



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

Dalmain Primary School

2015

Independent Review Findings



**Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools**

Disclaimer

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

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

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Donald Boyes
Board Chair:	Mr Simon Clark
School Location:	64 Dalmain St Dalmain WA
School Classification:	PS Class 4A
Number of Students:	282
Reviewers:	Mrs Megan Phillips (Lead) and Mr John Iacomella
Review Dates:	25 and 26 May 2015

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 have the potential to 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 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 Independent Public School (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.

The 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?

Dalmain Primary School is a well-established school situated in Kingsley, one of the early housing developments in the north metropolitan area of Perth. Having recently celebrated its 25th Anniversary, the school had seen a gradual drop off in the number of students living within its intake boundaries; however, recent trends indicate a growth in the number of applications for places in the school. This is particularly noticeable in the current waiting list for kindergarten students which, for the 2016 school year, indicates an enrolment of 40 kindergarten students; up from the more usual 20 students.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) for the school is 1077.00(2).

With the success of the school's intentional focus on the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results to improve student learning, enrolment is being sought for not only students within the school boundaries, but also from parents from overseas and others from neighbouring suburbs. Student outcomes are a credit to the school policy development and strategies aimed at ensuring a high standard of achievement is reached and maintained.

The Principal and staff are well respected and acknowledged by the community as dependable, pastoral and always available to listen to the concerns of parents and students. Parents were especially impressed that both the Principal and Deputy Principal know all students by name.

A school psychologist supports the students at educational risk program one day a fortnight and a school chaplain supports the pastoral care program.

Discussions with members of the community confirmed parent and staff satisfaction with the educational excellence being sought for students. Further, it was evident that the school provides for the broader development of students through the provision of health and well-being programs, and the deliberate inclusion of excellent programs in specialist areas such as music, physical and health education, Japanese language and art.

A cohesive workforce plan is in place to ensure the continuance of skilled teaching and support staff, vital to the school's reputation for academic success.

Partnerships with Greenwood College and Edith Cowan University support student learning. The Languages Other Than English (LOTE) teacher works with Greenwood College to develop programs and common assessment tasks.

The school is well resourced and teachers are enthusiastic and appreciative of the level of support they receive to attend professional development in addition to that provided by the school for whole-of-school curriculum requirements.

The board members, while positive and supportive of the school Business Plan and the generally high achievements of the students as indicated by their NAPLAN results, have not as yet developed their own confidence and understanding of the role they can and should play in the governance of the school.

With some board members about to retire as their children leave the school, the Board Chair is aware that the election of new members will provide an opportunity for the Board as a whole to re-train and better understand the significance of the position they occupy within the school community. There was little understanding or general knowledge of the role of the Board within the 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?

The school's self-review included comparative NAPLAN data analysis and teacher judgements, an Early Childhood Education review, English and mathematics reviews with results measured against the Business Plan; science results measured against the discontinued Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE); and an overview of the specific learning programs in place to improve student outcomes in spelling. These were well documented and discussed on the days of the review visits.

With procedures in place for the provision and assessment of all areas of the curriculum, the NAPLAN literacy and numeracy learning area data is clearly the focus of the academic excellence sought for students at the school. Other learning areas such as science, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), spelling and attendance were included in the self-review with data clearly showing the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the school's approach to meeting students' needs. Other areas of the curriculum: music, art, Japanese, and physical and health education did not have a comprehensive program of assessment and evaluation with outcomes to be achieved and were not included in the School Business Plan or the self-review.

The Board was cognisant of the elements of the Business Plan and the DPA and had taken part in the self-review.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

Five of the six targets in the school's Business Plan focus on student achievement in literacy, numeracy, science and society and environment using NAPLAN and WAMSE test results. The NAPLAN targets are for student achievement to be the equivalent of, or better, than like schools in all five domains for Years 3, 5 and 7.

NAPLAN test results for the period 2012–2014 indicate the students have achieved the equivalent of, or better than, like schools for all the learning domains except spelling. In 2013, Year 7 students achieved less than like schools for spelling. Further data analysis indicated that spelling was an issue in the lower year levels. For example, in 2013, 9% and 12% of the Year 5 students achieved in the bottom 20% compared to 7% and 10% for like schools.

The school has implemented *Words Their Way* to improve spelling results throughout the school. Students in Years 3 to 5 are grouped according to their spelling levels and then taught for 40 minutes each day in an effort to improve their learning. Student results are entered into an electronic database and student achievement progress is carefully monitored. Teachers acknowledge that there has been improvement. In 2014, Year 3, 5 and 7 students achieved comparable NAPLAN results to like schools in spelling. However, the staff believe there remains room for improvement and have identified a group of students who continue to need additional support.

It is a credit to the school that it has consistently achieved results better than or equivalent to like schools in the NAPLAN domains, except for spelling in 2013, and has achieved its targets in the Business Plan.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed for any student achieving less than the benchmark in literacy or numeracy. The IEP is developed in consultation with the parents and details the area of concern, the desired student achievement goal, the planned strategies and timelines. External assistance such as speech therapists and school psychologist are used if necessary. A Group Educational Plan is developed for groups of students identified as having learning difficulties. Discussion with teachers indicates these plans do have a positive impact on student learning.

The Deputy Principal has responsibility for ensuring the plans are implemented and reviewed when necessary.

The *Support a Reader* program is another example of the school implementing a strategy to improve the learning outcomes of groups of students experiencing learning difficulties. Teachers have indicated this program is assisting students with their reading and verbal skills development. NAPLAN reading results for 2012–2014 confirm that the school, in most cases, has fewer students in the bottom 20% of readers compared to like schools.

The school uses NAPLAN tests from previous years to assess student literacy and numeracy levels in Years 2, 4 and 6. Discussions with teachers indicate the results provide baseline student data that help identify students experiencing learning difficulties in numeracy and literacy. Also, the student data assists in more effective planning for the successive year for literacy and numeracy programs.

The school is continuing to administer the WAMSE tests despite these tests being discontinued by the Department of Education in 2013. The school uses these to measure student learning outcomes in science. These test results are published in the annual reports. In 2013, 50% of students achieved in the top 20% of the State. When the school administered the test in 2014, 47% of the students achieved in the top 20% of the State.

Currently, the school is investigating other standardised tests to measure student achievement and progress in learning areas other than literacy and numeracy.

Teachers in the early childhood years are using the *Bright Path* software program to assess student progress and evaluate teaching programs. Parents are encouraged to take an active interest in their child's development and receive frequent student progress reports from the school. The reports cover English, fine-motor skills, mathematics and gross-motor skills. Student progress is measured on a continuum from 'Working Towards' to 'Working Above' the expected level. Discussions with parents indicate a high level of understanding and support for the early childhood program at the school. The school is well prepared for the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework in 2016.

The non-academic target in the Business Plan is to maintain the current high level of attendance, above 94%. The school has achieved this target for the last two years.

The Principal and parents confirmed the transition to high school program is successful. Examples were given of students from the school enjoying success in their secondary studies as well as being chosen for leadership roles in their high school.

The school is implementing other programs besides literacy and numeracy that improve the learning outcomes for all the students. For example, The school has used the flexibility available to it as an IPS to appoint a music specialist and implement a whole-of-school music program. Students have the opportunity to join the choir and participate in major public events such as the Massed Choir Festival held at Winthrop Hall and the Western Australian Government Schools Music Society Festival (Hairspray Musical) held at Burswood. Students undertaking instrumental music tuition through the School of Instrumental Music complement these school-based programs. Discussions with parents indicate their strong support for the music program being inclusive of all students, as it develops the whole child and has a positive effect on their children's attitude to learning at school. Students indicated their enthusiasm for participating in the music program and believe it has enriched their learning experience at the school. Physical education, Japanese language and the arts are other programs to which the school is allocating additional resources to improve learning outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy for all students. Discussions with board members confirm a willingness to consider student learning targets besides those based on the NAPLAN learning domains.

The school's curriculum leaders have prepared planning documents for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. These detail the targets, strategies, timelines, program evaluation and recommendations for future action. Discussions with teachers confirmed their participation in the planning process and the support and direction they receive for successful implementation of the curriculum.

The scope of the learning program would be more accurately indicated in the next Business Plan if it included expected learning outcomes for learning areas of the Australian Curriculum other than literacy and numeracy and non-academic targets.

Dalmain Primary School

An examination of the teacher judgements indicates the school awards 'A' level assessments above expected when compared to like schools for all NAPLAN domains. For example, in 2014 the school awarded 11 As for Year 3 numeracy when like schools awarded four. Discussions with the school administration indicated that teacher judgements are referenced to the NAPLAN data so that any student receiving an A is also in the top 20% achievement band for that domain.

Dalmain Primary School has achieved its targets as detailed in the Business Plan. There is strong curriculum leadership that fosters teacher collaboration to provide a comprehensive curriculum for all students. Curriculum evaluation and implementation decisions are based on student achievement data.

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?

‘Creating a Culture of Academic Excellence’ is the leading statement of the Business Plan. To achieve this culture the school aims ‘to provide a welcoming, inclusive environment where there is an expectation that everyone will: Work towards achieving their potential; Show respect for themselves and others; Have social, civic and environmental responsibility; and Take pride in their school’.

It was evident to the reviewers that the school has a very positive and supportive learning environment that is focused on the well-being of every student and for all students to achieve at their highest level. Parents, staff and students commented that the school is a community where everyone is welcomed and respected.

Discussions with students confirm they feel safe and supported at school and that all teachers have high and realistic expectations for their learning. Students commented that any new student is shown respect, is immediately welcomed and is readily included in the school’s various activities. A parent related how their child with a learning difficulty was immediately accommodated in the school by receiving the appropriate learning program and being accepted by all students. The child now willingly attends school and there has been a measurable improvement in the child’s learning outcomes.

During meetings and discussions with staff, a unity of purpose and consistency in practice among all staff was evident to the reviewers. There is a clear understanding of the school’s goals and a commitment to working together to achieve the best learning outcomes for all the students. Teachers are supportive of their colleagues and readily collaborate in preparing teaching programs, reviewing student work or preparing out-of-classroom activities, incursions or excursions. Managing student behaviour is not a major issue at the school where student welfare and well-being are of the highest order.

The school is implementing the *You Can Do It* program for K-6. This program develops students’ social and emotional capabilities that include the values of: confidence; persistence; organisation; getting along, and resilience.

Teachers maintain a values record sheet plotting student progress and acquisition/demonstration of the values. The values are displayed throughout the school and in every teaching area. Students achieving success are recognised at the end of term school assembly with their photograph on display at the school. The reviewers sighted the teachers' record sheets listing the date and the value acquired for each student in the class. Parents are very supportive and enthusiastic about this program and confirm the analysis by the staff that the program has helped create and promote the school's culture of caring and support for all students in their learning. In particular, parents and staff acknowledge the capacity of the resilience value in helping students engage in schooling and achieve to their potential.

Teachers confirm the school has a strong focus on achieving the NAPLAN Business Plan targets. Nevertheless, they are encouraged and supported to enrich the learning experience for the students by implementing alternative curriculum delivery strategies to broaden the learning outcomes for all students. For example, a teacher indicated the support and encouragement she received in implementing the *Wildways 2015* program which has the potential to be integrated in all the learning areas. Information to date indicates the program, which includes establishing formal links with other schools and organisations, is achieving the purpose of enriching the learning experience of students.

Water Wise, Buddy System, Dalmain Dockets, Cyber Bullying and Restorative Practice are other examples of programs implemented at the school to create a positive and supportive learning environment for all students.

The school is very inclusive of all students irrespective of any learning difficulties or physical disabilities. Participation in the entire range of school activities is encouraged and supported. Parents confirmed that students take a meaningful and active part in all school activities, inside and outside the classroom, and are treated with respect and dignity.

The Tree House Restaurant initiative conducted by the Year 4 class is an example of all students working together to showcase their personal learning developments to their parents; demonstrate how all their learning to date can be integrated to achieve a common goal; and finally, to raise funds for charity.

In 2014, the staff used the School Survey documents from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to conduct parent, staff and student surveys.

Fifty-five households (28%) replied to the parent survey. In all criteria except one parents were in the agreed/strongly agreed category. The exception was in the criterion 'This school takes parents' opinions seriously' where the majority of responses were 'neither agree nor disagree'. Criteria that were scored highly by parents included, 'My child likes being at this school' and 'Teachers at this school expect my child to do his/her best'.

The highest-rating criterion from the students' survey was 'I feel safe at this school' slightly ahead of 'My teachers expect me to do my best'.

Staff rated all criteria very highly with the highest including 'Teachers at this school expect students to do their best' and 'Student behaviour is well managed at this school'.

Staff indicated information from these surveys is used to improve the school's planning processes and general operations. For example, the school has enhanced its strategies for communicating with parents and is currently investigating alternative strategies to increase parental awareness of the use of technology in their child's education, both at school and at home.

Currently, the school has limited formal contact or collaboration with other similar or neighbouring schools. Teachers utilise their own personal networks to share their teaching experiences and to expand their professional knowledge. Within the school there is extensive peer sharing of professional knowledge and discussion of student achievement. Comparison of student achievement and work samples with those of other schools that could complement within school moderation is limited. School administrators have indicated this is an area that could foster professional growth and assist in the process of moderating student learning achievement.

Dalmain Primary School is achieving its goal of creating a culture of academic excellence that challenges and supports staff to give all students the opportunity to achieve at their highest standard. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and have confidence that the staff are making decisions and implementing programs that are in the best interest of all their children. The staff are united in sharing the common goals for the school, consistent in their teaching practice and encouraged and supported to be innovative in planning for improving student learning outcomes.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

The Principal, deputy and staff are a stable group of educators aware of the need to further develop the scope of the next Business Plan. Specialist teachers in particular are keen to raise the profile of their curriculum areas as implementation of the Australian Curriculum is expanded to include areas such as the arts, physical and health education and languages. The Board and leadership team have planning in place to ensure sustainability of staffing with impending vacancies and the implementation of programs designed specifically to improve student performance in the next cycle. To this end, planning is already in place and discussions with staff are well advanced as to the impact upon the identified areas of need for students. With the increase in numbers of applications for places in the Kindergarten program for 2016 already up by 50% — from 20 to 40 students — and the recognition that the clientele is changing, the school has indicated its commitment to best practice in working within the Early Years Learning Framework and the full resourcing of strategies and equipment required to further the data driven improvement plan in place.

The level of collaboration among the staff and parent body, as well as the support from the Board, augurs well for the continued improvement and enhancement of learning opportunities for all students at the school.

Successful implementation of the Australian Curriculum is a testament to the dedication of the whole staff to the needs of their students and a matter of satisfaction to parents who have chosen to send their children to the school.

Well established protocols such as On-Entry testing in Pre-Primary, enable teachers and parents to take appropriate action to ensure those students requiring extra assistance are able to access it as early as possible. Parents cited this early action to discover the strengths and weaknesses of individual students as one of the strong points of the school.

Astute management of the one-line budget has allowed the school to follow its own priorities; with the expected changes to the allocation of funds in 2015 proving to have very little effect on the provision of the learning program and the required support in place.

Furthermore, the excellent achievements of the school in meeting the majority of targets in the Business Plan demonstrate the sound benchmark upon which targets for the next three years will be developed. Embedded data-driven self-review practices analysing the learning of all students identify areas for improvement from the school's claims and the evidence provided.

Specific resourcing, support and a clear focus on the needs of the early childhood students, given the increase of numbers of students enrolling for the Kindergarten program for 2016, will become a priority in the development of the next Business Plan.

With self-review practices well established in the school's procedures a strategic basis likely to sustain improvement has been created. Parents and board members indicated a high level of trust in the staff to continue to implement these practices and procedures.

With the Board growing in awareness of its governance role within the administration of the school, members are enthusiastic about the Board's future development. Further training is planned for current and new members, taking into consideration the overall skill-set required and the number of members essential for good governance as the school finalises its next iteration of the Business Plan and DPA.

From the staff's claims and the evidence provided, the reviewers are confident of the school's ability to maintain achievements and provide for future improvement through target setting, workforce planning and resourcing.

Conclusion

Dalmain Primary School is clearly meeting all of the aspects of its vision statement. Students are rising to the best of their academic abilities within a supportive learning environment, confident in the nurturing care of their Principal, Deputy Principal and teachers. Parents are aware of the role they play in the education of their children and praised the way in which the school meets the needs of their individual students. Specialist learning areas add balance to the school's strong focus on literacy and numeracy achievement.

The focus on excellence within a nurturing environment is fully supported by the Board. The continued focus on the role of the school chaplain is testament to the importance paid to the changing circumstances of many families now enrolling in the school, and the goal of supporting all students both academically and emotionally.

Business Plan targets have been met. Teachers and support staff are fully engaged in the gathering of data, analysis and provision of ongoing structured programs which meet the needs of individual students. All staff reported that they felt respected professionally and supported to attend specific professional and personal development as required.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- consistent achievement of results better than or equivalent to like schools in the NAPLAN domains and achievement of targets in the Business Plan
- the trust and respect that has been developed and continues to be nurtured within the whole-school community
- the decision of the Board to seek further training and education regarding their role, in order to best serve the needs of the school community.

Areas for Improvement

The following area for improvement is identified:

- include expected learning outcomes for learning areas of the Australian Curriculum other than literacy and numeracy and non-academic targets in the next Business Plan.

Declaration

We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Dalmain 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.



Mrs Megan Phillips, Lead Reviewer

29 July 2015

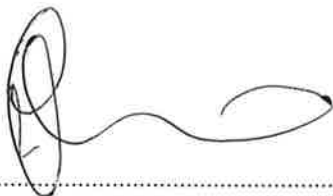
Date



Mr John Iacomella, Reviewer

30 July 2015

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

7/8/15

Date