North Beach Primary School

2014

Independent Review Findings
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: Stephen Pash
Board Chair: De Graber
School Location: 75 North Beach Road, North Beach WA 6020
School Classification: PS Class 5
Number of Students: 429
Reviewers: John Garnaut (Lead) and Bill Gibson
Review Dates: Day One: 11 March 2014
Days Two and Three: 17 and 18 March 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, Deputy Principal, Business Manager and the Board Chair 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?

North Beach Primary School is a Level 5 Primary School located adjacent to Star Swamp Reserve in the coastal suburb of North Beach. The school, which was established in 1934, became an Independent Public School (IPS) in 2012.

The school provides a range of educational experiences for students from Kindergarten to Year 7 resident in the communities of North Beach and Trigg. At the time of the review the school had an enrolment of 429 comprising 238 (55.5%) male and 191 (44.5%) female students. The enrolment included 18 (4%) indigenous students, 7 (1.6%) students receiving Schools Plus support, 37 (8.6%) students born outside Australia and 67 (15.6%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D).

For 2014, the school has an Index of Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1094, down slightly on the previous 1107. The reduction is, in part, reflective of the subtle change of student distribution that sees an increase from 5% to 10% in the fourth quartile. Over the duration of the current DPA the school has identified steady enrolment growth (increased 14.2% from 2012 to the time of review), a 5% decrease in the number of students in the top three quartiles (from 95% in 2012 to 90% in 2014) and an increase in the number of EAL/D students as impacting on teaching and learning programs.

The School Board-endorsed Workforce Management Plan has identified contextual challenges and limitations including staffing profiles, enrolment fluctuations and leave liability as impacting on the continued delivery of a quality education program at the school. The use of IPS flexibility is assisting the school to sustain and enhance learning with appointed staff committed to the vision and culture of the school.

The school is benefitting from the staffing flexibility inherent in IPS status. An innovative leadership structure is established through a more expansive distributed leadership model that includes curriculum, cross curriculum and learning area leaders to guide all aspects of teaching and learning.

The school facilities, including purpose-built arts block and library, are well maintained and support the delivery of teaching and learning programs across
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all years. A private provider offers an onsite after-hours care program in rooms previously occupied by an education support unit that closed in 2007. Specialist programs are offered in the Arts (visual art and music), physical education (Years 1–7) and health (Years 3–7) with French language delivered to students in Years 1–7. The school embraces its surrounds including the Star Swamp Reserve to support the highly regarded environmental education program. Visiting instrumental music specialists funded by the School of Instrumental Music (SIM) Program extend the music program with sessions in clarinet, cello and violin for identified students. In addition, selected students attend offsite Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) sessions.

The School Board made the transition from a council at the time the school was granted IPS status. Under the leadership of a parent chair, the seven-member Board has contributed to the review of the school vision and, in accordance with the DPA, participated in the ongoing review of student learning. The Board has provided endorsement of key documents including the DPA, the Business Plan, the Workforce Development Plan, the Annual Report and the school budget.

A collaborative leadership team, committed staff, supportive community and a school culture established over 80 years are combining to underpin the North Beach Primary School’s response to a range of identified contextual factors including enrolment fluctuations, staffing and demographic change.
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?

Interviews with North Beach Primary School leaders and staff, School Board members and consideration of written documentation demonstrated the impressive nature of the school's self-assessment. There is an established culture of evidence-based, critical self-assessment and review at a number of levels including whole-of-school performance, class performance, teacher performance, leadership performance and performance of the School Board.

Collaborative processes for school self-assessment exist with whole of staff involvement in a well-planned 12-month cycle. Whole-of-school self-assessment includes a wide range of relevant data including student academic performance data (comparisons with like and local schools, longitudinal analysis, sub-group analysis), non-academic performance information, data relating to student social and emotional development and behaviour data. Recent reflection against the National School Improvement Tool has complemented existing school self-assessment.

The school Business Plan, Supplementary Business Plan and operational plans demonstrate that the school clearly acts upon the outcomes of the self-assessment through plan modifications and relevant changes to teaching and learning programs. Targets for improvement in the Business Plan are regularly monitored and reported to the School Board.
School Performance—Student Learning

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

The *North Beach Primary School Business Plan (2012–2015)* provides detail of targeted improvement in literacy, numeracy and social and emotional wellbeing. The targets were determined after a collaborative review of student performance in the years immediately prior to the establishment of the current DPA. The Business Plan includes supporting statements underlining the purpose for each set of targets. The school demonstrated the effectiveness of its ongoing process of self-review and improvement when, in response to student learning information, it resolved to revise its literacy targets in 2013 to better reflect the identified needs of its students.

The reviewers verified the school’s comprehensive self-review of targets established in 2012 and its progressive achievements in the current Business Plan. The school demonstrated that it systematically reviews its performance against both State like schools and national statistically similar schools. In meetings with the reviewers the leadership team demonstrated that school performance was also reviewed against local schools, in particular those with similar ICSEA and student distributions.

The revised literacy target is set in terms of matching or exceeding like schools performance in all aspects of literacy in Years 3, 5 and 7. Progressive results indicate school performance is approaching the target and the school is well placed to meet most aspects of the literacy target by the end of the current Business Plan cycle. The *2013 My School® National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)* report indicates that, apart from Year 3 grammar and punctuation and Year 5 reading, writing and spelling, the school is performing close to or above statistically similar schools. School performance in literacy and numeracy NAPLAN testing (including Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment) has steadily improved since 2009. Additionally, the school has targeted improvement for students identified as being at educational risk in reading. Through a strategic, well-resourced, whole-school approach the school is confident that the reading skills of identified students will continue to improve.

For numeracy the school established two targets, one specifically focusing on the 2013 Year 5 cohort, and the second concentrating on 2014/15 like school NAPLAN comparisons across Years 3, 5 and 7. The specific 2013 Year 5
target aimed at increasing the number of students achieving NAPLAN Bands 7 and 8 or above has been achieved. Based on evidence provided by the school and information included in the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2013 My School® NAPLAN numeracy report, the reviewers support the school’s prediction that, in 2014, it will achieve the second target being to achieve at or above the like school mean in Years 3, 5 and 7 by 2014/2015. School leaders indicated the need for continued focus on meeting the needs of those students capable of high levels of academic achievement.

The school demonstrated that it utilises a combination of teacher judgements as reported in Student Achievement Information System (SAIS), West Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) data and, where available, Australian Curriculum exemplars to monitor, analyse, reflect and respond to student achievement in the remaining areas of the curriculum.

Effective curriculum leadership has resulted in the school being well advanced in its implementation of the Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history. School leaders reported that national timelines for implementation would be met. Staff continue to use the Curriculum Framework as the basis for program planning in the other learning areas.

The school provided clear evidence that it has established a broad range of strategies to address the learning of cohorts and significant sub-groups of students. The leadership team indicated their activity in monitoring the performance of Aboriginal students and students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Less obvious was analysis of student performance information by gender. Leaders indicated their intent to more closely monitor this in the next Business Plan cycle.

In response to detailed analysis of data gathered by NAPLAN, SAIS and On-Entry Assessments, the school adopted a comprehensive whole-school approach to literacy. The collaboratively developed Whole-School Literacy Plan 2014–2016 is articulated in the school Operational Plan that includes details of a phase of learning audit designed to assess the implementation of the mandatory elements of the plan.

Discussions with school leaders, teachers and community members confirmed reviewer observations that differentiated curriculum is planned and delivered in every classroom to improve the learning of the diverse student population. The commitment to evidence-based support programs including
MultiLit and the school initiated Bush Buddies early intervention strategy highlight the commendable emphasis on targeted intervention at North Beach Primary School.

Overall progressive results indicate that student performance is within the expected range when compared to like schools. The school's analysis of student performance data indicates that most performance targets should be achieved within the current DPA.
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?*

Through observations and extensive interviews with parents, students and the School Board the reviewers were able to verify that the vision, ethos and ‘We Care” motto are embedded in all aspects of the school’s operation.

The school’s vision, reviewed in collaboration with the School Board in 2012, aims to provide a quality education program in a caring environment that nurtures and enables all students to achieve high standards and maximise their potential. Both the vision and the motto are embraced by the school community and underpin the educational experience for the school’s diverse socio-economic student population. The Bush Buddies Program, which aims to provide students in the Early Years and their families with the opportunity to participate in a working partnership, exemplifies the school’s caring culture.

An ongoing focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of all students resulted in the current Business Plan targeting anxiety, bullying and self-esteem. Meetings with students, parents, Board and staff supported the school’s anecdotal evidence and survey feedback that it has successfully used a range of strategies to embed the vision and motto in order to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, with appropriate additional support available for those requiring intervention. During the external review the Board Chair reflected the view of the school community when she suggested, ‘the school has created a caring and sharing environment of trust’.

The school is commended for the development of a culture that has a prime focus on the development of the whole child and high expectations. The school culture effectively supports critical analysis of teaching and learning and, through a clear framework of values and virtues, ensures a safe and inclusive environment for its diverse student population. The school has utilised the IPS staffing flexibility to appoint staff supportive of this culture. Strategies that support the development of this culture include the “You Can Do It” program, an ongoing Values/Virtues program and the highly regarded multi-layered Buddies initiative.

The school offers a differentiated teaching program to support the learning of all students. Staff members have collaboratively developed whole-of-school
literacy and numeracy statements to guide teaching through the phases of schooling. The School Operational Plan (2014–2016) provides a detailed overview of strategies to be used to ensure the learning needs of all students are met. Meetings with highly engaged curriculum leaders and teaching staff together with a review of NAPLAN data indicates that endorsed strategies are appropriate, innovative, coordinated and monitored. This approach is exemplified by the commitment to targeted improvement for students identified as being at educational risk in reading.

A highly effective partnership with the outreach services of the West Coast Language Development Centre has enabled the school to access resources to underpin its literacy program. Based on available data from multiple sources including NAPLAN, On-Entry Assessment and teacher judgements as reported on SAIS, the school identified and committed resources to the delivery of the MultiLit recovery program. Following a review of the program the school extended the strategy to include MiniLit and, in 2014, the early intervention PreLit program.

The school is commended for the development of highly effective partnerships with parents and the broader community. In addition to the partnership with the West Coast Language Development Centre, the school has forged a number of significant partnerships that are contributing to the quality of its learning environment. Meetings with staff, parents and the School Board variously highlighted relationships with the Carine Network of Schools, the North Beach Baptist Church, the North Beach Returned Services League, Therapy Focus and the Disability Services Commission, all of which have a significant impact on the learning environment.

Meetings with parents and Board members acknowledged community appreciation of the highly effective school leadership team, the welcoming front office staff and the approachable teaching and support staff. In addition, the reviewers observed parents and families contributing as partners in the school. The contribution of parents is exemplified by the enthusiastic participation of a significant number of students from across all phases of learning in the parent-coordinated, before-school Running Club. Other programs that add significant value to the learning opportunities on offer at the school include the Tree Nursery and the Vegetable Garden Project. Both enjoy the support of volunteers from the community. The Parents and Citizens' Association is very supportive of the school and is active in providing significant resources to complement the learning environment.
North Beach Primary School has established a high quality learning environment underpinned by a strong sense of community pride and a commitment to a collaboratively-established school vision. Together the leadership team and staff have created a supportive, inclusive and successful learning environment for its diverse student population.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

A culture of ongoing, critical self-review is established at North Beach Primary School. School leaders, through personal modelling and the establishment of structures and processes that facilitate self-reflection and collaboration, set high expectations for ongoing improvement to teaching and learning. Unsolicited comments from staff, parents, members of the School Board and students acknowledged the very significant, positive influence of school leadership on this school culture.

Distributed leadership is well established and supported at the school. Many in leadership positions volunteer their time to develop leadership expertise and support other staff members. Meetings with school literacy leaders, numeracy leader, social and emotional development leader, science leader, information technology leader, kindergarten/pre-primary hub leader and the performance management review leader demonstrated the high level of expertise, enthusiasm and commitment at the school. Leaders enact their roles through well-planned structures including a weekly forum, fortnightly staff meetings, hub phase of schooling meetings and school development days. Significant informal collaboration amongst teachers enhances the effectiveness of these leadership roles.

Significant improvements to student academic performance since 2009 can be attributed, in part, to staff willingness to challenge and enhance their teaching strategies. Through formal and informal collaborative meetings staff discuss evidence-based successful teaching strategies and reflect on and modify their practice. Through this collaboration, whole-of-school approaches in literacy and numeracy have been established which enable consistent and agreed teaching and learning strategies, and moderation of teachers’ grading to occur. In performance management processes, led by the Principal and Deputy Principal, staff reflect against the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards and discuss their identified areas for improvement. Recent staff reflection against the National School Improvement Tool has also contributed to effective staff self-assessment processes.

Through collaborative meetings, the staff has agreed to consider the implementation of coaching and teacher observation to further improve teaching practice. Some staff members are trained as “coaches” and
professional learning is planned to develop staff understandings about the processes and benefits of teacher observation. This initiative has the potential to further enhance the quality of teaching at the school.

School planning documents effectively provide direction for school improvement and staff practice in the school. The North Beach Primary School Business Plan 2012–15 articulates a set of values that underpins all planning and practice, a conceptual teaching and learning model, broad whole-of-school directions (literacy and numeracy; student behaviour, attendance and wellbeing; leadership; early childhood education and achieving greater autonomy), and short and longer term targets for school improvement in literacy, numeracy and social and emotional wellbeing. Teacher planning is guided by more detailed operational plans, the Australian Curriculum, the Curriculum Framework and information about student performance and needs. The staff has modified some of the original targets of the Business Plan because of their lack of specificity.

The reviewers concluded, after meeting with the School Board and consideration of sample minutes from Board meetings, that the Board is established and operating within Department of Education guidelines. The Board has made a valuable contribution to the school through the analysis of school performance, the review of the school values and the ratification of the Business Plan and budget. Discussions with Board members indicated that not all of them fully understood the nature of their role and the Board has yet to contribute to policy development and review. The meeting with a representative parent group indicated that there was little knowledge of Board initiatives in the community. Board members indicated that there may be significant turnover of Board personnel in 2015 because of their Year 7 children moving to secondary schools. It is recommended that further training be made available for Board members in 2015; people who can contribute a diverse range of strategic skills be sought to nominate for vacant positions in 2015, and communication relating to the function and activity of the Board be enhanced.

The initiative of the school to establish the Bush Buddies program for three year olds is acknowledged, particularly the intent to attract new prospective parents to the school, implement parent education programs and link children to services that can identify and address learning difficulties and related health issues. Staff reported that the children and families most in need are not accessing the program. Further innovative strategies to engage these parents are encouraged.
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The reviewers concluded from meetings with school leaders, staff, the School Board and parents that the positive culture at the school, excellent distributed leadership structure and collaborative planning and decision-making processes have established an environment that is stable and sustainable, where staff members are confident to challenge their teaching practice in an ongoing way.
Conclusion

North Beach Primary School exhibits a culture that is student focused, gives primacy to the development of the whole child and provides a concentrated focus on pastoral care and values development whilst achieving good academic standards. The school demonstrates a strong sense of community and is a friendly, safe place for children to optimise their development and learning. The positive school culture will enable appropriate responses to changing demographics which includes more students with learning difficulties and non-English speaking backgrounds.

School leaders model ethical, respectful and professional practice and set the very positive tone for the school. The school exhibits the characteristics of a genuine "learning organisation" where there are high expectations of children and staff. Staff collaborate to achieve the best outcomes for children, continually challenge their own teaching practice and engage in professional learning and use evidence-based planning and practices. Relationships between staff, students and parents are positive and supportive.

The school has achieved a number of targets of the Business Plan relating to literacy and numeracy, and is well positioned to achieve the remainder of the targets by the time of completion of the current Business Plan and DPA period.

Commendations

The reviewers commend the school for excellence in the following areas:

- The established culture of evidence-based, critical self-assessment and review at a number of levels including whole-of-school performance, class performance, teaching, leadership and performance of the School Board.
- The commitment to the development of the whole child through a set of embedded values, pastoral care, high expectations, a safe and inclusive learning environment and differentiated curriculum.
- The commitment to evidence-based support and early intervention programs including MultiLit and the school-initiated Bush Buddies early intervention strategy.
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- The very high level of trust, respect and collaboration evident in school staff and community relationships.
- The highly effective partnerships with parents and the broader community that support student learning at the school.

Areas for Improvement

The reviewers identify the following areas for improvement:

- The contribution of the School Board is further enhanced through:
  - the ongoing training of existing Board Members
  - the initial training for newly elected Board members
  - active recruitment of members with diverse and relevant skill sets
  - enhanced communication of Board activity to the wider school community.
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 North Beach 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.

John Garnaut, Lead Reviewer

10 April 2014

Date

Bill Gibson, Reviewer

10 April 2014

Date

Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services

11/4/2014

Date