



Department of
Education

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Darling Range Sports College

Public School Review

September 2019

PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

Purpose

All Western Australian public schools are reviewed every three years by the Department of Education's Public School Accountability directorate. A review gives assurance to the local community, the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General that a school is operating effectively and delivering high quality education to its students. The review acknowledges the achievements of the school and gives feedback to support the principal and staff with their improvement planning.

The principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence gathered by the principal and staff. Information validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the school review report. The report is provided to the principal, the chair of the school board/council and the Regional Executive Director.

Expectations of schools

For all Western Australian public schools, expectations are set out in either: the Delivery and Performance Agreement, which is an agreement between the Department (represented by the Director General), school (represented by the principal) and school board (represented by the school board chair); or, the Principals' Statement of Expectations and the Funding Agreement for Schools.

School performance rating

This performance rating is based on information gained from the self-assessment submission and the validation process. It is focused on a review of the following areas of school performance: relationships and partnerships; learning environment; leadership; use of resources; teaching quality; and student achievement and progress.

The school's performance rating is:

	Effective
	The school demonstrates effective practice in creating the conditions required for student success.

	Needs Improvement
	The school has aspects of its practice below expectations and needs supported action to improve student success.

Context

Darling Range Sports College is located in the suburb of Forrestfield, approximately 25 kilometres south-east of the Perth central business district, within the South Metropolitan Education Region. Set in a semi-rural environment at the base of the foothills, the college first opened in 1975 as Forrestfield Senior High School. It transitioned to a sports college in 2008 and gained Independent Public School status in 2015.

Darling Range Sports College has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage rating of 963 (decile 7). It currently enrolls 966 students from Year 7 to Year 12.

The college delivers a range of approved specialist sporting programs, including athletics, basketball, netball, soccer and swimming, Australian Rules Football. An ACES¹ excellence program and a corresponding primary version (PACES²) provide challenging academic rigour for high achieving students at the college and for students from the Darling Range Learning Community Primary Schools.

The school is supported by an active School Board and the Parents and Citizens' Association provide a canteen service to the school community.

Facilities include a specialist sports stadium and a heated indoor swimming pool. Funding was recently provided to upgrade the school's design and technology centre, science laboratories and food technology classrooms. In 2019, the college was successful in its nomination as a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) partnership school. A STEM facility is included in the planned upgrade.

School self-assessment validation

The principal submitted a comprehensive school self-assessment.

The following aspects are confirmed:

- A willingness to seek and respond to feedback is a feature of the school's practice and provides collective insights that inform follow up planning.
- There was alignment between evidence, and observations and judgements about performance.
- Planning intentions described in the school's submission were enhanced during the validation phase.
- The staff and community engaged positively in the school review.
- During the validation visit, the leaders acknowledged the value of using the Electronic School Assessment Tool as a repository of information from which the senior leadership could reflect upon progress made against identified targets.

The following recommendations are made:

- Assume that the reviewers appreciate the interdependent nature of the domains and that cross-pollination of evidence is likely. Avoid uploading documents multiple times.
- Align evidence directly to observations, impact and planned actions. Where possible, annotate evidence to draw the reviewer's attention to relevant aspects that align to planned actions.
- Identify planned actions that are directly aligned to the point in time review, stating future intentions based on the evidence provided.

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Relationships and partnerships	
<p>The principal leads an emphasis on active engagement in building strong and sustainable relationships. A sense of positivity and pride in the college is emerging from this and parents consider themselves as valued partners in their children's education.</p>	
Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broad range of effective communication options, including the use of Connect, are well established and embraced by key stakeholders. • The School Board advocates for the school and is proactive in establishing partnerships, including one with the Australian Business and Community Network, to the ultimate benefit of students. • The college is forging quality connections with local primary schools, strategically targeting Year 4 students for their PACES¹ program in 2019. • A prioritised focus on staff wellbeing is acknowledged and staff morale is high.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and/or further develop partnerships, such as the Aspire UWA and Curtin Ahead initiatives, to enhance the college's academic profile. • Continue to develop a marketing strategy, using social media to showcase the college to best effect.

Learning environment	
<p>Whole-school approaches, with clearly articulated expectations of what effective teachers do, results in a safe, orderly and inclusive learning environment. The 5 P's of the college PBS² matrix – proud, polite, prepared, punctual, productive – set the standard expected of all.</p>	
Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Darling Range Way' seeks to engage all students actively and incorporates Classroom Management Strategies (CMS). On-going professional learning, conferencing and shared best-practice maintains a CMS focus throughout the college. • Improved transition planning for identified at risk students in Year 6 has resulted in improved attendance and behaviour in Year 7. • Restorative Practices are embedded in the school's PBS approach to positive effect. A reduced suspension rate is noted. • Robust case management practices are individualised to secure the best fit for each student. The regional participation initiative is proving particularly successful.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to embed the use of Restorative Practices throughout the college. • Continue to design lessons for all staff to overtly teach the PBS goals. • Build upon the existing strategies that engage students identified at risk.

Leadership

Staff state that they are reinvigorated by the executive team's promotion of a shared vision that is improvement focused. Ideas are welcomed and options explored as the college builds upon quality practices with increased confidence, rigour and structure.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of evidence-based surveys are conducted regularly. Data review and corresponding interventions confirm a culture of reflective practice. • A distributed leadership model exists. Opportunities to share best practice are provided and staff are actively encouraged to pursue Level 3 classroom teacher and senior teacher status. • Staff induction processes are comprehensive. One-to-one CMS conferencing occurs and on-going support is provided by assigned leaders. • NAIDOC³ celebrations and the 2019 Reconciliation Walk support the college's goal to garner trust and build quality relationships with the Aboriginal community.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align survey data analyses to targeted interventions that occur. • Implement the planned, Just Entered Teaching (JET) strategy, appointing a JET coordinator, to foster smooth transition for all staff new to the college. • Continue to build cultural responsiveness by embedding the <i>Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework</i> in curriculum across the college.

Use of resources

There is clear evidence of strategic deployment of resources – human, physical and financial. An informed budget is aligned to the key priorities of the business plan and targeted to meet identified needs of students.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The manager corporate services is a valued member of the executive team who attends Student Council meetings to educate and negotiate with respect to the business needs of the school. • The Finance Committee has representatives from every learning area and budget submission processes are understood and adhered to. • A detailed workforce plan exists. Forward planning in light of impending growth in student population has resulted in the appointment of an additional member of the executive. • Resource allocation decisions are evidence-based. Funded intervention programs, such as Macqlit and The Sound Way, prioritise student needs as the primary focus. • The Building and Grounds Committee are activating a strategic plan that is improving the conditions for student learning.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an understanding of how business plan targets are supported by financial, human and physical resources.

Teaching quality

School-wide beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching, as articulated through the 'Darling Range Way', are understood and accepted. Explicit instruction, using the gradual release model, is supported by a strong culture of CMS to allow a focus on quality pedagogy.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are conversant with the priorities and targets of the business plan. There is clear alignment between whole-school planning and practices in the classroom to achieve set goals. • A detailed teaching and learning handbook articulates a lesson design and common language that teachers and education assistants apply. • The Explicit Instruction Committee seeks to further embed this practice across the college. • The data literacy of staff is strong and differentiation occurs, applying a 30/40/30 rule, which is monitored closely. • A strong culture of peer observation and feedback exists. Staff use a Swivl to record and share practice for reflective purposes.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop competency with explicit instruction, gaining consistency of practice through the establishment of a sustainable model. • Further embed information communication technology in the curriculum. • Continue the moderation processes with like schools, established this year.

Student achievement and progress

A comprehensive data matrix is used to track student achievement and progress. Managed by the learning support coordinator, the matrix is reviewed by every teacher to inform differentiation strategies that provide opportunities for all students to succeed.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAPLAN⁴ achievement is consistently sound. Considerable progress is evident in numeracy from Year 7 to Year 9, with higher progress and achievement in both numeracy and writing when compared to like schools. • The VET⁵ participation rate is above 80 per cent and the college provides opportunity for students to engage in a wide range of certificate courses relevant to their chosen pathways. Many certificates result in 100 per cent achievement. • The median ATAR⁶ for 2018, whilst lower than like schools, increased from 2017. • A robust internal self-assessment process is undertaken by teachers. Interventions are aligned to targets identified in the business plan. • The Literacy Committee leads a focus on reading with English teachers engaging in a buddy system with learning area representatives from across the college.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a whole-school numeracy initiative.

Reviewers

Kath Ward
Director, Public School Review

Melissa Gillett
Principal, John Forrest Secondary College
Peer Reviewer

Endorsement

Based on this report, I endorse your school performance rating of 'Effective'.

Your next school review is scheduled for 2022.



Stephen Baxter
Deputy Director General, Schools

References

- 1 Primary Academic Challenge and Enrichment Studies
- 2 Positive Behaviour Support
- 3 National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
- 4 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
- 5 Vocational Education and Training
- 6 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank