Yanchep Beach 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: Mr Paul Fuller
Board Chair: Mr Darren Meakins
School Location: 100 Lindsay Beach Boulevard, Yanchep 6035
Number of Students: 567
Reviewers: Ms Cris Sandri (Lead) and Mr Tom Campbell
Review Dates: 2 and 3 November 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?

Yanchep Beach Primary School opened as a new independent public school in January 2014 to serve the rapidly growing north-west corridor of Perth.

The provision of this contemporary and well-resourced learning and teaching environment has been a significant enabler to help facilitate the introduction, development and establishment of a child-centred, positive and vibrant school. A whole-school focus on teaching and learning practices and procedures is evident.

Strong local input and parent involvement in the establishment and planning phase, particularly the nature playgrounds as outdoor learning environments, has resulted in a collective sense of achievement and considerable pride for the school in the community. Parents indicated that Yanchep Beach Primary School is a school of choice and is developing as a centre for the community.

The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 984. Overall student numbers have continued to increase from 319 on opening in 2014 to 650 currently enrolled from Kindergarten to Year 6 for the commencement of 2017. The impact of this growth is more pronounced in the early years, particularly in Kindergarten, reflecting the local community demographics. Catering for the rapid change in student enrolments while embedding school processes and practices has been described by the board and school leadership team as its most significant strategic challenge during the first three years of operation.

Transiency rates of 21% have presented as being relatively high, with student regular attendance rates at 72% emerging as a potential issue. These are being addressed currently in the school.

Staff numbers have increased to complement student growth through strategic merit selection, resulting in an enthusiastic, committed, engaged and capable workforce aligned to the school vision.

As a result of a process involving public consultation and engagement, the board endorsed the motto, and set the vision and strategic direction for the school that formed the focus and targets of the 2014–2016 Business Plan. The motto Inspire To Grow is the guiding principle that is underpinning the school’s operations as a growing professional learning community.
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 original business plan developed in 2014 was edited and endorsed by the board on two separate occasions during 2015 to better reflect the evolving landscape of the school, with the most recent iteration focusing on 2016–2017.

The 2016–2017 Business Plan, based on the Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2016–2019 High Performance-High Care, consists of three priority areas: success for all students; excellence in teaching, and community partnerships. Each priority area includes goals and strategies to achieve, grouped under the headings of learning environments, teaching, resourcing and leadership.

In addition, twelve strategic student learning targets at whole-school and phase-of-learning level, and a further 12 whole-school operational targets were also set. A statement on values and shared community beliefs as well as strong reference to the recognition and inclusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the curriculum completes the plan.

All aspects of the business plan were reviewed by the school. Conclusions included an outline of specific achievement and the identification of future directions.

The National School Improvement Tool was used in 2015 by the leadership team to gauge organisational progress. By choosing to focus on the 'outstanding' criteria, areas of strengths and those needing development were identified for possible action.

The National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care (NQS) process began in 2014 when the school was established. The requirements and pedagogical philosophies of NQS and the Early Years Learning Framework formed the basis of practice and planning for the establishment of the early phase of learning in the school. While a self-audit against the NQS was completed in late 2016 to gauge initial implementation, the leadership team indicated that a more comprehensive self-audit will be undertaken in 2017 by the early childhood team and the principal. Initial data suggests staff believe areas 1, 5, 6 and 7 have been met.
School Performance—Student Learning

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

In analysing student learning data, the leadership team acknowledged the formulation of the academic targets as a concern. The reviewers concur with the conclusion that overall targets need to be much more focused or ‘sharper’. Despite this it was clear that significant effort has been deployed particularly in developing whole-school programs and enhancing classroom practice to address concerns with student progress and achievement. The fruition of this work is beginning to materialise.

A strategic improvement target for Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN was to increase the number of students achieving scores in the top proficiency bands to be higher than like schools in all learning areas. This target was not achieved. The leadership team recognised this was not a realistic target given the current academic base of the students. It is recommended that targets for the new business plan relating to NAPLAN should be the result of a close interrogation of the academic achievement of all students. However, it needs to be acknowledged that Yanchep Beach Primary School is a relatively new school and more comparative data will be forthcoming to assist in these decisions. Analysis of other NAPLAN data further clarifies the importance of this process.

The longitudinal data in comparing the school performance with like schools reveals that in all learning areas Yanchep Beach Primary School is significantly below except for Year 3 numeracy where it is close. A consideration of the progress and achievement data for Year 3 to 5, when compared with like schools, indicates that all learning areas except for writing are in the lower progress/lower achievement quadrant. These results present a significant challenge for the staff.

An On-entry Assessment target was set for students to be equal to or better than State-wide averages. This target was not achieved with results being considerably lower than expected, including a significant number of students achieving close to zero. The school leadership has recognised this concern and begun to seek solutions. These include placing a greater emphasis on parent education and development programs, particularly for kindergarten students.
Teacher judgements fall within the expected range, but with room for refinement. The principal has acknowledged that there is scope for staff to become more adept at interpreting data to inform their teaching and more regular interrogation of data is proposed. This, associated with relevant professional learning, should result in a closer alignment of grade allocations.

The business plan identifies academic targets which have been measured using a variety of diagnostic tools consistent with the Western Australian Curriculum. These include *PM benchmarks, Talk 4 Writing, Letters and Sounds, Words Their Way, Investigation Common Assessments* (science), Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study, gradual release teacher reviews and the National School Improvement Tool.

The targets focus on science, numeracy and overall progress. A prediction that ‘80% of students or higher will achieve at expected cohort levels’, was not achieved with many students at lower levels of attainment. The staff contend that progress is being made and should improve further with more specific targets, analysis of data and a focus on individual student progress.

The target for K–3 students to acquire literacy according to recommended phases in *Letters and Sounds* phases was achieved. Visits to classrooms verified that very rigorous practices were in place. It is anticipated this will impact on future results.

A significant number of non-academic targets have been outlined in the business plan. While some tend to be more strategy based, they provide evidence of school direction. These focus on community diversity, at-risk students, physical education, voluntary contributions, specialist teaching, the Western Australian Curriculum, classroom management, parent and student satisfaction, teacher aspirations and governance. Except for the target of having 80% of families paying voluntary contributions, these were achieved.

The staff have been proactive in endeavours to improve student achievement with the implementation of a number of initiatives including:

- a focus on the gradual release model and whole-school approaches
- emphasis on curriculum differentiation
- cooperative learning and explicit teaching
- continuous formative and summative assessment
- collaborative planning time for staff
- establishment of learning area committees


- implementation of coaching models and instructional rounds
- targeted professional learning to enhance teacher skills
- a detailed tracking data base for at-risk students.

In literacy, the implementation of ‘best practice’ strategies was observed. Of note has been the introduction of the Talk 4 Writing program. Evidence from classroom visits confirmed the very high quality of the writing and that the teaching practice was of a concomitant standard. Similarly, the Letters and Sounds program is making a significant difference to learning in the K–2 classrooms.

The work undertaken by the literacy committee has been thorough. It has ensured that individual teachers have had support and the intention of the school to have a whole-school approach to literacy with a focus on explicit teaching has been realised. In the forthcoming year, the committee intends to complete a project that will enhance reading strategies throughout the school. The school self-review identified that ‘reading is below expected levels and must become a priority of all year levels’.

In spelling and grammar and punctuation there have been similar concerns and solutions. The committee is investigating an appropriate program to support spelling and, as with reading, will focus on a case management approach to early intervention for students in bands one and two. An emphasis will also be placed on band three and four students with the intention of having more representation in the higher bands.

In numeracy, the committee has progressed in a similar manner with in-class support for teachers, a focus on whole-school planning, and First Steps practices. The numeracy committee is currently developing a scope and sequence relevant to the Yanchep Beach Primary School context. The committee is also committed to the importance of explicit teaching, the review of grade allocations through moderation and facilitating targeted professional learning for staff.

The science program is highly regarded with teachers receiving support from a dedicated specialist. The emphasis on the gradual release model, as in other learning areas, has had a significant impact on the enhancement of teacher skills. As teachers have become more comfortable teaching science, the emphasis has shifted to an in-class focus, with Primary Connections the mainstay program and support remaining important. It became evident through discussions with teachers and the science coordinator that this
Yanchep Beach Primary

approach is working well. A whole-school assessment project engaging students in a common investigative task was commendable. This made it possible to track all students and assess how they were achieving against the descriptors in the Western Australian science curriculum.

The ICT at the school has evolved with the express intention of focusing on pedagogy. The leadership and staff hold to the belief that ‘ICT tools and strategies complement and enhance quality teaching strategies but do not act as a substitute’. This was confirmed in a reading of the detailed ICT operational plan and during classroom visits. The school has over 250 devices available for student use with a one-to-one program (Press Start), being implemented in Year 4. It is anticipated that this program will be extended into other year levels. The program, Google Classroom has added to the teacher repertoire and the opportunities for the students.

The staff are provided with structured professional learning, supplemented with before-school ‘techie brekkies’ which many attend. The school is in a sound position to support pedagogy across learning areas, build staff capacity and be involved in upcoming innovative approaches to ICT. It is an expectation that this process will have a positive impact on student learning.

In taking account of students at risk an associate principal has compiled a detailed database for students at educational risk which informs the leadership team and staff on every aspect of a child’s progress and achievement. An effective triage system for identifying students has also been developed. It is anticipated that these records will be invaluable in meeting the obligation to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to succeed. The reviewers noted a thorough approach to the development of individual education plans and group education plans and the sharing of information with parents.
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?

Within each of the three priorities in the business plan a number of goals and strategies relevant to the creation of a positive learning environment have been articulated placing a significant emphasis on the health and well-being of students. This was verified during classroom visits where the reviewers observed engaged students receiving positive encouragement and support from staff.

Critically important to this has been the implementation of the FiSH philosophy. This forms the basis of the values program and is founded on four principles:

- make their day—consider at all times how we can offer our help and kindness to others
- play—is a state of mind that brings new energy and sparks creative solutions
- choose your attitude—recognise how we can be in control of our actions
- be there—be thoroughly committed and engaged with everything you do.

It was clear to the reviewers that the philosophy has been embedded across the school, with students knowledgeable and enthused by the program and staff committed to its implementation. A very positive impact on the way the students interacted with each other and their dedication to the tasks at hand was evident. In a discussion with parents it was revealed that the philosophy was also important in many homes. Parents were genuinely appreciative of the fact that they had additional strategies to ensure their home environment remained positive and that there was a connection with the school.

To complement the principles embodied in the FiSH philosophy the school has embarked on the introduction of a Positive Behaviour Support framework with a focus on providing a safe and supportive learning environment. A dedicated committee has been engaged in introducing the all-encompassing framework to have a positive impact on behaviours and enable staff to monitor and respond to concerns.
For students who may have experienced loss in their life through death, divorce or stressful family situations there is an opportunity to gain support by taking part in the Rainbows program which has had a significant impact at the school. This is facilitated by the school psychologist and is well patronised.

The principal has been proactive in making available the resources for staff to access professional learning sessions focusing on classroom management strategies. Staff report this has had a positive impact on the classrooms. The reviewers found the classrooms very orderly with students committed to task during observation visits. Staff have also accessed professional learning focusing on cultural awareness.

Classroom visits verified the claim that in addition to facilitating a positive learning environment, the staff are successfully encouraging students to achieve high standards. Students have access to stimulating resources, classroom displays are purposeful and attractive and staff indicated they regularly include technology in their lesson delivery.

The school’s initiative in providing flexible learning spaces is commendable. Three nature play areas have been established which are used both as play areas and for positive learning experiences facilitated by classroom teachers. Flexible use of the school library was noted. Reviewers had an opportunity to observe a designated flexible classroom where use of innovative furniture pieces for students with particular needs was established and students also have access to the ‘virtual learning space’, Google Classroom.

The selection of specific strategies has been instrumental in facilitating a positive environment at the school. Whole-school approaches have provided continuity for the students. Cooperative learning is a key strategy, which has fostered engagement and the implementation of ‘flexible, adaptive and innovative approaches’. The approach has been particularly relevant to the learning opportunities provided for Aboriginal students.

Physical education, visual arts, music and play are highlighted in the business plan as important in the growth of the whole child. The reviewers agreed these programs had a positive impact on the learning environment. The students participate in a wide variety of physical education activities, clubs, incursions and excursions, a school camp and end-of-year water fun day. They also have an opportunity to exhibit their visual arts work, take part in competitions and have been involved in out-of-school musical events.
The distributive leadership model in place complements this approach. The administration is very committed to the positive direction the school is taking. Many of the staff have willingly accepted leadership roles on various committees which are seen by the school leadership and staff as critically important to the successful implementation of the school's priorities.

Students also have leadership opportunities with school prefects and faction captains being selected through a formal voting process administered by the WA Electoral Commission. A meeting with the students confirmed they had a genuine say in school activities, took their responsibilities seriously and were confident their roles were valued.

Comments made by the parents regarding communications were reassuring. The school, with endorsement from the Board, has developed a Communication Charter which has successfully ensured a variety of channels (e.g., Facebook, newsletters, school website, blogs, apps and class meetings) are available for two-way communication. The charter also takes account of the need for this communication to be realistic in terms of the impact it has on teacher time and availability.

An issue that has been identified by the leadership team and staff requiring continued communication with parents relates to concerns with student attendance. More recently, there has been a growing number of students with unexplained absences. Strategies are currently being implemented to address this concern.

Parents are encouraged to be an integral part of their children's learning journey. In discussions they confirmed that the three-way conferencing offered by the school during the reporting period was highly informative. It was noted that attendance at these sessions exceeds 90%. Parent workshops on a variety of topics have been offered and are also well attended.

Overall parent satisfaction with the school is rated highly with evidence derived from the annual survey and in discussions with a parent representative group during the review. The parents commented that staff are approachable, caring and hardworking, with the interests of the students given high priority. They were positive about the way the school is managed and appreciative of the efforts made to ensure they were kept informed. Through surveys and in discussions with the student leaders evidence of these satisfaction levels was confirmed. They found their teachers caring and supportive and believed that school was a safe place to be.
Yanchep Beach Primary

Community partnerships are being established, with the leadership team noting that those involved should have close links with the school. So far the school has formed links with Apple, the Dyslexia-Speld Foundation, Atlantis Day Care (which provides before-and after-school care) and various other external bodies that use Yanchep Beach Primary School on a fee-paying basis. As it becomes more established it is the intention of the school to forge greater strategic links with the community.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

The leadership team and staff have successfully begun the process of introducing, developing and implementing teaching strategies and philosophies that address the context of the school and the demands of the Western Australian Curriculum while beginning to implement a rigorous, evidence-based approach to ongoing improvement based on ‘*We assess—We plan—We act*’.

As a new school, Yanchep Beach Primary School is developing a systematic approach to data collection to critically analyse the learning of all students and identify areas of achievement and areas for improvement. As a result of these emerging self-review practices, areas for refinement and improvement in student learning performance, staff development, and organisation development have been identified.

The board has been intimately involved with the development of the school and its direction since the planning phase in 2013 prior to opening in 2014. Discussions with board members indicated that the board engages in the review process and demonstrated an understanding of the governance roles and responsibilities as described in the DPA. It is clear that the board, leadership and staff of the school are united, committed and explicit about the core goal of improving student learning and establishing an effective and excellent school.

The board and school leadership are developing long-term strategic resources planning and ensuring these align to the business plan, including replacement schedules and workforce plans. More refined and strategic planning is undertaken to ensure that human, physical and financial resources are available to sustain current programs and practices and support future initiatives.

A respectful and collaborative relationship exists between the leadership and staff of the school and the board. The board is highly motivated and enthusiastic about moving onto the next phase of development of the school and the need to increase board capacity and further develop its governance role.
Yanchep Beach Primary

The board is in a position to represent the views and aspirations of the school community and members accept the need to continue to develop the profile of the board in the wider community.

Meetings with staff, parents and board members verified the role of the leadership team in developing, managing and establishing a vibrant new school intent on continuous improvement. Though dealing with rapid growth, a collaborative, collegiate environment is being embedded, with opportunities for staff leadership and the building of staff capacity to implement whole-school processes and practices effectively for critical reflection and systematic curriculum delivery.

The reviewers are confident of the ability of the staff to continue to refine and maintain initial achievements and provide for future improvement as the school moves out of establishment phase. Through more specific and strategic target setting, a focus on the learning improvement of every child, workforce planning and resourcing the school is well placed to improve its performance into the next planning cycle.
Conclusion

The school leadership, board, staff and school community have set high standards and high expectations of teaching, learning, respectful relationships and productive, flexible learning environments during the establishment phase of the school. Despite challenges presented by rapid growth a strong culture of care, mutual respect and collaboration has been developed.

Strong leadership and capable staff, together with whole-school approaches to curriculum delivery, have begun to show improved student achievement and growth.

The staff endeavour to respond to the community, supported and encouraged by an increasingly active parent body, engaged board and collaborative and enthusiastic colleagues.

As the school moves forward, the board, school leadership and staff are united, enthusiastic and committed to establishing a very effective school. This reflects the school community's desire to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive teaching and learning environment for children and staff.
Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the usage of the FiSH philosophy to form the culture and connection of the school
- the enthusiastic, respectful, caring and dedicated staff
- the strong, committed leadership team
- the endeavours in creating and providing meaningful, flexible learning environments
- the establishment of an organisational structure that facilitates collaboration at phase-of-learning and whole-school levels
- the leadership opportunities for staff, provided through the distributed leadership model
- the emphasis and development of whole-school approaches in teaching and learning which focus on student improvement and achievement
- the targeted and strategic staff selection process.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement have been identified:

- include in the next business plan a manageable number of focused targets that are specific, measurable and meaningful to demonstrate improved learning for all students
- embed whole-school formative processes to interrogate, measure and monitor student achievement and progress and to gauge the implementation and success of improvement strategies
- implement strategies for staff to become more adept at interpreting data to inform their teaching
- continue to engage in whole-school explicit intervention strategies designed to raise the achievement level of all students
- develop and refine the board’s governance processes.
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 Yanchep 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.

16 December 2016
Ms Cris Sandri, Lead Reviewer

14 December 2016
Mr Tom Campbell, Reviewer

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services

Date

16/12/16