Bicton
Primary School

2017

Review Findings

Independent Public School Review

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Stephen Doherty
Board Chair:	Mr Nick Emeljanow
School Address:	View Terrace, Bicton WA 6157
Number of Students:	400
ICSEA[1]	1099
Reviewers:	Mr Bill Gibson (Lead)
	Professor Marion Milton
Review Dates:	11 and 12 October 2017

Purpose of the Review

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

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

Review Methodology

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

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

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

- the *My School®* website

- School Performance Monitoring

- Schools Online reports.

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

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

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

Business Plan

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

Context

Bicton Primary School is located in the south metropolitan area, 16 kilometres from Perth. The school was established in 1904, celebrated its centenary in 2004 and became an IPS in 2015. It is well maintained and sits in attractive, terraced grounds with established trees. Several newer buildings have been added including a library/computer laboratory and rooms for music and art/science.

The ICSEA is 1099, with 78% of students in the top two socio-educational quartiles. Currently the student enrolment consists of 400 students (215 boys and 185 girls), from Kindergarten to Year 6. The enrolment includes 2% Aboriginal, 4% who speak English as an additional language or dialect and 14% non-fee paying visa students. Fifteen students receive disability resourcing services support, two students are under the care of the Department of Communities and 54 students have been identified through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data – School Students with Disability, the majority for asthma or anaphylaxis.

The school is located in close proximity to several other government and private schools. The latter schools attract a substantial proportion of students from Year 5 and Year 6 prior to secondary schooling. This contributed to a decrease from a total of 51 students in Year 3 in 2014 to 37 in Year 5 in 2016. The 2017 enrolment data has indicated an increase in Pre-primary students while overall numbers remain steady.

Findings

- The Business Plan 2016–18 was developed in 2015 in consultation with the board, and presents a long-term strategic approach. It outlines the vision, values, school creed, priorities and goals. The business plan timeframe is not aligned with the DPA (2015–17) to allow time for consultation, staff discussion and the release of Focus 2016 as a basis for determining priority areas. The principal indicated the timeframe of the next business plan will align with the new DPA.

- Broad goals are listed in the business plan in line with Focus 2016. Strategies, performance monitoring, resources and support available are listed in detail under each of the headings: "success for all students", "high quality teaching and leadership" and "build school community partnerships". A final statement indicates the links between the three strategic objectives,

the Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2016–2019 and Focus 2016 statements.

- The goals/targets are broad and could encompass a wide range of smaller targets, which were evident in operational planning. In student performance, the overall business plan target encompasses both literacy and numeracy and therefore is not easily achievable in full. The targets under the area of high quality teaching and leadership, while often difficult to measure, could be linked to student outcomes or progress, when professional learning and programs have been adopted in specific learning areas, for example in mathematics. To support the self-review judgements about progress and outcomes, it is recommended the next business plan include well-crafted targets that emphasise how much improvement is expected and how the improvement will be measured. Discussions with the principal and board indicate the new business plan targets will be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time limited (SMART), and that yearly reviews will determine progress towards them in line with the business plan goals and priorities.

- The 2017 self-review documentation indicates a thorough investigation of student improvement and progress, as well as school performance, teaching and leadership, and community involvement, areas listed as priorities in the business plan.

- The business plan is placed on the school website, hard copies are available in the office and parents are notified of its availability via the school newsletter.

Areas of strength

- The attention to detail provided, in terms of the strategies and resources required to achieve goals.

- The statements indicating clear links between the strategic plan and system requirements.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure the timeframe for the next business plan aligns with the span of the new DPA.

- Develop, in collaboration with the school board, SMART student improvement and school performance targets intended to have maximum impact on overall school performance in the next business plan.

- Ensure indicators used to judge community partnership involvement are measurable.

Teaching and Learning

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

Findings

- Reviewers compared evidence tabled by the leadership team and curriculum leaders with information sourced from School Performance Monitoring, Schools Online and the My School website. The analysis verifies self-review findings that the very broad student improvement target has not been fully achieved.

- Progress towards the student achievement target of the "extent to which the school maintains and improves standards of achievement in literacy and numeracy" is assessed and reported using National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) longitudinal average trend lines, percentage of students achieving in the top 20% and On-entry assessment.

- The self-review of literacy indicates that, apart from Year 3 spelling and grammar and punctuation, the percentage of students in the top 20% increased from 2015 to 2017 with the school outperforming like-schools in 2017 in all domains except Year 5 spelling and reading.

- The self-review of literacy 2014–17 trend lines indicates positive trends were evident in all domains except Year 5 spelling and reading.

- In numeracy the self-assessment determined the 2012–17 trend is positive in both Year 3 and Year 5. While the school has not increased the percentage of students in the top 20% from 2015 to 2017, the percentage in 2017 is above that of like-schools.

- The school self-review of On-entry assessment evidence determined the targeted minimum 0.5 points of expected progress between Pre-primary and Year 1 for identified students has been achieved.

- Generally, academic achievement is summarised by the comparative performance tables which indicate that, except for 2016 Year 3 writing and 2017 Year 5 spelling which were 'below expected', students performed 'at or above expected' in all domains during the 2015–17 DPA. The My School Results in Numbers table indicates that apart from the Year 3 cohort which performed below schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds in all literacy domains in 2016, the school regularly performed close to or above expected levels.

- A review of 2012–17 trend lines in literacy and numeracy supports the self-review conclusion that, while the 2016 downturn in Year 3 has impacted literacy and numeracy trends, the school is well-placed to achieve its 'good to better' focus. The contextually appropriate focus on increasing the percentage of students in the top 20% band is acknowledged in the teacher effectiveness statement that acknowledged "most of our students achieve well." The commitment to develop leadership support for the advanced children in the School Leadership Planning document is affirmed.

- The leadership, curriculum and phase of development (POD) teams indicated awareness that the 2016 Year 3 cohort had performed below the averages of like-schools in all NAPLAN domains. However, Year 3 performance in 2017 is above like-schools in all domains. Conversations with the Year 3–6 POD team and the student services team indicated targeted resourcing, programs and strategies were being provided to support the Year 3, 2016 cohort with a detailed analysis of Education Assessment Reporting Software (EARS) data used to identify areas requiring additional focus. Assessments including Progressive Achievement Testing (PAT) and Brightpath are being used to monitor improvement.

- Students receiving disability allocation support and those below the national minimum standards have individual education plans or are included in group education plans. All students requiring an adjusted education plan receive support from the student support team. Guided by the Students at Educational Risk policy, the team coordinates input from outside agencies, staff professional learning, parent communication, plan reviews and if appropriate, the preparation of modified reporting documents. The team tracks students to minimise the impact of transition and works closely with the school's education assistant placement committee to ensure the needs of the student are prioritised when allocating support. Parents of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments spoke of the commitment of staff to support the learning of their children.

- While attendance targets have not been achieved, overall attendance rates are consistently above like-schools. Of concern to staff is the percentage of students in the early childhood area whose attendance is 'at risk'. The attendance policy indicates that staff communicate the importance of regular school attendance. The student support team indicated EARS data highlighting the correlation between irregular student attendance and literacy and numeracy achievement, especially in the early years of schooling, will be closely examined.

- Collaborative planning to support curriculum delivery and monitoring of student performance processes is embedded. This is enabled by the

formation of POD teams, the allocation of common release time and a focus on professional learning related to contemporary pedagogy and the direction set by the business plan. There is a clear focus on developing comprehensive whole-school approaches to teaching as evidenced by English, mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT) and digital technologies, humanities and social sciences (HASS) and science policy statements.

- Performance management is in place for all staff. For teachers, it is aligned closely with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers with staff using the Performance Conversations coaching jigsaw to identify conversation topics. Similarly, support staff use the jigsaw together with the Competency Framework for Education Assistants to develop an agenda for performance meetings. The principal uses full circle feedback to guide personal performance improvement.

- The development of the Lesson Study policy which aims to embed a school-wide approach to pedagogy and emphasises the importance of collaboration, classroom observation and feedback has supported progress towards the achievement of Strategic Objective 2 which relates to high quality teaching and leadership.

- The Riverside Network of Schools provides a valuable resource for the provision of professional learning, networking and cross-school moderation. Other professional partnerships include connections with the School of Special Education Needs: Disability and the Science Teachers Association of Western Australia.

- In addition to engagement with the Riverside Network the staff has participated in a range of professional learning opportunities including differentiated teaching practice, reading and phonics, and anxiety in students. Individual staff members have been upskilled as trainers in selected areas. Conversations with the leadership team highlighted the significant impact high quality professional learning has on teaching and learning.

- Parents were very positive about the school, expressed their appreciation of the principal and staff and affirmed the provision of an environment where students could build their confidence and social skills. Some of the contributing initiatives include the partnership with the EdConnect Australia mentoring program, the highly-regarded fathering project, the strong relationship with the Bicton Returned and Services League of Australia and the chaplaincy program. The principal, board, staff and community are commended for promoting productive engagement of parents in the education of their children. Effective partnerships with parents and the wider community are established on trust and mutual respect and students were

thoughtful and conscious of 'doing their best to succeed' with a positive attitude towards the school, teachers and their learning. Parents felt that the school is a true 'school of choice'.

- The inclusion of improvement goals/targets fundamental to achieving the school's 'good to better' focus is pleasing. The principal reported that many of the strategies have been implemented; however, while the connection to improved student learning was not easily demonstrated, he indicated recent pedagogical adjustments have contributed to improved numeracy performance. It is appropriate the school continues to make the links between improved student learning and school targets to improve the quality of teaching and school/community partnerships.

Areas of strength

- The development of the Lesson Study policy which aims to embed a school-wide approach to pedagogy and emphasises the importance of collaboration, classroom observation and feedback.

- The promotion of productive engagement of parents in the education of their children.

Areas for improvement

- Examine the correlation between irregular student attendance and literacy and numeracy achievement.

- Continue to make the links between improved student learning and school targets to improve the quality of teaching and school/community partnerships.

Student Performance Monitoring

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

Findings

- From the self-review documents and discussions with the leadership team, the reviewers can confirm that continuous and rigorous self-assessment processes are in place. Further discussions with teachers indicated assessment processes are embedded throughout the school. Further evidence includes an assessment and reporting schedule that specifies what is to be assessed, when and by which year groups. The leadership team indicated an evaluation of data from First Cut and EARS is undertaken by senior staff. In addition to an analysis of NAPLAN student performance data by staff, a commercial company is engaged to conduct further analysis to identify specific areas of strength and concern. Following those analyses, teacher development is organised to interpret the findings in terms of teaching needs for individual students and whole classes.

- The Student Achievement Information System and Student Information Systems are used to plan targeted interventions. This assists with class level planning to target areas for focus and revision and individual learning needs in literacy and numeracy. The data is also used to inform operational plans and phase, year and class level planning to support the overall focus on 'good to better'. Reviewers noted staff were conversant with the operational plans and used them as working documents. The self-review indicated areas of strength in literacy and numeracy and areas needing improvement. On-entry assessment data is collected and analysed to identify students whose learning, emotional and social needs indicate they need further preparation for formal schooling. Reassessment of identified students is completed in Year 1.

- Class teachers also undertake assessments based on the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline. Common assessment tasks are set in year groups and teachers monitor their judgements against the School Curriculum and Standards Authority examples, in-school comparisons within year level and POD teams and comparisons with other teachers in the Riverside Network.

- This year PAT mathematics and reading comprehension assessments have been introduced along with the South Australian spelling test at the start and end of the year to enable teachers in Years 1–6 to judge student progress and program effectiveness. Parents who spoke with reviewers indicated they

were informed of their children's progress via semester reports and one-on-one discussions when required.

- The music specialist indicated that she had used the School of Instrumental Music aptitude assessment to determine current student knowledge and would use it in the future to review increases in musical understanding.

- The leadership team and early childhood teachers indicated the school has self-assessed and met the seven areas of the National Quality Standard. The school is awaiting external verification of their findings.

- Annual reports for 2014–16 have been placed on the school website and on Schools Online. These annual reports provide clear evidence of student progress and achievement on NAPLAN literacy and numeracy assessments compared to like-schools and Western Australian public schools. The non-academic area of attendance is outlined and the results of student, staff and parent surveys are presented. The annual reports indicate the priority areas for the following year based on the analysis of the results presented. In addition to a comprehensive summation of progress in literacy and numeracy, the 2016 Annual Report included a commentary on activities in both Japanese and visual art together with an ICT report. As parents interviewed emphasised the significance of all aspects of learning it would be contextually beneficial if future reports included outcome-focused statements in each learning area.

- Sustainability of student performance monitoring should be ensured through the processes in place including: the intention to develop a wider distributed leadership; the existing schedules of assessments by year group and date; and prioritising NAPLAN analysis and follow-up discussions by a commercial company on school development days. The school may need to consider which processes and priorities in the assessment area will best serve them into the future to ensure teacher capacity is built to interpret assessment data in terms of student learning needs, planning and teaching.

Areas of strength

- The thorough and embedded nature of the assessment of student learning and performance.

- The emerging POD teams which focus on understanding the data and interpreting it in terms of the learning needs of phases and year levels.

Areas for improvement

- Align student performance monitoring with clear targets from the business plan as well as operational plans.

- Report student monitoring annually through achievement and progress towards business plan targets.

- Include outcome-focused statements in each learning area in future annual reports.

Program Delivery

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

Findings

- A review of school documentation, meetings with curriculum leaders and specialist staff, together with classroom visits confirmed curriculum programs, initiatives and strategies are developed in accordance with the requirements and schedule of the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline. Focused differentiation supports the needs of students requiring teaching and learning adjustments.

- In addition to Japanese (Years 2–6), specialist programs operate for Years 1–6 in visual art, physical education and music. Specialist teachers show a commitment to ensuring judgements are made in accordance with achievement standards and moderated where possible.

- A commitment to support student learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics is evidenced by the development of a whole-school approach to the teaching of science and technology.

- Collaborative teams develop programs of work. Where necessary the staff have developed scope and sequence documents to guide programs of learning. An example provided was the scope and sequence statement being developed using a synthetic phonics approach.

- Student safety and welfare is embedded within the vision "to nurture, inspire and achieve success." A strong values program, whole-school Positive Behaviour Support framework and programs such as Aussie Optimism, EdConnect Australia mentoring, peer mediation and Rainbows together with the employment of a school chaplain support student wellbeing. Discussions with the student support team, parents and students reflected feedback from surveys and an analysis of attitude, behaviour and effort data that indicated students feel safe and supported.

- Documentation including the Positive Student Behaviour Support plans, Student Personal Mobile Device policy, Social Media policy, the Code of Conduct, Healthy Eating policy and the Excursion policy outline policies and procedures used to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students.

- In response to discussions with staff and the board, an action plan to embed the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework within the operations of the

school was established. Evidence of the developing focus is the commitment to include Aboriginal perspectives in HASS operational planning as exemplified by the Point Walter and local area whole-school oral history project.

- Management of the school's program delivery is of a high standard. Well-documented school statements inform the community of school operations and procedures. These documents include homework and handwriting statements, operational plans and scope and sequence charts, the Assessment Schedule, executive team roles statement, regular newsletters and parent and staff handbooks.

Area of strength

- The commitment to include Aboriginal perspectives and the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework in HASS operational planning.

Resourcing and Support

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

Findings

- Meetings with representatives of the finance committee and the board confirmed the principal, manager corporate services, finance committee and the board consider resourcing decisions. Allocations of financial and human resources are linked to identified needs, planning and priorities. Though currently vacant, the inclusion of a position for board representation on the finance committee provides additional transparency.

- The principal, manager corporate services and the student support team verified student characteristics funding including disability allocation support is directed to the achievement of improved outcomes for identified students.

- Resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Prioritised in Strategic Objective 1, "success for all students", additional funding was allocated to the chaplaincy program to enhance pastoral care through programs such as Aussie Optimism and Rainbows together with initiatives such as the garden and Lego clubs. Similarly the school has used IPS flexibility to employ a school psychologist.

- Workforce planning is guided by the staffing profile package and reviewed annually. Future planning and recruitment will consider the potential impact of profile imbalances on the sustainability of existing programs and strategies. The distributed leadership model is strategically managed to drive succession planning, support program sustainability and the ongoing professional up-skilling of staff.

- Evidence of progress towards the achievement of business plan Strategic Objective 3, "build school community partnerships" is provided by the outstanding support of the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) whose members supported the completion of an extensive range of projects including redevelopment of the quadrangle, the development of a nature play area and the acquisition of additional technology infrastructure.

- The finance committee indicated that with stable enrolment, ongoing 'out of hours' use of the facilities, continuing support of the P&C and local businesses, and continuing high level of parent voluntary contributions (currently 85%), the school is well positioned to sustain key initiatives.

Areas of strength

- The inclusion of a board representative position on the finance committee to ensure processes remain transparent and focused on the school improvement agenda.

- Distributed leadership which guides succession planning and supports the ongoing professional growth of staff.

School Board

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

Findings

- There has been an engaged and passionate board operating at the school over the period of the business plan. The board consists of: the chair, who is a parent member; the principal; seven additional parent members, one of whom is the P&C representative; and three staff. It complies with the *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Regulations 2000* regarding membership categories and composition.

- When the board was created, former council members targeted parents with specific skill sets as prospective board members, and asked them to apply. As a result, there is a highly capable board representing the community.

- Discussions with the board chair, principal and members confirm the board fulfils its functions as it participates in:

  o the endorsement of the DPA

  o review and endorsement of the budget

  o contribution to and endorsement of the business plan (further discussions indicated that the next business plan would include a statement from the board chair and that the business plan would be signed by the principal and the board chair)

  o review of school policies

  o processes to determine progress via the school's midyear annual progress review, and that they question and discuss what is working well and what needs to be improved

  o processes to determine the satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students which are reported in annual reports.

- Regarding the review and endorsement of the annual reports, it was acknowledged that a statement from the board signed by the chair would enhance community understanding of board engagement. Members indicated that while the information in the annual reports relating to progress and outcomes had been presented to them at meetings they had not seen the actual annual reports at meetings; however, the annual reports can be

accessed on the website. One new member indicated that she had accessed them along with other information prior to moving to the area.

- A board member and the principal undertook two days of board training and provided a briefing to members. Members understand their roles and responsibilities as prescribed in the *School Education Act 1999, School Education Regulations 2000* and Department policy. Several members have experience on outside boards, and are aware that IPS boards differ from corporate or community boards. Members are aware of the online training modules available through the Department, and discussions indicated that, while they intend to complete them, there has been some difficulty in obtaining access to the network. Reviewers affirm the commitment to ensure all members have access to and receive training through online modules.

- The board intends to undertake a self-review later in the year.

- The board meets once per term and receives relevant financial reports as well as regular updates on student monitoring and performance and NAPLAN data. Board minutes for 2017 have been placed on the website and provided for reviewers.

- To ensure sustainability, the initial parent group of board members were nominated for one, two or three-year terms, to allow for rotation. A documented succession plan is recommended to ensure ongoing retention of board operation, knowledge and experience.

- The board has established a close working relationship with the principal and the P&C, with the P&C president attending and reporting to all board meetings and the board chair attending and reporting at all P&C meetings. Discussions with parents indicated that they had very little knowledge of the board's role and function or knowledge of members apart from the chair who is a long standing active school community member. It is recommended the board take steps to inform parents and the school community of its roles and functions.

- While the board actively fulfils its role and members are involved in various school activities, there is no broader visibility via the newsletter nor annual report apart from a brief statement relating to the board's function on the school website. It is recommended that the board increase its visibility in the school community.

Areas of strength

- Board members are keen, engaged and active members who embrace their responsibilities.

- The high level of input into the development of the school vision, values, mission and strategic purpose.

- The high level of robust discussions and input towards development of the business plan.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the visibility of the board within the school and community.

- Explore means to enhance communication with the school community regarding the board's role and function.

- Sign off both business plan and annual report documents.

- Undertake a self-review to investigate board effectiveness, sustainability and an inventory of skill sets to ensure ongoing board effectiveness.

- Document a succession plan.

Conclusion

The Bicton Primary School community has embedded a safe, positive, inclusive and collaborative learning environment that supports its vision "to nurture, inspire and achieve success." Relationships between students, parents, community and staff are positive and supportive.

A contextually appropriate emphasis on "success for all students" as represented by the focus on 'good to better', "high quality teaching and leadership" and "build school community partnerships" guides the development, delivery and evaluation of teaching and learning.

A committed leadership team, informed phase of learning, student support and curriculum teams and enthusiastic staff have collaboratively established a positive learning environment with an emphasis on the development of staff capacity, a culture of high expectations and effective teaching. The capacity to sustain and improve is strengthened by board oversight of school planning and accountability processes.

While the overall standard of academic achievement is generally within or above the expected performance range, the principal and board chair are confident endorsed strategies and programs will lead to improved student outcomes in the next DPA.

Declaration

We confirm the information in this document is, to the best of our knowledge and based on the verification of the evidence provided by Bicton Primary School, true and correct.
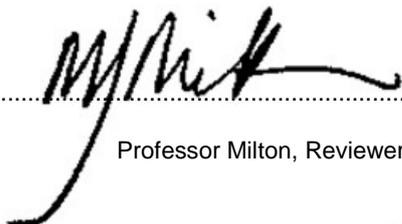
The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.

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Mr Bill Gibson, Lead Reviewer

............6 November 2017............
Date

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Professor Milton, Reviewer

............6 November 2017............
Date

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Mr Ken Perris, Director
Independent Public School Review

............15 November 2017............
Date