Caladenia Primary School

2014

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 Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Edward Nastasi
Board Chair: Mr Steven Donald
School Location: 89 Fraser Road North Canning Vale WA 6155
School Classification: PS Class 5
Number of Students: 763
Reviewers: Mr Mike Duncan (Lead) and Mr Graham Rixon
Review Dates: 11, 20 and 21 August 2014

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General 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. Additionally, the findings inform school improvement.

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 wellbeing
- 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 which was presented to the reviewers at the commencement of the review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review conclusions, reviewers were provided 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.

Department of Education Services reviewers met with the Principal, the Board Chair, deputy principals and the business manager on day one to determine the school's conclusions from its self-review. Subsequently, reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of inquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for days two and three was then negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During these two days the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with 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?

Caladenia Primary School opened in 2007 and has a current K–7 enrolment of 763 students. The school was successful in gaining Independent Public School status in 2012. Caladenia is located in the south metropolitan region, approximately 14 kilometres from Perth.

The school has developed strong partnerships and links within its local community. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is 1084. The school is culturally diverse with over 50% of its students coming from a language background other than English with many coming from Asian and African countries. There are six Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students. The school draws student enrolments from the surrounding suburbs. Students have access to the school’s specialist programs in physical education, music, visual arts, languages (Japanese) and Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) programs. The school offers two academic extension classes: a Multi-Age Academic Class (MAC) for Years 4, 5 and 6 and a Primary Academic Class (PAC) for Year 7, which are very successful in establishing partnerships in the local and wider community. Staff report these programs are widely acknowledged as contributing greatly to the outstanding results being achieved by the students. The school is highly regarded by the local community and, as a consequence, enrolments are trending upwards. This will be affected by the movement of the Year 7 students to high school in 2015, though the staff have developed appropriate strategies to assist with the transition.

The school provides a wide range of sporting, social and cultural opportunities for its students. These extended learning opportunities include the partnership with 22 local schools to support the Academic Extension Programs that form an integral part of the curriculum offerings of the school. The school also has an extensive School of Instrumental Music (SIM) program combined with an after-school music tuition program. The school has commenced participation in a variety of music and choral performances and State-wide visual arts competitions and displays. There are also strong literacy and numeracy support programs. These programs are supported by a strong pastoral care tradition and a highly competent and effective administration team.
The school staffing profile indicated a stable staff with a good mix of experience. Staff turnover is quite low. A number of staff have been at the school since its inception. The ability, as an Independent Public School, to select its own staff will allow the school to further determine the staffing profile to suit the needs of the students and the school. Some of the staff have served in a number of roles, thus providing them with a common understanding of the organisational structure of the school and well established community relationships. The staff is committed to providing an education that recognises and values diversity and to offering all students opportunities to succeed.

The school's physical environment (grounds and surrounds) is most attractive and welcoming. The school staff and board members are committed to enhancing the facilities available to the students with planned extensions, renovations and alterations a feature of their forward planning. The school's buildings and gardens provide a setting that contributes greatly to the establishment of a first-class learning environment.
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 Principal, deputy principals, Business Manager and Board Chair addressed the review process at a presentation supported by assessment, monitoring and review documents. They also discussed the school’s planning and reporting cycle and the context of the school. They spoke about the transition towards becoming an Independent Public School and the development of the DPA and the Business Plan 2012–2014. Student learning is guided by the setting of multiple targets that are developed by all relevant staff. Judgements regarding achievement of those targets are made by staff, the leadership team and the School Board. The school’s self-assessment and self-review processes and documentation are of high quality and demonstrate a commitment to rigour and continual improvement.

The Principal presented the school’s Annual Report 2013, in addition to the 2012 report, which is available online. This was augmented by various tables and surveys that had been developed and conducted to gather evidence and validation regarding the school’s efforts and achievements. The Principal provided an overview of how the alignment of performance data and action plans occurs for the whole school, classes, cohorts and individual students. There was clear evidence of a whole-of-school approach to data collection and analysis. This was linked to the school’s annual review cycle that demonstrated an action learning approach. It was evident from the presentation, and confirmed by discussions with staff, that a culture of continuous improvement is strongly embedded within the school.

The staff is commended for the self-assessment and review methodology. The self-assessment is a summary of the overall progress achieved by the school in addressing the Business Plan and its associated targets and is primarily informed by its annual school reports, evidence from external sources such as National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE), parent reports, online entry data and surveys. This self-assessment demonstrates a commitment by the staff to review performance with like and local schools, State and national standards. The documentation and analysis demonstrate great rigour and professionalism.
The reviewers noted the very high achievement by the majority of the students. The school has a highly sophisticated approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
School Performance—Student Learning

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

The Business Plan 2012–2014 clearly identifies the school’s targets for student achievement and describes the major strategies and milestones to be followed to achieve those targets. The school leadership team and staff determined the targets and communicated them to the school community through the Business Plan. They are aspirational targets and well suited to the context of the school. There is clear evidence of thorough interrogation of the data and appropriate planning undertaken to develop strategies to support staff to address the targets. There was evidence the staff was addressing the needs of various groups within the school population. There was also significant evidence of moderation both within the school and with like-schools.

The staff is using appropriate systemic assessments to make informed judgements about student performance in each of the learning areas. The majority of students are achieving sound to high-level results. Evidence gathered from population testing, such as NAPLAN, is corroborated by teacher assessment. Staff use a combination of assessment tools to make judgements and plan for improvement. School-level information about student performance is collected regularly and comparisons are made with like-schools, State and Australian schools. Standardised testing measures are routinely used in the school to reflect on performance. A longitudinal summary of student performance shows Year 3, 5 and 7 results are at above or as expected level of achievement for like-schools in all domains. Progress and achievement quadrants for 2011–2013 are typically in the top right quadrant (higher achievement/higher progress) and as such are demonstrating outstanding results. The school’s WAMSE relative assessment data indicates Years 5 and 7 performed at expected or above expected levels. The school’s overall performance has been above expected and is a credit to the staff.

The staff is aware of the need to maintain high standards in literacy and numeracy. They have set aspirational targets for student academic learning and, after review, have determined to continue with this approach. It is evident the staff is committed to the continual improvement of students’ academic achievements and the quality of the learning environment.
The staff adjusts strategies in response to any emerging problems or changes. A number of strategies have been introduced, including explicit teaching, focusing on teachers' pedagogy to maintain or improve student achievement. The strategies include the establishment of the students-at-risk team to support a focus on individual education plans (IEPs) for those students identified as being in need of further support. On-entry data is used to identify a basis for planning literacy, numeracy and social development strategies.

Teachers work in collaborative learning teams to develop strategies to implement and assess the Australian Curriculum. Professional learning has been built around the phase-one learning areas of the curriculum.

The school has strong pastoral care structures to support student attendance with the attendance of the majority of the students excellent. The school has policies in place that reflect the importance the community places on student attendance.

The establishment of partnerships with Murdoch University, Canning Vale College, Leeming Senior High School, Wattle Grove Primary School and others is of great significance to the professional development of the staff at the school. These key strategies, it is anticipated, will greatly enhance the curriculum knowledge and understanding of the staff and henceforth support the academic improvement of the students at Caladenia Primary School. The staff is commended for involvement in these innovative and rigorous initiatives designed to improve capacity to address the needs of students.

The school staff is also commended for the efforts made to improve and maintain student learning for all by the provision of a multitude of curriculum offerings. Programs have been selected to address the specific needs of all students. The introduction and expansion of the arts programs is notable for the contributions to the fabric of the school and community. The school has a significant population of students with English as additional language or dialect (EAL/D). Teaching and learning strategies have been formulated to address their needs. The academic extension programs (PAC and MAC) are outstanding and achieving excellent outcomes across the breadth of the curriculum. The diversity and appropriateness of the courses is acknowledged. The staff has implemented a curriculum that challenges, engages and improves learning for all students.
School Performance—Quality of the Learning Environment

*How well has the school performed in creating an environment that promotes learning and wellbeing for all students and the attainment of the school vision?*

The Caladenia Primary School 2012–2014 Business Plan aims, through the achievement of the school vision, to provide all students and adults with ongoing quality opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to achieve their potential. The Business Plan lists the objectives, values and the key focus areas of: Excellence in Teaching; Achieving Academic Excellence; Achieving Non-Academic Excellence; School Environment. The school motto: ‘be the best that you can be’ represents the emphasis placed on setting high standards in all school activities and on the partnership with the community.

Classroom visits confirm rooms are well resourced and provide students with a positive learning environment. Students displayed a respectful attitude to each other, their teacher and to the deputy principals and Principal. It was evident learning expectations are high, with students engaged in their learning and demonstrating pride in their achievement. Reviewers noted the preparedness of students to share their learning with others through various approaches, including formal presentation to the whole class, group or one-to-one discussion.

Explicit instruction methodology is deployed in literacy and numeracy, with this being extended to all areas of the curriculum to meet the objective of improving student performance. The reviewers observed a very high level of curriculum planning and sharing between staff supported by curriculum teams, collaborative teams and the leadership team. The use of information technology is well advanced, with the use of classroom sets of computers on trolleys, smart boards in each classroom and iPads in the early years. Teachers in the senior primary years use the Edmodo system to facilitate online connection between school and home.

The staff is commended on developing a stimulating and positive learning environment with a range of strategies and actions that are socially inclusive and encourage students to become engaged in their learning. In supporting students ‘to be the best that they can be’ the school provides an atmosphere that fosters care and wellbeing to a very high level.
Caladenia Primary School

The provision of PAC, MAC and specialist programs in visual arts, music and Japanese has enabled the school to enrich the learning environment and extend the learning experiences for all students. Through meetings with staff, parents and students, the reviewers were able to verify the strong community feeling throughout the school. Students commented how teachers were approachable and prepared to listen. The students gave examples where the school was inclusive of all students irrespective of individual abilities and capacities, such as finding roles for all students in leadership, music and debating presentations. Students commented how the staff supported students with learning difficulties to improve their achievement. The students believed they were always supported in their learning.

Communication to parents is through a variety of means including electronic distribution of the fortnightly newsletter, an up-to-date school website and the innovative Caladenia PS smartphone application. This application is proving to be well received and used by parents. The reviewers commend the school on effectively implementing the application as a medium for communication with parents, the school and wider community. The staff advised the reviewers that parents are very supportive, heavily involved in school activities, and are engaged in a range of endeavours including fundraising through an active Parents and Citizens’ Association. Education is highly valued by the parent community and is reflected in the strong tradition of consistently high student attendance, low transiency rates and parents moving into the school’s catchment area. The regular parent satisfaction surveys reinforce this positive attitude towards the school’s vision.

The school executive, comprising the Principal, three deputy principals and the Registrar, with the cooperation and support of staff, has developed and is continuing to drive a climate of innovation in the school. The staff has pursued a number of partnerships and innovative programs that have resulted in a range of benefits for student learning and for the school community. The school has strong partnerships with Wattle Grove Primary School (through which students are invited to share experiences and teachers undertake professional development and moderation), Woodside Petroleum (extending students in science), Curtin and Murdoch University (PAC), and Leeming Senior High School and Canning Vale College.

The staff is commended for developing a quality learning environment with a range of strategies and actions that are socially inclusive and engage students in learning while providing an atmosphere that fosters care and wellbeing to a high level.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

The reviewers verify that the staff has undertaken a rigorous self-review of the school's performance against obligations and commitments outlined in its DPA and the 2012–2014 Business Plan. A wide range of documentation supported the self-review. Evidence included a thorough planning cycle based on four phases of development:

1. Whole-school development
2. Curriculum/teaching strategy development
3. Teacher empowerment

The staff has been working on the first three phases during the life of the current Business Plan and now most teaching and curriculum strategies have been embedded and are proving sustainable, progression to Phase 4. The reviewers affirm the school's direction in peer performance coaching as the model for the performance management of staff as an exciting initiative for the next Business Plan.

The sustainability of the school's high performance is through the quality of the teaching and learning and involves intensive collaborative activities across all teaching and learning areas. A distributed leadership model engages all staff in the development of strategies, collaborative planning and interrogation of data. Teachers and education assistants are highly committed to their work of improving the learning outcomes for every student. Quality programs provide students with diverse options. Staff members embrace professional learning opportunities and use their expertise to mentor and support colleagues. The school staff is commended for the clear structures in place to ensure optimum learning experiences for the students. On-entry testing and early-years speech screening, informed teacher judgements including moderation with Wattle Grove Primary School and internal testing, inform the teaching and learning programs across the school. The reviewers were able to verify that surveys of teachers, leadership and Board are integral in this improvement culture.

The reviewers identified many examples of collaborative and distributed leadership throughout the school. This was evident through discussion with
the executive team, curriculum teams and a cross-section of teachers and education assistants and while visiting classrooms. The comprehensive range of documentation received also supported this distributive leadership model. The Principal, deputy principals and staff have developed and are continuing to drive a climate of teamwork and innovation in the school. The reviewers found the collaborative and distributive leadership model, the motivated staff, the high level of effective communication and the drive to improve student learning commendable. This has contributed to a high level of staff morale within the teaching and non-teaching staff and their support for each other.

The reviewers were able to verify that the school has a positive culture and inclusive environment that values and supports all students. Meetings with the School Board and a number of parents provided verification and evidence of the positive culture developed in the school, the inclusion of all students and a focus on learning. It also demonstrated the effective partnership between parents and the school and the use of community partnerships in providing enhanced opportunities for teaching and learning. Teachers verified the school's processes and strategies that supported their work and are instrumental in their pastoral care program. Key elements of the care demonstrated for students were evident in the comprehensive focus on individual performance, the students at educational risk program and EAL/D teaching. These support programs are delivered in a range of teaching scenarios designed to meet individual needs including assistance to staff in making adjustments to the learning programs for students with IEPs. The teachers are making significant progress in accommodating the needs of overseas students entering the school, especially those in the early years.

The reviewers verified that the Board is fulfilling its role effectively and that a schedule of annual presentations by the Principal and/or a deputy principal on student performance and achievement of targets remains a priority. Sustainability of the school is related to the Board developing sound processes for establishing and reviewing the focus areas and policies of the school, planning for and approving school budgets, evaluating the performance of the school in achieving the targets set, promoting the school within the community and determining the satisfaction levels of parents, students and staff achievement. The reviewers recommend the next iteration of the Business Plan includes targets that are measureable and achievable with a more defined focus on the whole child, including both academic and non-academic performance, with particular reference to the specialist subjects and students at educational risk.
The Principal and the Board Chair discussed the possibility of the Board membership being more inclusive of the multicultural school parent population. During the independent review process, the following possibilities for strengthening the Board’s role in the school were identified:

- the Board appoints a parent to the Board who reflects the multicultural nature of the school’s population and hence endeavours to ensure the school is more inclusive
- the Board develops a communications strategy to ensure the wider community is aware of its function and accountability role in supporting the school.

Under the leadership of the Principal and Registrar, the school efficiently manages the one-line budget that includes staffing and relief flexibilities. The administrative team presents the school as efficient, caring and friendly. Workforce planning has a high profile in the management of the school in order to meet the challenges of maintaining and improving the delivery of: quality teaching and learning; employment of staff with the required knowledge and skills to meet the school’s priorities; meeting student enrolment requirements, including the transition of Year 7 from primary to secondary school in 2015. In addition, careful consideration is given to ensure resources for initiatives such as specialist programs, IT throughout the school and supporting students at educational risk.

Since opening in 2007, there has been a strong focus on engagement with parents and the wider community. The positive relationships between parents and the school should sustain parent engagement in supporting the school to improve student outcomes.

The reviewers verify that the school is in a strong position to sustain and improve its performance through the quality of the collaborative teaching and learning activities across all teaching and learning areas. The school has a strong focus on self-review from whole-school to classroom level. Judgements are made reflective of comprehensive data analysis, are moderated and used to monitor individual student progress and student cohort gain. A distributed leadership model engages all staff in developing strategies, interrogation of data, peer collaboration and building capacity of teachers and education assistants who are highly committed to providing quality learning experiences to improve the learning outcomes of all students. Quality programs provide all students with a diverse range of opportunities. The school’s capacity to
sustain and improve its performance is enhanced by parent and community support and an informed School Board.

The independent review process verifies the school is in a strong position to sustain and improve teaching and learning during the course of the next Business Plan. This conclusion is supported by the strong leadership model, the reflective self-review cycle, the educational structures and processes in place and by the support and assistance of the School Board and an active school community.
Conclusion

The reviewers acknowledge the commitment and effectiveness of the school’s self-assessment and recognise the school staff has developed a positive approach to school accountability and self-improvement. The school staff has clearly demonstrated efforts to meet the commitments of the DPA and Business Plan. Excellent progress has been made towards meeting targets and the staff has shown the ability to reflect on and adapt those targets as required. The staff has developed appropriate programs, resources and teaching strategies to support the vision and expectations for student learning, while taking into account those factors which impact on achievement participation and engagement.

Observations, documentation and discussion provided the verification that the school has a caring and supportive environment enhanced by positive partnerships with the community. A safe learning and working environment was evident to the reviewers and confirmed by staff, students, parents and board members.

The school has established strong governance processes, plans, policies and a deep sense of collaboration and high expectations.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the self-assessment and review methodology typified by high quality data collection and analysis and embedded self-review practices
- the strong school leadership team that actively oversees the performance of all facets of the school
- the efforts to improve and maintain learning for all by the provision of a multitude of curriculum offerings, particularly the Academic Extension Programs and the Explicit Instruction Program, which allow all students to achieve to their potential through exceptional levels of engagement
- the inclusive student needs-centred culture which characterises the school’s ethos and manifests itself in pastoral care strategies that create a positive socio-emotional environment conducive to learning
• the development of, and participation in, numerous partnerships that have established a strong collegial culture and engaged all staff in the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning.

Areas for Improvement

*The following areas for improvement are identified:*

• in development of the next Business Plan, include targets that acknowledge the changing demographic profile of students
• the School Board conduct self-review processes and consider seeking broader community representation and participation
• the Board develop a communications strategy to ensure the wider community is aware of its function and accountability role in supporting the school.
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 Caladenia 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.

9 October 2014
Mr Michael Duncan, Lead Reviewer

9 October 2014
Mr Graham Rixon, Reviewer

14.10.2014
Mr Terry Werner, A/CEO, Department of Education Services