planning days, curriculum committee meetings and during weekly/fortnightly meetings of year-level collaborative planning teams.

Standards of student achievement and progress are also regularly assessed through the monitoring of students' performance in school-designed Teaching and Learning Adjustments (TALAs).

The Principal shared with reviewers the actions resulting from the school's self-review which encompass a revised model for distributed leadership, the introduction of the Whole School Audit and increased resourcing to support teacher leaders in curriculum implementation and collaborative planning processes to focus on improving student performance.

In support of this growing culture of school improvement and the refinement of the process of self-review, reviewers recommend aligning future annual reports with Business Plan targets and areas of focus to better ensure self-assessment practices are strategic in measuring performance over the term of the three-year plan.

Discussions with members of the School Board confirmed their engagement with the review of student performance data and genuine desire to play an active role in school review processes.

Reviewers verified that self-review processes have identified both the school's strengths as well as areas for improvement in student learning and are contributing to evidence-driven planning for improvement.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The Bletchley Park Primary School Business Plan 2013–2015 identified four key areas of focus:

- for all students to be successful as individuals
- to improve student outcomes through high-quality teaching and leadership
- to meet the needs and aspirations of students to match local needs and help build a strong community
- to manage performance against outcomes, priorities and targets, using technology, research and innovation to drive change.

To this end, the school aspires to 'be a place of excellence where students can achieve full potential in their academic, creative, personal, physical, social and emotional development'.

In assessing performance against these key areas of the Business Plan, the school set targets which focused on student achievement and progress in NAPLAN and On-entry Testing in literacy and numeracy, although during the term of the Business Plan, targets using On-entry data were determined to be unworkable, so were discarded.

Targets were also set to measure attendance.

The first target aimed to measure 'the performance of each cohort in meeting or exceeding the national average NAPLAN Literacy assessment in Year 3–5 and Year 5–7, taking into account the move of Year 7 students to secondary school'. As a result, progress was monitored for students in Year 5–7 from 2012–2014 and students in Year 3–5 from 2013–2015.

The target was achieved for both cohorts across all areas of literacy, with the exception of spelling for Year 3–5 students, and reading for students in Year 5–7.

This target was then applied to numeracy and was achieved for students in Year 5–7 from 2012–2014 and not achieved for those in Year 3–5 from 2013–2015.

While comparing progress against national averages is of interest, reviewers agreed with the Principal's belief that the value of this information is limited in informing teachers on the success of programs used, particularly as no comparisons have been made regarding student achievement.

Of interest, is data from Schools Online which shows the achievement of Year 3 students falling below like schools in all areas of NAPLAN, and with the exception of writing, just below for students in Year 5. This is reflected in the Schools Online NAPLAN Progress and Achievement 2013–2015 graph in which all areas, with the exception of writing, appear in the lower left quadrant indicating both lower progress and lower achievement.

In considering this information in light of their analysis of performance against the first target, school leaders shared their intention to approach future target setting with care to ensure it is both strategic and purposeful. This will also help to reduce confusion between the achievement of targets and the attainment of milestones. The reviewers support the staff's intentions to design future targets which will measure the impact of programs and strategies on student learning, leading to evidence-based planning for improvement.

School staff also shared action already underway in response to analysis of students' performance in literacy and numeracy. This includes significant changes to the school's instructional leadership, modified to ensure collaborative practices are supported and leadership shared. Coinciding with this is an in-depth review of policy and teacher practice in literacy, the impending whole-school implementation of the Talk4Writing program, as well as the appointment of strong, capable numeracy leaders committed to driving whole-school improvement in mathematics.

Reviewers were provided with the opportunity to experience this improvement focus in classrooms where strong collaboration is evidenced through shared teaching practice, common assessment processes and strategic data analysis designed to support evidence-based planning. This is complemented by growing flexibility in the use of learning spaces, small group learning designed to target specific needs and the effective use of ICT to provide high-quality learning and teaching to meet the needs of students.

Reviewers commend the school on the positive action taken to allocate experienced and capable teachers to roles of curriculum consultants and leaders, adequately resourced to ensure all staff are supported and their contribution valued.

The second target relates to the performance of EAL/D eligible students, stating that they 'meet or exceed the average national growth rate in all NAPLAN literacy assessment'. Performance against this target was assessed using Education Assessment and Reporting Software (EARS) to filter students identified as Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) now known as EAL/D.

For EAL/D students in Year 3, the target was met in reading and spelling, while it was achieved in all NAPLAN areas by EAL/D students in Year 5. In 2014, all EAL/D students achieved the target in writing, grammar and punctuation and numeracy, but not in reading or spelling.

Once again, while this information is of interest, reviewers and school leaders agreed that its usefulness in providing evidence to support improvement planning for EAL/D students is limited, particularly as their mean performance sometimes exceeded that of the total student cohort. These results are testimony to the quality of support provided to EAL/D students who enrol at the school. Increasing enrolments of students with little or no English has led to positive action with the strategic allocation of an EAL/D Curriculum Consultant and 2.5 FTE, education assistants to support teachers, EAL/D students and their families. A variety of assessment tools are used to provide teachers with a starting point upon enrolment including a school-based assessment package as well as TAC and the SOCS testing for use with students enrolling in the early years. Strategies in place include use of the Progress Maps, professional learning for staff in cultural awareness, support in implementing TALAs, frequent use of interpreter services and parent education sessions. Reviews commend staff on the provision of a high quality program to support EAL/D students and their families.

TALAs are also in place for students who require additional support in either literacy or numeracy, providing a record of adjustments made to the teaching and learning program. Should the TALA not have a positive impact on the student's progress, a referral is made to the Learning Support Team at which time specific processes are implemented in support of the student who is considered at risk. This includes the development of an individual education plan (IEP), access to support depending on his/her need and ongoing tracking of progress.

The Learning Support Team also plays a key role in providing support for students who have special needs. The team coordinates input from outside agencies, staff professional learning, parent communication and collaboration, planning reviews and, if appropriate, the preparation of modified reporting documents.

Parents of students with special needs spoke highly of the commitment of staff to support their children's learning.

Until recently, the school had established an 'Opportunity Class' designed to meet the needs of students identified as capable of high levels of academic performance. Strategies now focus on empowering teachers to differentiate learning programs to meet the needs of these students, enabling them to join their peers in classrooms while still accessing Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC).

Another factor seen as impacting on performance in the early years is the increasing enrolments of boys. This year the school is trialling an all-boys class in Year 2, with instruction based on beliefs about how boys learn best. Flexible learning spaces and unconventional furniture support the teacher's commitment to the provision of a learning rich environment with a language-experience base. Reviewers commend the school on this forward thinking initiative.

Specialist programs operate effectively for music, physical education and science.

The school's science program addresses a recommendation from the previous Independent Review which cited a need for science targets. In response to this, attempts to set targets actually resulted in the setting of milestones relating to science implementation. Importantly, during the term of the Business Plan, science has grown considerably in strength with the appointment of two science specialists and the establishment of a science lab. As a result, the school is developing sound practices in collecting and analysing data to measure learning progress.

Another area acknowledged by reviewers is the impact of ICT on learning. Teachers shared with reviewers their experience in hosting a TeachMeet for 60–70 participants at which five Bletchley Park teachers were among the 11 who presented. Visits to classrooms confirmed that ICT was integrated and pervasive across many year groups. Teachers, students and parents commented on the usefulness of Apps such as Seesaw and ClassDojo in communicating between home and school. They felt well informed about what their children were learning and confident in the lessons provided. Reviewers commend the school's ICT teaching and learning programs as these initiatives increase engagement and challenge and extend student learning.

The remaining targets both relate to attendance. The first attendance target states 'the average rate of attendance will continue to exceed the state *average*' was achieved.

The second attendance target 'the attendance rate of identified students at risk will increase to 85% and be maintained at this level' was partially achieved.

Overall, the school's attendance remains slightly better than that of WA Public Schools.

Documentation and interviews with curriculum leaders, learning area specialists and school leaders enabled reviewers to verify the highly developed culture of collaborative practice which will ensure stakeholders continue to set purposeful direction for the school. To this end, reviewers recommend that planning for the 2016–2018 Business Plan involve wider consultation with staff, interested parents and members of the School Board.

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?

Through discussions with key personnel and subsequent classroom visits, reviewers were able to verify that the school's embedded culture of a supportive and positive learning environment for both staff and students promotes student learning and attainment of the school vision.

The distributed leadership model, consisting of experienced educators from the administration team, and the curriculum consultants (Level 3 leaders of each year level team), form the leadership team which effectively supports and guides teachers. Collaborative decisions are made regarding the resourcing and provision of appropriate strategies, programs and processes, according to the interrogation and analysis of the data collected. This whole-school audit initiated in 2015, will again take place during the latter part of the 2016 school year.

Members of the school community who met with the reviewers reported that the school has achieved a safe and inclusive environment in which everyone felt valued and supported; and furthermore named this as one of the reasons why it is considered the school of choice in the area, despite its large numbers.

Classroom teachers, education assistants and specialist teachers are commended for their professionalism in seeking to engage with the most effective ways of disseminating the curriculum. Evidence was provided that the requirements of the National Quality Standard (NQS), the Australian and Western Australian Curriculum and the highest standards of pastoral care and safety for children are uppermost in the planning and resourcing across all year levels.

Students, staff, and parents identified deployed strategies and resources to support student learning, engagement and well-being, as other positive aspects of belonging to this very multicultural and challenging community.

Students, in particular, were able to identify the availability of assistance from teachers and administration, not only through appropriate classroom strategies, but also through the availability of resources and the presence of teachers in the playground as reasons for feeling safe and supported at the school.

The school has established several successful methods of communication in order to assist parents and their engagement in the life of the school. In particular it was noted that communication with the high number of EAL/D families enrolled is being managed very successfully. Despite these successes reviewers were concerned that with only five parents across the whole school community responding to the mandated Parent Opinion Survey, further strategies may be required in order for the school to successfully engage with the community, to determine the level of parent satisfaction and act accordingly.

Effective partnerships with parents at a classroom level are established and parents were high in praise for the work being done by school leaders and teaching staff. Parents were also aware of the capacity of the school to deal with children who required assistance with their learning, the availability of specialist teaching and learning programs, such as physical education and science; and were appreciative of the extra effort put in by the Principal and staff to provide for their children.

The school engages with external agencies such Murdoch University and the Dyslexia Speld Association to enhance the teaching and learning programs; and other community based opportunities such as Little Athletics, Cubs and Scouts and a before-school and after-school care agency are in place to offer opportunities for the students.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Whilst the staff has recognised that the target setting for the last iteration of the Business Plan is an area requiring attention; reviewers were assured of the staff's ability to maintain achievements and provide for future improvement through more definitive target setting, workforce planning and resourcing.

Although embedded self-review practices are evident, the development of an integrated, well-defined Operational Plan to underpin and clearly identify a whole-of-school clarity of purpose will assist with transition across year levels. Staff and curriculum leaders have identified this as a priority, and attention to integration of planning and review of teaching and learning language, processes and procedures has begun incidentally across some year levels and more formally in others. Specialist teachers in curriculum areas such as physical education, have well researched and data-driven operational planning in place.

The School Board, has to some extent, employed governance processes that strategically oversee and provide critical reflection on school performance and the cycle of self-review. However, there is still much to be done from this governance perspective.

With a relatively new but highly motivated Board Chair, and elections about to take place for the School Board, reviewers were encouraged that the Board is cognizant of the importance of its role. Awareness of the importance to have all members trained, a membership based on a skills set to best provide for the governance required and the need to proactively raise the profile of the Board, as recommended in the previous Independent Review, have been identified for immediate uptake.

Leadership that fosters continuous improvement is one of the many successful and easily identified traits of the whole staff at Bletchley Park School. Education assistants, classroom teachers and specialist teachers are provided with opportunities to reach their individual potential, and to implement research-based opportunities to extend the learning and promote the well-being and success of students. Examples of this were provided by the innovative Walker-based strategies in the Kindergarten, the Year 2 boys-only class and the opportunities to ready the students for their transition to secondary education through the setting up of programs and engagement with neighbouring high schools.

Leadership opportunities are provided for students through the student representative council environment and sports committees.

Effective staff selection and the dedication of many staff who have been at the school for many years, some since its inception, have provided the learning community with the continuity and collegial capacity to implement processes and procedures effectively.

A comprehensive performance management process for all teaching staff is documented. Based on the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and incorporating the iStar model of connected practice, it is currently under review.

Given the nature of the school and the physical and emotional demands placed on staff, staff well-being was identified as an area in which the school could provide support. A staff well-being program commenced in 2015 and was fully implemented in 2016.

Astute management by school leaders, and support by the School Board, have enabled the ongoing provision of the physical and financial resources required to sustain current programs and support future initiatives. Staff have confidence in their own capacity, are encouraged to address innovation through individual research, and are full of praise for the leadership of the school, especially the positive attitude of the Principal, which enables them to seek the best possible results for students.

The Principal's capacity to allocate the appropriate release time required for staff to work together, both at team and individual levels, and the effective timetabling required for this to happen with the least amount of disruption to students, has resulted in a reciprocal giving of time by staff, for meetings after school and even on weekends. The recent Saturday ICT TeachMeet hosted by Bletchley Park was a resounding success. This type of professionalism and dedication is an example of the cohesiveness and collaboration staff were keen to share with reviewers.

The Bletchley Park Primary School self-review provided the opportunity for the leadership team and School Board to closely examine the value of strategies and resources in place for the improvement of student outcomes. With a clearer view of what is required, the leadership team and School Board are now in the process of developing realistic data-driven targets for the next iteration of the Business Plan.

Conclusion

Bletchley Park Primary School continues to experience increasing enrolments, serving a more diverse community, and parents confirm it remains the school of choice. Having just completed its second Independent Review, the school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Through the process of self-review, staff have reflected on their school's performance against targets set in the 2013–2015 Business Plan and have put into place positive action in support of ongoing improvement. Strong, shared leadership is committed to building the capacity of all staff to improve student achievement, progress and engagement through practice that is both innovative and collaborative. In turn, strategic use of IPS flexibilities now ensures that changes implemented are adequately resourced.

This commitment to ongoing school improvement will be further strengthened by the Board's intention to develop their capacity to maintain oversight of school planning and accountability processes.

In addition, a developing interest in pursuing additional partnerships with local community and business groups to support the learning program, will leave the school well-positioned to build on current levels of performance.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the strong improvement focus following the self-review which includes:
  - a refined model of distributed leadership utilising experienced and capable teachers in roles of curriculum consultants and leaders
  - introduction of the whole-school audit
  - increased resourcing to support teacher leaders in curriculum implementation and collaborative planning processes to focus on improving student performance
- the professionalism of staff leading to an improvement focus in classrooms where strong collaboration is evidenced through shared teaching practice, innovative curriculum delivery, strategic assessment and data analysis designed to support evidence-based planning to target specific learning needs

- leadership that provides all staff with opportunities to reach their individual potential through the implementation of research-based strategies to extend the learning and promote the well-being and success of students
- the provision of a high-quality program to support EAL/D students and their families
- the trial of an all-boys class encompassing flexible learning spaces and unconventional furniture to support a commitment to providing a learning rich environment with a language experience base
- the school's expanding ICT teaching and learning program designed to increase engagement and challenge and extend student learning.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- planning for the 2016–2018 Business Plan to involve wider consultation with staff, interested parents and members of the School Board
- targets for the next planning cycle to be more purposeful to effectively measure the impact of programs and strategies across all areas of focus to inform future planning
- development of comprehensive Operational Plans explicitly detailing focused curriculum planning and strategies across learning areas and accounting for the differentiation required to effectively improve outcomes for all students
- align future annual reports with Business Plan targets and self-assessment results
- future workforce planning be expanded to ensure factors such as experience, expertise, gender and age align with the school's future directions and needs of students
- engage with the community to determine the level of parent satisfaction and act accordingly
- the Board continue to develop its role in supporting the school through:
  - accessing training for all members
  - considering membership based on a skills set to best provide for required governance
  - exploring opportunities to increase its profile through communication of its activity within the school community.

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 Bletchley Park 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.

.... 29 April 2016 ....

Ms Su Wilson, Lead Reviewer   Date
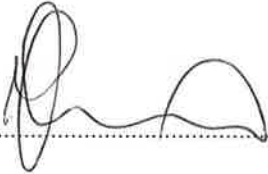
.... 29 April 2016 ....

Ms Megan Phillips, Reviewer   Date

.... 13/5/2016 ....

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,   Date
Department of Education Services