



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education

Kensington Primary School

2017

Review Findings



Independent Public School Review

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Bronwyn Jones
Board Chair:	Ms Belinda Moharich
School Address:	73 Banksia Terrace, Kensington WA 6151
Number of Students:	470
ICSEA¹	1125
Reviewers:	Ms Janine Milton (Lead) Mr John Latham
Review Dates:	14 and 15 August 2017

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review is to provide assurance to the principal and school community, the board and the Director General of the Department of Education of the extent to which the school staff and board have met the commitments of the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA). The review verifies the degree to which there are effective processes in place bringing about improved student learning.

¹ The Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale of socio-educational advantage that is computed for each school. It allows for comparisons to be made between schools that are matched according to their socio-educational advantage, allowing fair comparisons of NAPLAN results between schools with students who have a similar ICSEA. The median ICSEA value is 1000.
http://www.acara.edu.au/resources/Fact_Sheet_-_About_ICSEA.pdf

Review Methodology

Underpinning the review methodology is the understanding that the principal is required to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the DPA are met; school performance and student improvement targets and priorities, as detailed in the school's business plan, are assessed, reviewed annually and an annual report made publicly available. The review seeks to determine the extent to which these commitments have been met.

The principal provided the school self-review conclusions to the reviewers one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The reviewers supplemented the information provided by the principal 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's School Performance Monitoring
- Schools Online reports.

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school self-review documentation to verify achievement of the DPA and business plan commitments, and developed lines of inquiry where further in-school verification was required.

An agenda for the site visit was negotiated with the principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made in the school self-review statements. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students where required. Where the school belongs to an Independent Public School (IPS) cluster of schools the review considers whether the purpose of the cluster has been met and the benefits to the school.

The evidence provided by the principal, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visit, was used as the basis for judgements made in verifying how well the school staff and board have met the commitments of the DPA and business plan.

Business Plan

How effective was the business plan in responding to the school's context and improving student learning (progress, achievement and engagement)?

Kensington Primary School is a Level 5 primary school located in the suburb of Kensington, four kilometres from the Perth central business district. The school was established in 1926 and currently has an enrolment of 470 students from Kindergarten to Year 6, of whom 5% are indigenous and 18% have a language background other than English. The school has an ICSEA of 1125 and provides for 234 male and 236 female students. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority socio-educational advantage quartiles table for 2016 places 84% of students in the top two quartiles. Since becoming an IPS in 2015, there have been a number of leadership changes resulting in the appointment of a new principal in 2016.

Findings

- The 2015–17 Business Plan identifies the three strategic priorities of “successful students”, “excellence in teaching and learning” and “engagement of parents and community partnerships”. To establish the academic strategic direction of the school, the board and staff have focused on the provision of engaging and differentiated learning opportunities based on the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline and Early Years Learning Framework.
- A section of the business plan has been dedicated to the description of a curriculum vision which is founded on the development of students’ skills, understandings and attitudes, aligned to their individual needs. The overarching school vision aims to develop the potential of individuals to make a positive contribution to the development of society.
- The Department’s four core values of “learning”, “excellence”, “equity” and “care” provide a framework for the pursuit of all educational endeavours.
- In Semester 2 of 2016, an extensive review of the business plan by the leadership team, curriculum leaders, staff and the board identified that school improvement processes were being hampered by an unwieldy number of targets. This process also concluded that many targets were articulated as strategies, making measurement of achievement difficult. This resulted in the board endorsing a revised set of 13 improvement targets that still align to the intent of the original targets and are more measurable and results-focused.

- A broad range of strategies have been developed by the staff to address the three strategic priorities and each are linked to the revised improvement targets.
- Discussions with various groups of staff during the review visit revealed an inconsistent ownership and understanding of the business plan and interaction with its contents, hampering whole-school alignment of school improvement intentions.

Area for improvement

- Engage in regular collaborative reflection and review of the next business plan to ensure that curriculum implementation and improvement strategies remain aligned and focused on the intent of the document, and that staff understand and have ownership of the plan.

Teaching and Learning

How has the quality of teaching improved and sustained student learning (progress, achievement and engagement)?

Findings

- Over the past two years, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments show that relative student achievement and student progress remain slightly below like-school means, with student progress stronger than achievement when compared with like-schools. In 2016, all average test results in literacy and numeracy in Year 3 and Year 5 were below the average achieved by like-schools, with writing in Year 3 and Year 5 and grammar and punctuation in Year 3 being more than one standard deviation below the mean.
- The initial business plan developed in 2015 included 40 targets, nine of which related to improving student performance. The refining of these targets in 2016 resulted in the retention of six targets related to student learning.
- The 2015–17 Business Plan set a target for progress of the stable student cohort between Year 3 and Year 5 to be at least equivalent to that of like-schools in all NAPLAN assessments. This has been achieved in reading, spelling and punctuation and grammar. Writing was significantly below and numeracy just below like-school averages.
- Another student learning target focused on improving student perseverance from 66% of students showing consistent perseverance in 2014 to at least 75% consistency, as measured by teacher ratings in semester reports for students in Years 1–6. Although progress was made in 2016 from 57% in Semester 1 to 67% in Semester 2, this target has not yet been achieved.
- The stated outcome of the “successful students” section of the business plan is “to continually improve academic performance outcomes for all students in literacy and numeracy”. However, the selected targets focus only on the progress of the stable cohort, while there is an identified need to lift the academic achievement of students in comparison to students in like-schools. To embed a culture of high expectations, the inclusion of targets for achievement as well as progress is encouraged.
- Student learning in the early years has been assessed and analysed using On-entry literacy and numeracy testing with the expectation that students will reach the 0.5 progression point by the end of Kindergarten and 1.0 by the end of

Pre-primary. School data in 2016 shows that by the end of Pre-primary, 96% of students were meeting expectations in numeracy but rates of literacy achievement were below expectation, especially in writing. Early childhood teachers and school leaders have interrogated this data with a resultant focus in 2017 of more explicit and directed teaching. Assessments in 2017 demonstrate retention of numeracy achievement and improved performance in literacy. It is recommended that this work is continued and strengthened to embed explicit teaching practices, and that early childhood performance targets are included in the next business plan.

- The National Quality Standard has provided an excellent framework for review and development in early childhood education. Teachers are actively reviewing their practice in the seven quality areas with an internal audit showing the school is meeting five of the quality areas and working towards the other two (relationships with children, and leadership and service management). A verification review is planned for later in the year.
- Through effective student performance monitoring, students at educational risk (SAER) and those requiring extension are identified and tracked. Documented plans are developed and monitored by teachers, with appropriate parental input and administrative oversight. The development of a SAER policy has provided more certainty of the ongoing sustainability of services.
- The development of teacher learning communities (TLCs) and phase of development teams (PODs) in 2016 and the alignment of these to formative assessment and contemporary curriculum has resulted in a significant cultural shift in the school. Sustainability is enhanced through increased staff capacity in data analysis and devising evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning.
- The TLCs are vertical structures of staff from all areas of the school who meet twice a term to discuss pedagogy and whole-school formative assessment. Three teacher leaders are provided resources to help them to lead their TLCs. The TLCs follow an action learning cycle including new learning, personal action planning, reflection and review. Staff interviewed endorsed the usefulness and effectiveness of the TLCs.
- The PODs are horizontal structures based on small groups of teachers meeting each fortnight in the same year level/phase of learning. These are also based on formative assessment specific to their year levels, curriculum planning and moderation. Interviews with POD members confirm that teachers see these meetings as extremely useful although it was clear that a large amount of time continues to be used for more operational matters.

- Annual operational plans are devised in assessment and reporting; engagement and retention; literacy; numeracy; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework. These plans contain links to the business plan and highlight key strategies, resources, responsibilities and monitoring required. Some of the 2015 business plan targets appear in these plans, demonstrating their continued importance in monitoring progress.
- Performance management of staff has been ongoing for many years based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. In 2016, this process was made more streamlined and includes self-reflection assisted by school leader classroom observations, peer observations and data reviews, improvement planning and reflection.

Area of strength

- The development of purposeful professional learning and collaborative structures to enable staff to develop capacity in formative assessment and evidence-based curriculum planning.

Areas for improvement

- Include targets for student academic achievement in the next business plan.
- Strengthen and embed explicit teaching practices in the early childhood years and include early childhood performance targets in the next business plan.

Student Performance Monitoring

How well established are the school's self-assessment practices in accounting for school improvement?

Findings

- The whole-school assessment and reporting operational plan and schedule outline the process for gathering and analysing systemic and school-based student performance information throughout the year. In Term 1, teaching staff participate in a comprehensive analysis of On-entry and NAPLAN data. This process, which is integral to school review and planning, incorporates staff involvement in the interpretation of data that specifically relates to business plan targets as well as a range of other student performance diagnostic information.
- Student progress is also monitored through the administering of a number of other instruments including Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) for mathematics and reading, the Cars and Stars reading program, South Australian spelling tests and the implementation and moderation of common assessment tasks in a range of learning areas. This process would be enhanced by the inclusion of documented conclusions and proposed future directions established in response to data analysis.
- To increase teachers' understanding and use of formative assessment, the principal has introduced an approach called 'Inside the Black Box'. In TLC meetings staff examine, discuss and trial a range of techniques and strategies inherent in the program. Although still in its relative infancy, it was evident through discussions with staff that they have enthusiastically embraced the concept of formative assessment. The real efficacy of this approach has been the increased capacity of teachers to make ongoing adjustments to their teaching and learning programs with the ultimate aim of optimising learning opportunities for students.
- In response to weaker than expected NAPLAN performance in writing, the principal has introduced the Brightpath assessment program which has been adopted across all year levels. The program, which has a strong research base from the University of Western Australia, enables teachers to gather valuable information regarding students' learning. Discussions with a diverse range of teaching staff revealed widespread support for the program and the increasingly positive impact it was having on their capacity to plan targeted and meaningful teaching approaches.

- Satisfaction survey results for teachers, parents and students are reported with detailed analysis and comment. In general, discussions with parents and students indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school staff, programs, communication and day-to-day operational procedures.
- Discussions with students showed that the communication of learning intentions and success criteria by teachers, coupled with the ongoing provision of feedback about their performance, are valued by students and have a positive impact on their learning.
- To further the school improvement agenda, the staff have partnered with Curtin University to gather and analyse data through a series of surveys and questionnaires designed to elicit feedback from students and teachers relating to their perceptions of the learning environment, classroom climate and school organisational climate. These instruments help to identify areas to be addressed and enable the development of targeted improvement emphases. This process has just commenced and staff reveal an appetite to use the information gleaned from the instruments as part of the school improvement process.
- The school annual reports provide a detailed synopsis of the achievement of business plan targets. However, the inclusion of information regarding student achievement is required to provide a more holistic and comprehensive view of student performance.
- Increasing levels of staff commitment to a more formative, educative and purposeful approach to student assessment, coupled with opportunities for distributed leadership, give confidence that processes to monitor student performance will continue to improve.

Areas of strength

- The recent focus on increasing teachers' knowledge and use of formative assessment to enable a more purposeful and targeted approach to curriculum planning and delivery.
- The use of a range of survey tools to elicit feedback from students and teachers relating to their perceptions of the learning environment, classroom climate and school organisational climate.

Areas for improvement

- Include a more comprehensive analysis of student performance information in the annual report.
- Record conclusions and proposed future directions in response to data analysis of all targeted areas of school improvement.

Program Delivery

How well has the school performed in providing education programs that promote learning and wellbeing for all students?

Findings

- The staff and leadership team have established several programs and strategies designed to enhance student learning, engagement and wellbeing in accordance with their vision and values. Curriculum programs and initiatives continue to be developed in accordance with the requirements and schedule of the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline.
- Staff describe an eclectic mix of teaching and learning approaches in numeracy within the structure of a common numeracy block from Kindergarten to Year 6. A scope and sequence document has been developed in mental mathematics to enable teachers to deliver learning opportunities commensurate with students' year levels. The Natural Maths program supports the teaching of mental mathematics and has enjoyed a considerable uptake by teachers. However, many teachers report that while the generation of a common language and common understandings guides the content of many teacher discussions, the development of other areas of the mathematics curriculum is not yet supported by a whole-school approach. The use of support materials such as the Geraldton Numeracy Strategy and a common text book demonstrates variable levels of implementation by teachers.
- In 2016, a synthetic phonics program called Decode/Encode was introduced in response to an identified weakness in spelling. This program is used for all students in Years K–2 and as required in Years 3–6. A committee of five staff members is involved in the review and refinement of this initiative using strategies such as staff professional learning, discussion at TLCs and PODs, purchase of resources, modelling by lighthouse teachers and shoulder to shoulder support for classroom teachers. Literacy blocks now have a consistent language of Decode/Encode embedded into them and all teachers seem committed to this whole-school approach.
- There is a variety of strategies used for other aspects of literacy rather than an adherence to identified whole-school approaches. Strategies such as First Steps, Talk for Writing and Seven Steps for Writing show the various approaches adopted to teach writing. The reviewers affirm the intention of the leadership team to develop a whole-school approach to writing after analysing data gathered by teachers on the efficacy of a range of approaches implemented across the school. While this is an evidence-based approach, it is important to

review research to make the most informed decision. Guided reading is taught and assessed by the majority of teachers through the Cars and Stars reading program; however, discussions with staff reveal that a common model for the actual implementation of the strategy has not yet been developed or investigated.

- A mathematics enrichment program with the selection of students guided by data from the PAT mathematics instrument has been established to promote students' passion and interest in mathematics rather than an extension of knowledge and skills. The program is primarily topic-based and does not involve assessment. While there is no quantitative process to measure program effectiveness, the reviewers can confirm the high regard held for the program by students and parents.
- A team consisting of a learning support coordinator, school psychologist and chaplain has been established to address the learning, engagement and wellbeing needs of students. The deputy principal has taken on the role of learning support coordinator and provides leadership to teachers in the development of approaches to differentiate the curriculum for students with specific learning needs. Students identified as requiring learning adjustments are assisted to access the curriculum through individual and group education plans using system-level and school-based diagnostic data to inform the development of individualised learning goals and strategies. The progress of students is tracked and monitored using profile sheets which contain specific formative and summative performance information as well as details regarding intervention. Additional support and relevant professional learning for teachers is provided by the school psychologist and learning support coordinator. Reviewers affirm the strong pastoral care provided to all students.
- A valuable role is played by education assistants who support teachers to deliver the Macquarie University's MiniLit and MultiLit programs to small groups of students with identified literacy difficulties in the early years. It would be useful to quantify the effectiveness of these programs.
- Addressing the need for safety and welfare of students is prominent within the learning environment. Satisfaction survey data, coupled with discussions with a variety of school community stakeholders, reveal a school that is safe, welcoming and inclusive. The school chaplain supports the pastoral care process by working directly with students and families. The implementation of the Build Up Zone (BUZ) program is assisting identified groups of students to become socially well-adjusted and mentally resilient. Selected Year 6 students have been trained as BUZ rangers and provide additional ongoing social and emotional support to other students in the playground.

- The specialist programs provided in Japanese, physical education and the performing arts (music) are comprehensive and highly valued by students, staff and parents. The extensive range of in and out of school hours activities including managing two large choirs, coordinating School of Instrumental Music lessons, arranging before and after school training and coordinating teams for interschool competitions, provides a wide range of opportunities for students and raises the profile of the school.
- Sustainability of program delivery will be enhanced through ongoing staff commitment to the establishment of whole-school approaches across all areas of the curriculum and phases of development.

Areas of strength

- The introduction of a whole-school synthetic phonics program and a writing assessment has enabled greater consistency of understanding and language across year levels and deeper understanding of literacy learning.
- The provision of expansive programs in music and physical education enrich the lives of students and raise the profile of the school.

Area for improvement

- Develop whole-school pedagogical approaches informed by the analysis of systemic and school-based data sources and contemporary research.

Resourcing and Support

How well has the school established systems to monitor and review the allocation of resources to meet strategic and operational priorities?

Findings

- Financial and human resources are well managed in the school. The board receives a copy of the budget at the beginning of the year with regular updates from both the principal and manager corporate services. The board is also provided with a copy and explanation of the student-centred funding model.
- A school finance committee, with school administrators and teacher representation, meets each term to monitor and review the allocation of resources. This committee provides oversight of operational procedures, budget requests and expenditure. Staff indicate that being an IPS has made them more aware of the importance of having accurate data to underpin projections and maintaining vigilance so they are flexible to respond quickly to unexpected events.
- There is a documented cycle of self-assessment connected to targeted planning at the strategic and operational levels with articulated reference to resource provision. This has enabled an orderly environment to be established and maintained.
- Teachers and program coordinators interviewed all stated that they had enough resources to sustain current and intended program delivery. Procedures for gaining access to resources through the library enable teachers to find and use resources in an effective and efficient manner. Staff commented that resources provided for professional learning and development are adequate and they have been distributed in a manner that progresses the intentions of the business plan and addresses the identified needs of students.
- The workforce plan was developed in 2015 with reference to future needs until 2017. This plan identifies short, medium and long-term gaps and some workforce issues to be addressed. Due to the high leadership turnover, not all issues have been resolved although it should be noted that there are none that require immediate action. The principal intends to develop a new workforce plan in 2017 for 2018 and beyond to best address the directions and strategies identified in the next business plan.

Area of strength

- Sound financial and resource management ensures staff have access to adequate resources to sustain quality educational provision.

Area for improvement

- Develop an effective workforce plan that enables the school to achieve the objectives of the next business plan.

School Board

How effective has the board been in carrying out its functions, roles and responsibilities?

Findings

- The board currently has a total of 15 members comprising seven elected parents, one parent nominated by the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), two community representatives (one yet to be appointed) and five staff including the principal. This membership is representative of the school community and complies with the *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Regulations 2000*.
- Many of the board members are new to the board this year. The board chair, who has been on the board since 2012 and chair for a number of years, has been very proactive to ensure new members receive induction and all members have ongoing access to training. The board members have a growing understanding of their role as a result.
- In 2016, the board revised its constitution, terms of reference and code of conduct resulting in greater clarity of its role and purpose. Meeting procedures and protocols have been tightened, including provision of an annual meeting overview. This has greatly improved efficiency and led to greater member satisfaction.
- The board fulfils its functions as prescribed in the *School Education Act 1999*, *School Education Regulations 2000* and Department policy by participating in:
 - the endorsement of the DPA and participation in review of this agreement
 - the development and endorsement of the school's annual report, including brief commentary on the board's actions and school highlights
 - the development, endorsement and regular review of the school budget and business plan
 - processes to review school performance, including regular presentations and discussions regarding student performance in NAPLAN and other in-school assessments
 - processes to determine satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students, with results reported in the school's annual report
 - participation in the selection of the new principal.

- The role of the board is clearly communicated to parents and the community through a detailed overview on their website with a list and photographs of board members, copies of board meeting minutes and a succinct document developed by the chair outlining 'what they do', 'who they are' and 'how people can get involved'. The date of the open public meeting is also advertised.
- The board members have reflected upon the performance of the board and their own knowledge, understanding and contribution. At the end of each meeting, they reflect and minute their reflections about the effectiveness of each meeting and note how it might be improved. This demonstrates that the board is performing in a purposeful and diligent manner.
- The board members have a growing understanding of school self-review processes and their critical reflection role in this process. They take an active interest in the school and are keen to develop sufficient skills and understanding to play an effective strategic governance role. In 2016, skills of particular board members were used to revise the initial business plan and this has resulted in a more targeted and measurable plan.
- It was noted in the board survey that some student and school performance data is difficult to understand. Staff analysis of the data with documented findings about what has worked well and what has not, conclusions and recommended future directions may help board members to clearly understand the analysis and lead to more constructive debate and strategic oversight.
- During a time of instability of school leadership, the board chair demonstrated strong community leadership by interviewing staff regarding the qualities of the leader they would like before participating in the selection process for the new principal. An effective collaborative partnership between the board, P&C and school leadership has been developed which will help to sustain strong governance into the future.
- The school board is well led by both the chair and the principal to meet the commitments of the DPA and represent the school community with vitality and commitment.

Areas of strength

- The leadership commitment shown by the board chair to develop and maintain the strong governance capacity of the board.
- Strong governance meeting procedures and protocols have been collaboratively developed and are being maintained and strengthened over time.

Area for improvement

- Provide the board with findings, conclusions and recommended future actions to accompany data analysis related to improvement targets.

Conclusion

The leadership and staff of Kensington Primary School demonstrate strong commitment to the school and a willingness to review their performance and develop responsive plans to improve. The school board is growing in its capacity to provide effective strategic governance and demonstrates a willingness to work in partnership with the school staff to achieve improved outcomes.

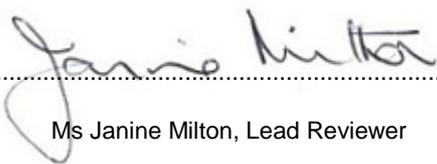
Processes to more effectively use formative assessment to guide reflective teaching and the development of appropriate evidence-based whole-school approaches have commenced. Strengthening and embedding these approaches through established collaborative processes will support a collective endeavour to establish a culture of high expectations across the school.

The school has a positive learning environment that is safe and inclusive. It is highly valued and supported by students, parents and community members and well positioned to achieve its vision of developing the potential of individuals to make a positive contribution to the development of society.

Declaration

We confirm the information in this document is, to the best of our knowledge and based on the verification of the evidence provided by Kensington Primary School, true and correct.

The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



Ms Janine Milton, Lead Reviewer

9 October 2017

Date



Mr John Latham, Reviewer

9 October 2017

Date



Mr Ken Perris, Director
Independent Public School Review

13 October 2017

Date