



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Education Services**

Ranford Primary School

2016

Independent Review Findings



**Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools**

Disclaimer

This document reports the findings of the Department of Education Services' review and verification of the school's self-review. The school's self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The findings of the independent review are forwarded to the School Principal, the Board Chair, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

The Department of Education Services does not endorse any commercial organisation, product or service mentioned in this report.

The Department of Education Services can only guarantee the authenticity of original documents. This document is uncontrolled once printed.

To help people with disabilities obtain access to information, this document can be provided in alternative format on request. Please contact ips@des.wa.gov.au with specific requests or telephone 08 9441 1900.

School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Bronwyn Tester
Board Chair:	Ms Michelle Price
School Location:	Orkney Crescent, Canning Vale WA 6155
Number of Students:	622
Reviewers:	Ms Cris Sandri and Ms Su Wilson
Review Dates:	27 and 28 July 2016
Initial Review:	2013

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education on the extent to which the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) and associated Business Plan.

The focus of the review is on:

- how well the school has implemented self-review
- how well the school has improved student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes learning and student well-being
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Review Methodology

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake annual self-assessments of its performance. The outcome of these assessments formed the basis for the school's self-review. The school sent its self-review documentation to the IPS Review Team, Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The IPS reviewers supplemented the information provided by the school with information on the school's achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which included:

- the *My School*[®] website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation to verify achievement and developed lines of inquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for the review visit was subsequently negotiated with the Principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visits, was used as the basis for the verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in the DPA and Business Plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.

School Context

What are the important features of this school's context that have an impact on student learning?

Ranford Primary School is located in the Perth suburb of Canning Vale. The school opened in 1999 and began operating as an Independent Public School (IPS) in 2011.

Student numbers show an upward trend, with 622 students enrolled from Kindergarten to Year 6. The student attendance rate at 95% continues to compare well with like schools and the State average.

The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1082. Student demographics show an increasingly multicultural and diverse school community with 49% of students identified as having English as an additional language or dialect. The number of students entering Kindergarten with identified language concerns reflects this trend.

Thirty-eight students have been identified with a disability and 50 students with social/emotional issues through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with a Disability; with 23 students receiving additional funding for teaching and learning adjustments. There are five Aboriginal students enrolled at the school. Approximately 50% of students who begin in Kindergarten remain to graduate from Year 6. This transiency trend has an impact on student tracking data, particularly of cohort groups.

A stable leadership team comprising the foundation Principal and two deputy principals together with a staff of 78 with various levels of experience and cultural diversity, support the students. Four teaching staff have level 3 status and eight have achieved senior teacher status. All have leadership roles in the school.

Through sound operations and budgeting, the leadership team has used the flexibility and capacity as an IPS to mobilise and increase the number of staff in response to the needs of the students. This is particularly evident with the provision of support staff for students and teachers.

The school campus is aesthetically pleasing and well maintained. It was evident that this contemporary and well-resourced learning and teaching environment has continued to be a significant enabler to further facilitate, refine and improve practices and procedures.

Strong staff and parent involvement through the Board and the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) in planning and development processes, particularly of the library/media arts renewal project, has resulted in a collective sense of achievement. Parents spoke of considerable community pride in the school and indicated it is a school of choice.

The high standing of the school in the education community has been recognised, not only by invitations for involvement in a significant number of curriculum trials and system level initiatives, but also by an external validation through a Department of Education initiated Exemplary Study in 2014 and by winning the award of WA Primary School of the Year in 2015. These acknowledgements testify to the strength of the school's processes and programs that focus on the well-being and achievement of each individual child.

The Board is involved and committed. Members indicated an intention to increase public accountability by engaging more fully in their governance role as the school moves into its third DPA.

Parents and Board members confirm a strong commitment to supporting the school in providing a quality education for all students and further confirm that the school and its achievements are well respected in the community.

A number of partnerships including with experts, families, local government, local organisations and education organisations are in place to assist the Board and school leadership team access additional resources for the educational program and support of the school community.

The School's Self-Review Process

How effective was the school's self-review in accounting for its performance during the period of the DPA and Business Plan?

In reviewing its performance against Business Plan targets, the staff demonstrated a well-established, ongoing review process focused on the achievement of the individual child.

The 2014–2016 Business Plan identifies six key performance improvement focus areas, each with a set of milestones. In addition, academic targets are set for literacy and numeracy, attendance and attributes of attitude, behaviour and effort. The Business Plan is comprehensive. Academic student performance is measured by cohort and individual growth towards each target. Progress against the Business Plan targets is monitored and communicated to parents, teachers and students comprehensively in Annual Reports.

The processes for collecting, collating and analysing data to evaluate these targets and milestones is thorough. It was clear that a rigorous self-review process was in place supported by an effective distributed leadership model that ensured all stakeholders, including the Board, were involved.

Yearly learning area plans and 2014-2016 Operational Plans are developed, implemented, assessed and reported on to support the achievement of the targets and milestones. These operational plans inform staff capacity building, classroom planning and student achievement.

No recommendations for improvement were made following the previous Independent Review in 2013; however, commendations made were reviewed by the leadership team and a plan for strengthening and further developing these was provided for the reviewers in order to demonstrate the importance of building on and sustaining these acknowledged strengths of the school.

Kindergarten to Year 2 staff have completed a self-audit against the National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care. The staff rated achievement as having met six of the seven quality areas, and working towards the achievement of quality area three.

The Board and leadership team are focused on accounting for performance and drive a strong improvement agenda.

The Board and staff engage in analysis and discussion of whole-school evidence-based data, used to not only identify areas of strength and weakness, but to inform decisions, interventions and initiatives. Within the self-review process, staff have identified and considered focus areas for the next Business Plan confirming the emphasis on individual achievement targets and an effective, comprehensive and ongoing self-review process is in place.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The vision that *‘through teamwork our school community will provide a challenging, innovative and caring environment that empowers and motivates all to achieve their potential’* is clearly a guiding principle that underpins the school’s operations as a professional learning community and is exemplified through the 2014–2016 Business Plan.

Integral to this vision is a set of beliefs that underpin decisions supporting the achievement, progress and engagement of all students. This focus on meeting the needs of the individual is reinforced through a school-wide mantra that *‘every single child matters’*; a belief that drives all decisions about learning programs and practices.

School planning encompasses six key areas of focus:

- *Teaching*—excellence in teaching
- *Learning*—maximising student achievement
- *Relationships*—positive partnerships
- *Leadership*—committed and Innovative
- *Environment*—safe, supportive and values oriented
- *Resources*—resource rich and capacity building.

Each of these is further sub-divided into identified focus areas, with implementation demonstrated through the achievement of milestones and student achievement improvement targets. Progress in the achievement of both milestones and targets is measured through ongoing, collaborative self-review processes with information used as evidence to plan for improvement.

In setting targets to monitor student progress and achievement, staff carefully consider each target’s purpose and the quality of information provided. Key to these decisions is not only the intention to measure overall improvement, but also to examine the impact of programs and strategies on the progress of specific students and/or student cohorts. Specific individual achievement targets are set for students identified as developmentally vulnerable and needing intervention.

This is in support of the underlying belief that *'every single child matters'*. Reviewers commend the staff on this belief and their commitment to ensuring support processes are in place.

The first target measured achievement levels for Year 3–5 students (tested 2012–2014) stating that 90% will be above the Australian Minimum Standard in all areas of NAPLAN. This target was achieved for all areas with the exception of reading which scored 84%.

The target was then expanded to measure achievement levels for Year 3–5 students (tested 2013–2015) with the aim that 90% will be above the Australian Minimum Standard in all areas of NAPLAN (with the exception of writing set at 95%). This target was achieved with the exception of numeracy which scored 87%.

While the nature of these targets prohibited their application to 2016 performance due to the timing of the publication of the 2014-2016 Business Plan, reviewers acknowledge their inclusion in 2016 learning area plans in anticipation of the approaching review cycle. This action demonstrates the commitment of staff to the use of targets for self-assessment.

A second form of target examines the progress of identified students in specific cohorts, once again spanning the 2012–2014 and 2013–2015 school years and again covering all areas of NAPLAN. In forming these targets, teachers and school leaders identify individual students who they believe will be part of the stable cohort and determine a target based on their desired band growth. As such, nine targets were set for 57 students from the Year 3–5 cohort (tested 2012–2014). Seven of these targets were achieved with the two remaining targets relating to performance in numeracy.

In turn, thirteen targets were set for 92 students in the Year 3–5 cohort (tested 2013–2015). Seven of these were achieved and six weren't, one of which was for band growth in reading, two in grammar and punctuation, two in spelling and one in numeracy.

As with previous targets, the progress of the Year 3–5 cohort (tested 2014–2016) will be measured through targets set as part of the 2016 learning area plans.

Discussions with staff and school leaders clearly showed the worth of setting these targets was not just in their achievement, but in the strategic analysis of performance, which provides meaningful direction in making needed

adjustments to learning programs and areas of focus. Used in conjunction with teacher judgements on the progress of these students, this process is highly valued by the school community in contributing to the school's cycle of self-review.

While no specific targets have been set to measure comparisons with Australian, State and statistically similar schools, reviewers confirmed with staff and members of the School Board, the significant use of this kind of analysis in monitoring the school's performance. Of note, are results from NAPLAN 2015, which clearly show a trend of continued improvement with the school performing better than like schools in all areas.

Reviewers commend the school's strong culture of self-assessment with ongoing engagement of teachers in the setting of targets and analysis of data leading to evidence-based planning to contribute to school improvement.

The third target relates to student achievement and progress in literacy and numeracy in On-Entry testing in determining that:

- for Pre-primary—90% of students to achieve Progression Point 1.0
- for Year 1—93% of students to achieve Progression Point 1.5
- for Year 2—95% of students to achieve Progression Point 2.0.

While performance against these targets has been reviewed by the staff, a decision on the target achievement will not be determined until the end of the 2016 school year. In the interim, teachers use the information available to them from ongoing analysis of the data to strategically adjust their learning program.

Also of interest is the intention of staff to develop 'bridging targets' designed to measure progress from performance in On-Entry testing in Year 2 through to NAPLAN in Year 3. This initiative is planned for the next Business Plan cycle.

In addition to academic targets, a number of non-academic targets are in use. Attendance targets have been designed in support of the belief that 'every day counts, every lesson counts'. Targets include:

- 95% of students to regularly attend over 90% of the time
- 0% of students will be at severe risk (0–59%)
- 0% of students will be at moderate risk (60–79%)
- no more than 1% of students will be at indicated risk (80–89%)

- a 50% improvement in students who are arriving late to school
- students with 'unapproved absences', specifically vacations during school terms, to be reduced by 50%
- students 'signed out' during the school day to be reduced by 50%.

The achievement of attendance targets will be determined at the end of the 2016 school year. To date, analysis by staff indicates that performance is on track in all targets with improvements shown in all areas.

The final improvement target was designed to measure the students' commitment to their learning, drawing on leacher judgements concerning their attitude, behaviour and effort. The target states that the three attributes:

- Works to the best of his/her ability
- Is enthusiastic about learning
- Shows confidence in making positive choices and decisions

will be indicated as 'consistently' or 'often' on semester reports for all students.

Again this improvement target cannot be assessed until the end of the 2016 school year, although the annual self-review, as summarised in the school's 2015 Annual Report, measures and analyses progress towards the targets achievement. This ongoing analysis of performance is strategic in maintaining a focus on the needs of individual students and reflects the school's improvement focus. The value of the process of target setting and resulting collaborative discussions is highlighted and continues to reinforce the school's high expectations for both students and staff.

Fundamental to the school's strong academic performance has been the establishment of curriculum committees led by Level 3 and senior teachers and consisting of representatives from collaborative teams across all year levels. These committees are responsible for reviewing performance in their designated curriculum area, then working in collaboration with staff to develop evidence-driven planning for improvement.

Enriching information obtained from system-wide assessments has been the development of a whole-school *Student Assessment, Reporting, Data and Information Timeline*, providing staff with specific assessment tasks designed to measure performance with a strong focus on improvement. High-quality assessments including clearly defined common assessment tasks, work in

conjunction with processes to track student performance to provide comprehensive information on each child's progress. As a result, processes for the identification of students at educational risk are evidence-based and well established, leading to the development of individual adjustment plans (IAPs) designed to differentiate the teaching and learning program to meet each child's specific need. These IAPs are developed in consultation with the parents, using a school-designed proforma and utilising school-based or external support as required. Discussion with staff and parents confirm these plans have a positive impact on student learning.

Another area which required adjustments to teaching and learning is the significant number of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students in the school. The allocation of a 0.8 FTE EAL/D teacher and school-funded appointment of a part-time EAL/D education assistant provides support for these students and ongoing guidance for classroom teachers in meeting their needs.

Specialist programs operate effectively for science (which is also implemented in classrooms through collaborative planning processes), language (Italian), drama, health and well-being and physical education. In addition, a significant upgrade of the school's library has provided a learning space conducive to the introduction of media arts as a specialist area.

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?

The learning environment epitomises the school's vision, enacted through fifteen core beliefs which represent the school in action. This unrelenting focus is demonstrated through a culture of collaboration or 'teamwork' as stated in the vision itself and the promotion of innovative practice designed to challenge. This is couched within a nurturing and caring environment where both students and staff feel empowered to reach their potential.

Throughout the school, there is a clear expectation among staff, students and parents that every student will learn and achieve to his/her potential. Classroom visits show students to be focused on learning as they engage in quality teaching and learning programs, delivered in an inclusive learning environment.

In meeting with teachers and school leaders, reviewers verified the rigor with which staff assess and track student progress and achievement. Strategies include, but are not limited to: On-Entry testing for all students P–2, K–2 literacy screening, the RPS Early Intervention Plan, common assessment tasks, EAL/D progress maps, NAPLAN and the school's Social Matrix Snapshot (a tool listing factors that may influence each student's learning). Intervention programs for students performing outside expected levels include the establishment of IAPs designed in consultation with relevant members of staff and/or external support agencies. In addition, teachers use the *Abilities Based Learning Education WA* resource where relevant to track progress of students in receipt of Disability Resourcing Services funding. The school psychologist is a valued resource who acts as a conduit to additional support services, and parent involvement is considered crucial to the success of programs undertaken.

In responding to increased EAL/D student numbers, additional resources have been provided to employ a part-time EAL/D education assistant to support the EAL/D teacher in his work with staff, students and their families.

Part of the school's focus on continuous improvement is the ongoing enhancement of teaching practice through the modification of performance management processes.

Targeted professional development, supported by the establishment of mentor groups and innovative practice in classroom observation and feedback, is leading to real benefits for student learning. Reviewers commend the school's culture of professional learning and commitment to building the professional capacity of teachers to challenge, nurture and inspire students to learn.

In working through a model of self-assessment designed to build an effective and collaborative learning culture, staff are provided with opportunities to review research, collaborate with colleagues and access professional learning as they work to improve their teaching. Innovative practice is encouraged, as evidenced by the introduction of media studies, which led to two teachers accessing professional development offered interstate as well as influencing the school's library upgrade to produce a creative learning space.

Pivotal to much of the school's success in supporting students with social and emotional issues was the work of a highly experienced and capable school chaplain. This position was vacated mid-2015 and has only just been filled. In the interim, the needs of these students were met through direction provided by the health and well-being curriculum team, supported by the appointment of a specialist teacher. Programs implemented include *Bounce Back*, *Kids Matter* and *Aussie Optimism*, all of which are underpinned by the school's strong values focus. In addition to the recent appointment of a new chaplain, the staff is now working with the Board to investigate the appointment of a social worker. This commitment to identify and resource strategies which are socially inclusive to engage every student in quality-learning experiences while fostering his/her care and well-being, is further strengthening the learning program.

Interviews with parents determined a high level of satisfaction with the communication between the school and home. Contributing to this is the importance placed on the use of the communications diary, issued to all students from PP–Year 6. The diary is used every day to connect school with home, requiring parents, students and their teachers to reflect on the school week and resulting performance levels.

The staff also uses a variety of media to communicate with parents including email, telephone, a mobile phone app and an informative website. Newsletters are emailed and the school is currently trialling the emailing of electronic reports.

The biennial parent opinion survey conducted in 2014, provided 203 responses representing 49.6% of families. Survey results revealed very high satisfaction ratings from parents of children across all year levels. Discussions with parents supported these findings in confirming their high level of satisfaction with the quality of the school's learning environment and the education provided for their children, with many expressing pride at the school achieving the 2015 award of WA Primary School of the Year. The survey is planned for use again later in 2016.

Also contributing to the quality of the learning environment are the partnerships the staff has established with outside agencies and groups. One example is the commitment of the City of Canning to maintaining the sports grounds adjacent to the school and used extensively by the students. Partnerships such as this, together with strong support from the school's P&C, complement strategic planning to not only provide attractive, well-resourced grounds and learning space, but also broaden the range of extra curricula activities available to the students.

As is the culture of the school, close attention has been given to the quality of the learning environment in meeting the needs of students and the belief that *'every single child matters'*.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

It was evident that a systematic approach to data collection is in place at the school, complemented by embedded self-review processes that critically analyse the learning of all students at an individual level, to identify areas of achievement and areas for improvement. Board members confirmed the Board engages in the review process and has an understanding of the governance roles and responsibilities as described in the DPA.

The Board and school leadership ensure long-term strategic resource planning is in place and aligned to the Business Plan, to sustain current programs and practices and support future initiatives.

A very explicit improvement agenda is evident and focused on the core business of achievement for every individual student. It is clear that the Board, leadership and staff of the school are united, committed and explicit about the core goal of improving student learning. Sound practices are in place that form and support a strong foundation for future planning and further development of systematic curriculum delivery.

Through the self-review process, areas for refinement and improvement in student learning performance and staff development have been identified, including the need to continue to refine research-based pedagogical practices.

Strong and committed school leadership has facilitated and fostered continuous improvement in a very supportive professional environment. A culture of high expectations for teaching and learning, based on a team orientated environment of collaboration, mutual respect and support is evident. Building a strong, expert teaching team is considered a school-wide shared responsibility in recognising that highly effective teaching is the key to student achievement. Critical reflection and disciplined dialogue are the expected norm in the school. Staff are committed to this and consequently work as a team to implement processes and procedures effectively.

To continue to support the school and community aspirations for effectiveness and excellence, further refinement of staff pedagogical understandings and practices, together with Board governance roles are intended to be included in the next Business Plan.

From the claims made, and the evidence provided, the reviewers are very confident the school has the support of the community and the focus and capacity to sustain achievements and provide for realistic future improvements.

Conclusion

Ranford Primary School continues to be a well-respected, high-functioning and high-performing school. A clear improvement agenda, focused on the individual well-being and achievement of every student, is evident in an orderly, safe and nurturing learning environment.

The leadership and staff have continued to focus on developing a strong collegial culture that is intent on quality learning and teaching where every student is expected to learn. The vision and set of beliefs guide every aspect of the school's operations building and maintaining positive relationships and maintaining a learning environment that is safe, caring, respectful, tolerant and inclusive.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the trend of continued improvement, with the school performing better than like schools in all areas
- the belief of staff that '*every single child matters*' and their commitment to ensuring processes are in place in support of this
- the high standing of the school in the education community
- the leadership and staff for developing a strong culture of self-assessment, with ongoing engagement of teachers in the setting of targets and analysis of data leading to evidence-based planning contributing to school improvement
- the leadership and staff for developing a culture of professional learning and commitment to building the professional capacity of teachers to challenge, nurture and inspire students to learn.

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 Ranford 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.



Ms Cris Sandri, Lead Reviewer

8 September 2016

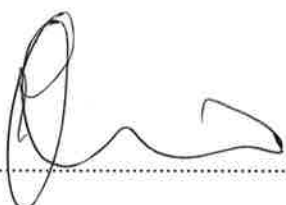
Date



Ms Su Wilson, Reviewer

8 September 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

15/9/16

Date