



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Donnybrook District High 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 self-review. The school 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.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr James Milne
Board Chair:	Mr Neil Pemberton-Ovens
School Location:	10 Bentley Street, Donnybrook WA 6239
Number of Students:	483
Reviewers:	Mr Bill Gibson (Lead) and Mr Phil de Garis
Review Dates:	24 and 25 October 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 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 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 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?

Located 215 kilometres from Perth and 35 kilometres from the regional centre of Bunbury, Donnybrook District High School provides for 483 students mainly resident in the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup. Seven buses transport students living outside the town to one of two well-maintained campuses 1.5 kilometres apart. The Mead Street campus on the original annexe site and an adjacent off-site kindergarten facility provides a natural bushland setting for 340 kindergarten and primary-aged students while the Bentley Street campus, located closer to the town centre on the original site, caters for students from Year 7 to Year 10. The school continues to navigate some logistical challenges to ensure the educational benefits of the distinctive Kindergarten to Year 10 structure are optimised.

Over the duration of the current DPA the leadership team have noted a change in the student demographic with an increasing enrolment of students in lower socio-economic quartiles. The changing demographic is reflected in the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) from 1007 in 2008 to a rating of 975 in 2016. *My School*[®] data places 30% of students in the top two quartiles in 2015 compared to 34% in 2013 and 48% in 2008.

The principal and board chair report approximately 20% of families have links to agriculture with an increasing number of families joining the community to take advantage of lifestyle and affordable housing opportunities. At the time of the review the enrolment included 32 (6.6%) indigenous students, 11 students receiving Disability Allocation support, nine (1.8%) students under the care of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS) and 48 (9.9%) identified in the Nationally Consistent Data Collection survey as having a disability. In 2015, 13 (45%) of the graduating Year 10, 2015 cohort had attended the school since Kindergarten while a significant 34% of students exited at the end of Year 6.

In 2015, the overall primary attendance rate (92.9%) was close to like schools (93.1%) and slightly above WA primary schools (92.7%). Encouragingly, the overall secondary rate (88.9%) was above both like schools (87.8%) and WA secondary schools (87.9%). The primary (92.6%) and secondary (76.5%) Aboriginal attendance rates were above like schools and all WA public schools. A continuing challenge is to reduce the number of secondary

students identified as 'Indicated—At Risk' (25.9% in 2015) compared to WA public schools (20%).

The impact of student transiency (13.9% in 2015) is reflected in the 2013–2015 NAPLAN data which indicates that, of 105 students completing the 2015 numeracy assessment, 26 (25%) had enrolled at the school following the 2013 assessment.

The staff profile includes a principal, associate principal and one level 3 deputy principal (3.0 Full Time Equivalent [FTE]) in the leadership team, two level 3 teachers (1.6 FTE), 32 (26 FTE) teachers and 24 (18.2 FTE) support staff. A part-time chaplain and school psychologist support targeted intervention. Workforce planning has identified enrolment fluctuations and the age profile as potentially impacting on teaching and learning. Staffing flexibilities are utilised to sustain and enhance learning with appointed staff committed to both school and community values.

Changes within the leadership team created by the retirement of the long-serving principal and appointment of a substantive replacement in term 4, 2014 have impacted with, for example, the *2011–2016 Business Plan* being revised to establish the board-endorsed *2015–2016 Business Plan*.

The ten-member board includes five parents, two community representatives, two staff and the principal with an additional staff member and community representative co-opted. Under the leadership of a parent representative chairperson the board fulfils its obligations as outlined in the DPA.

The school enjoys the financial support of a proactive Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) and enthusiastic parent/staff groups such as the Music Support Group to enhance the teaching and learning environment. Connections with the Collie/Preston Schools Network, professional associations and various learning area networks support the development of instructional capacity. A link with the Jobs South West agency supports engagement programs.

The staff are responding to a range of demographic changes and continue to develop and embed contextually appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

The School's Self-Review Process

How effective was the school self-review in accounting for its performance during the period of the DPA and business plan?

Collaborative whole-school, curriculum committees and Professional Learning Community (PLC) reviews were conducted on a range of valid data including NAPLAN, On-entry Assessment and the National Quality Standard (NQS) audit. In addition, evidence from moderated teacher judgements, common assessment tasks, National School Opinion Survey and school-generated surveys, an external audit of NAPLAN performance and school-based standardised testing was referenced.

An ongoing process introduced by the current principal includes a detailed analysis of evidence, a summation of progress and recommendations for improvement. The *Achievement of Business Plan Targets/Milestones* and *Professional Learning Community Reviews of the Business Plan 2015–2016* statements together with the *School Self-Reflection NAPLAN 2014–2016* document summarised progress against all targets in each key focus area and facilitated comparisons against national, State, like schools and local school norms.

At the class level, the critical approach is demonstrated by considered evaluation of individual student learning as reported in the Department of Education's Education Assessment Reporting Software and Student Achievement Information System.

A meeting with mathematics committee members verified an awareness of strengths and areas for improvement with, for example, a review of whole-school numeracy performance identifying a need for greater focus on the use of calculators to further improve student achievement. The committee indicated the expectations of the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) elevated student application and performance in the Year 9 NAPLAN assessment in 2016 with comparative performance improving by 0.7 to 0.5.

Meetings with the leadership team, staff and board confirm documentation and enabled reviewers to verify a broad-based self-review process was utilised to analyse and report performance.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

In the three years following the initial independent review, the school has experienced a significant change of leadership and direction following a long period of stability. The *2013 Independent Review Findings Report* made several recommendations related to student performance targets including: 'In constructing the new business plan the reviewers recommend that the targets be relevant, specific and measurable and include a timeframe.' Following this review the school extended the original business plan to cover the period 2011–2016 and retained the original goals and targets. The incoming principal has reviewed the plan with the board and established an interim 2015–2016 plan, the three priority areas of the plan and the initial student performance target remain intact with a significantly revised set of directions, strategies and milestones. The principal also established detailed review and analysis processes at strategic and operational levels to support the planning for improvement.

With an ICSEA of 975 the challenging academic improvement targets focus on comparison of the NAPLAN average growth rate of the stable cohort of students against national growth rates in years 3 to 5, 5 to 7 and 7 to 9. No timelines or expected degrees of improvement have been established.

The staff have evaluated progress against the 2013–2015 cohort and reported achieving the target in nine of the 13 categories monitored. In the 2014–2016 analysis the target was achieved in nine of 15 categories. Targets not achieved varied between one and 15 points below the national average growth. The review of NAPLAN data has been extended to include an assessment against like schools in 2016 showing the Year 3 and Year 9 cohorts behind in all tested areas while the Year 7 cohort exceeded these scores in all measures. Additionally, the analysis considered the NAPLAN scores distribution across the top (20%), middle (60%) and bottom (20%) in each learning area. The results varied from 0% in the top level for Year 3 mathematics to a strong result in Year 7 with 28% in reading and 24% in spelling.

Reviewers commend achievement in 2015 Year 7 persuasive writing with the cohort outperforming the All Australian Schools average.

This in-depth analysis has resulted in the establishment of whole-school planning in mathematics and English to address identified areas of weakness. This outcome emphasises the value of analysing school data to inform student improvement targets against like-school or WA public schools results. The process has also assisted the leadership team to identify reputation management and academic rigour as areas for strategic improvement.

The staff have continued to review pedagogy and student achievements through the development of a whole-school science plan. This plan is based on the syllabus and assessment outline and accesses the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools to assist with the analysis of progress. A science specialist has been appointed at the K–6 campus to support continuity of the teaching and learning in this learning area. Planning to develop a whole-school approach in humanities and social sciences in 2017 is a further example of this positive trend.

Detailed analysis of the standards of student achievement occurs at the learning area/phase-of-learning stage across both campuses. Examples include the K–2 use of data from the Australian Early Development Census and On-entry testing to assess learning needs and inform planning for improvement. Staff demonstrated the use of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) work samples, cross-group moderation of grade distribution and analysis of common assessment tasks to achieve consistency in student assessment and enable effective planning for improvement. The recent establishment of PLCs aligned to phases of learning and the provision of time for regular meetings has played an important role in this development. The connectivity of this extensive operational planning and review of the business plan is far from comprehensive and needs to be strengthened.

It is recommended a stronger connection be established between the strategic planning and review processes and the operational analysis and planning in place across the school.

In discussion with the reviewers, secondary staff commented on anecdotal feedback received from some Bunbury secondary schools in relation to the performance of former Donnybrook District High School students in years 11 and 12. The feedback varied considerably between groups and was not based on a formalised review process.

Additionally, the *2013 Independent Review Findings Report* recommended 'the school actively support networking for its secondary teachers outside the school'. While this is developing, it appears to be mainly based on personal

contacts and would be enhanced through a greater alignment with the destination schools of choice for the exiting Year 10 students. This development would also enable organised feedback and review to inform the school's analysis, target setting and reporting processes.

The school continues to provide a comprehensive set of elective and specialist studies and in the past three years has expanded the access of the K–6 students to specialist teaching in computing, physical education, science, visual art and music while Year 5 and 6 students benefit from an options program on the secondary campus that provides access to secondary specialists and facilities. Staff expertise provides secondary students with a broad curriculum and a range of electives including art, physical education, woodwork, metalwork, food, textiles and information and communication technology (ICT). Additionally, the staff are assessing the value of the current program and planning additional options for 2017. Alignment to the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline is planned and implemented as required and monitored efficiently. A good example is the planning to upgrade ICT equipment in preparation for the implementation of the digital technologies curriculum.

Parents and students indicated strong support for the introduction of Year 9 and 10 Certificate I courses in hospitality, engineering and agrifoods operations along with a valued structured workplace learning program. This has been a popular curriculum access development with attitude and behaviour data confirming the programs bring greater rigour to the teaching and students are more engaged. Students not involved in these Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) courses participate in a program focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The highly successful electric car challenge project continues as part of the engineering certificate program.

The school is commended on the implementation of an extended certificate program for years 9 and 10 and the continued evaluation of the suitability of the curriculum provided across both campuses.

Discussion with classroom teachers and phase-of-learning teams demonstrated individual student performance is monitored and appropriate individual education plans (IEPs) and group education plans (GEPs) are in place. The school-wide NAPLAN data review, results in IEPs for any students under the National Minimum Standards as well as students in receipt of a disability allowance and children in the care of DCPFS. The 80 IEPs in place are regularly monitored and revised with case management reporting in

week 5 of each term. Increased early and middle primary education assistant time was funded through 2015 workforce planning and was directly linked to support for individual and group improvement planning. Education assistants interviewed commented positively on recent changes and the way these demonstrated the support, empathy and care for students with special needs. Reviewers noted an excellent example of a program provided for an indigenous family with special needs.

While the case management process is comprehensive, it would be enhanced through the inclusion of specific, measurable targets and success indicators. Leaders recognised the need to establish school-wide management of IEPs with greater parent involvement to ensure the continuity and sharing of the comprehensive work undertaken to support students requiring teaching and learning adjustments.

Identified students participate in the Bunbury Primary Extension and Challenge program, the School of Instrumental Music program and some streaming of Year 8 to 10 classes to provide academic and skills extension programs for gifted students. Additional extension relies on individual teachers to establish differentiated extension programs for students in their care. It is recommended that, in line with the DPA requirement, the staff review the approach to extension programs to provide a school-wide response for students with above-average ability.

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?

A significant logistical challenge for the learning environment is the split-site situation noted in the school's context. The *2013 Independent Review Findings Report* recommended 'building stronger whole-school links, promotion of whole-school events and activities and developing a strengthened shared culture'. The leadership team has worked to address these recommendations in 2015/2016 and sought to embed the strengths of a K–10 district high school by overcoming the distance and staffing factors involved. Strategies include the extensive shared teaching expertise outlined in the student learning report, instituting a Year 5 and 6 options program with access to the senior campus resources and extending the junior campus kitchen garden facility with support from the year 9/10 agrifoods group. The return of the Year 6 students to the primary campus and the development of a whole-school end-of-year presentation assembly and family picnic have assisted to address this recommendation.

Parents and students interviewed considered the school a safe and inclusive environment and noted the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 was becoming less stressful due to the school overcoming the logistical and staffing issues required to create a shared ethos and culture. While parents interviewed by the reviewers considered these changes positive they continue to consider the transition could be more seamless and outlined concerns over some mixed messaging in the information to parents across the two sites. It is recommended the staff consider the consistency, clarity and purpose of communication with parents and ensure the changing nature of their cross-campus collaboration is fully appreciated and understood.

Parents and staff commented positively on the changing culture evident at the school. Parents noted staff were more proactive, appeared less set in their ways and more open to innovation. Staff commented on changes to the culture across the school, being challenged and being held more accountable as positives of the new administration. The principal has achieved a change to the enthusiasm and ethos through the introduction of the Action Learning Model, the establishment of PLCs based on phases-of-learning, a focus on effective performance management and ensuring best practice is recognised.

The leadership team, in response to the Department of Education's *Focus 2015* and the school's strategic planning, developed the Action Learning Model. The model has been developed around the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and includes actions, timelines and support provided at the school. The impact is monitored each semester and the resulting change in culture has been widely recognised by staff and parents. Buy-in from teaching and non-teaching staff is considerable but remains an on-going focus for the leadership team.

The PLCs meet each fortnight with time made available through an early closure agreement. The communities focus on making data-driven decisions in relation to student programs, a good example is the introduction of the *Diana Rigg Spelling* program with appropriate professional learning to address an identified need. The use of SCSA work samples, in-school moderation of grade distribution and school-wide testing has resulted in the development of a constant language in considering student performance and greater consistency in the evaluation of student progress and reporting to parents.

Initially the leadership team set the agenda for the PLC meetings; however, in 2016 the agenda responsibility has been devolved as the commitment to and professionalism of these communities grow and the distributed leadership model across the PLCs continues to develop. Teachers appreciate the contribution of education assistants in these meetings. Both groups identified how critical these meetings are to their professional growth and the development of teamwork, accountability and the use of data as the driver of educational decision-making.

Reviewers observed the impact this change has made on the culture of the school with increased expectation of students and IEPs more focused and effective. Reviewers noted the development was most effective in the k–pp and year 1–2 teams where NQS reflection and planning has been an important early focus. Discussion at this level did not appear to be aligned to the business plan and this will be improved by the development of more specific student improvement targets in future planning. Staff indicated school-wide operational plans helped to clarify the goals, thinking and discussion that consequently improved the flow between the PLCs. The leadership team recognise the understanding of the key pedagogy that underpins the operational strategies, such as implicit teaching, needs to be well understood and embedded and this remains a challenge for the professional learning program. The principal is commended on the implementation of a positive, team-focused culture across both campuses with a recognised rise in teacher enthusiasm and commitment.

Community feedback and exit surveys acknowledged a reputation management issue in relation to behaviour management. In response, the new administration identified the behaviour of a specific cohort as a problem that had resulted in declining student numbers especially in the senior campus. The *Managing Student Behaviour* policy was reviewed in 2015 and the *Positive Behaviour Support* program was implemented. A previous attempt to introduce this program had failed to achieve the 80% staff agreement level required and, as a measure of the changing culture, a 97% approval was achieved in 2015.

The school has access to school psychology services, has a valued chaplaincy program and dedicated staff who have implemented school-wide health and wellness programs for students including a *Massage in Schools* program anecdotally registered as being very successful in reducing stress. The staff have recognised a bullying issue and are currently reviewing the policy to bring a new focus and solutions to the problem. Reviewers noted the dedication and innovation of those involved in pastoral care and, while it is accepted that there is a problem in timetabling regular meetings for the pastoral care group, it is recommended that these be established.

Interviews with parents highlighted the satisfaction with the direction curriculum choice has taken in the past two years, in particular the introduction of the certificate programs in years 9 and 10 and the pastoral care programs. The 2016 Parent and Carer National School Opinion Survey highlighted these aspects together with the safe environment, the open and inviting nature of the school and the quality of the buildings and grounds.

The communication between teachers and parents was appreciated, especially in the early years while some interest was shown in the expansion of access to the Department of Education *Connect E-Schooling Services* program. The school also gathers valued information through parent exit surveys and acts upon feedback received as highlighted by the response to behavioural issues.

The staff are committed to enhancing community school alignment, to explore ways to ensure symmetry in the expectations of school achievements and seek to give back to a supportive community. Participation in the Collie/Preston Schools Network, the Youth Focus program, the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup and the Bunbury Regional Trade Training Consortium are examples of effective involvement in external partnerships.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

A systematic review of academic and non-academic performance has been introduced to guide teaching and learning adjustments. The developing self-review process includes the leadership team, curriculum focus committees, whole staff, PLCs and classroom teachers interrogating performance data. Documentation provided evidence the staff regularly review and report progress against targets and strategies.

It is recommended the new business plan addresses the DPA requirements of identifying long-term strategic goals, high-level strategies, outcome-focused specific and relevant academic and non-academic targets based on high expectations for all students with measurable success indicators and annual achievement milestones.

To support continuous improvement, the principal is implementing a distributed leadership structure with roles and responsibilities to empower staff members to deliver improved outcomes and engage with the expectations of the DPA and the business plan.

Performance management and developing engagement in targeted professional learning are enhancing the school's capacity to deliver contextually appropriate teaching and learning for all students.

Performance management requires self-reflection against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and evidence of commitment to school-wide planning, student performance and analysis in line with action learning model expectations. Staff reported this made the process more consistent, predictable while enabling discussion around professional learning and adding to their accountability.

Conversations with secondary staff highlighted the significant benefits of an emerging culture of peer-to-peer observation. Collaborative mentoring is provided with beginning and recently appointed staff receiving support to ensure whole-school, phase strategies and programs are consistently delivered. Commencing teachers felt supported in establishing their careers and addressing the requirements of the teacher registration process.

The principal exemplifies a commitment to professional excellence by working with the board chair to ensure a strong connection with community expectations.

The capacity to provide the education the community expects is being enhanced by staff engagement in appropriate contemporary professional learning. While not yet embedded, parents and students expressed an awareness of and appreciation for the improved pedagogy being offered.

Staff, parents and the board acknowledged the significant influence of the principal in managing change and guiding improved teaching and learning.

Following discussions with board members and an examination of documentation, reviewers concluded the board is operating within designated guidelines and has responded to the recommendations of the *2013 IPS Review Findings Report*. Under the leadership of a parent representative the board continues to make a valuable contribution through analysis of student achievement and survey feedback, policy development and ratification of the business plan, budgets and annual reports. The board continues to focus on member induction, training and the establishment of a portfolio approach to ensure it continues to address the requirements of the DPA. Succession planning is evident with the transition to a new chair supported by a substantial overlap.

Meetings with the leadership team, the board chair and the business manager indicated the leaders remain confident that, with stable enrolment, on-going support from traditional funding sources including the P&C, local businesses and continuing level of parent voluntary contributions support, key initiatives and specialist programs will be sustained.

Conversations with the board and the leadership team verify the positive culture and developing framework of collaborative PLCs will assist the school to improve student learning. To support business plan connectivity reviewers recommend the principal explicitly aligns key documentation including operational statements to the business plan.

The next iteration of the business plan will: seek to expand the school's contribution to the community; increase opportunities for primary students to further develop in science, technology, art and mathematics; continue to give primacy to the provision of a comprehensive education for all students; and, continue to capitalise on the opportunities provided by the district high school model.

Conclusion

Under the committed leadership of the principal the Donnybrook District High School staff and community continue to strive to ensure the educational benefits of the distinctive kindergarten to year 10 structure are optimised.

While not all of the challenging nationally normed academic targets were achieved, student performance in 2015 and 2016 continues within the expected performance range with achievement exceeding like schools in 60% of the longitudinal average checkpoints during the period of the DPA. The staff have implemented processes to sustain and improve performance.

Teachers and leaders are involved in data-driven review of school practice and quality planning strategies. Implementation of pedagogical change is well underway. The board is actively engaged in providing oversight of the school's strategic planning, monitoring and review processes.

The next business plan will seek to build on initiatives including the development of learning programs that lead to opportunities beyond school while continuing to prioritise the provision of a comprehensive education for all students.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- achievement in 2015 Year 7 persuasive writing with the cohort outperforming the All Australian Schools average
- the significant influence of the principal in managing change and guiding improved teaching and learning, including the implementation of a positive and team-focused culture across both campuses with a recognised rise in teacher enthusiasm and commitment
- the implementation of an extended certificate program for years 9 and 10 and the continued evaluation of the suitability of the curriculum provided across both campuses.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- establish a stronger connection between the strategic planning and review processes and the operational analysis and planning in place across the school
- review the approach to extension programs to provide a school-wide response for students with above-average ability
- consider the consistency, clarity and purpose of communication with parents and ensure the changing nature of cross-campus collaboration is fully appreciated and understood
- establish regular meetings for the pastoral care group
- address the DPA requirements in developing the new business plan, identifying long-term strategic goals, high-level strategies, outcomes-focused specific and relevant academic and non-academic targets based on high expectations for all students with measurable success indicators and annual achievement milestones
- make explicit the alignment of key documentation, including operational statements, to the business plan.

Declaration

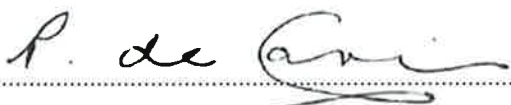
We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Donnybrook District High School as part of the Department of Education Services independent review process. The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



Mr Bill Gibson, Lead Reviewer

30 November 2016

Date



Mr Phil de Garis, Reviewer

1 December 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

13/12/16

Date

