



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education Services

# **Davallia Primary School**

**2014**

**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 John O'Neill
Board Chair:	Mr Michael Burke
School Location:	6 Juniper Way, Duncraig WA 6023
School Classification:	PS Class 5
Number of Students:	491
Reviewers:	Mr Graham Rixon (Lead), Mr Gerry Chapman
Review Dates:	15, 22 and 23 October 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.

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 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?*

Davallia Primary School is situated in the northern suburb of Duncraig. It was established in 1974 and has evolved over the years to be highly regarded by the community.

The school motto is 'Grow with Respect' and this value is expected from all people who work within or around the school including students, staff, parents and the wider community. The overarching goal is to develop resilient individuals who strive to reach their personal potential, live by the school's values and contribute to the school community. The school is currently undertaking a community consultation on a new set of values—Innovation, Respect, Perseverance and Responsibility.

The school enrolment was 491 students at the time of the review. Since 2009, the student population at Davallia Primary School has grown by approximately 28% (383 to 491 students). The growth areas have been Kindergarten to Year 2 and, as a result, there has been a focus on targeting staff employment for early childhood education years. Attendance at 94.8% is maintained at a rate well above the State average with high levels of regular attendance and a low transiency rate of 6.1%, indicating a stable school population. The demand for places at the school from the local community indicates there is no need to accept out-of-area applications. The exception to this is the small number of Kindergarten enrolments from outside the school's catchment area as well as from the local community. In preparation for the Year 7 transition to secondary schooling in 2015, the school has experienced an increasing local enrolment growth in the early years.

The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is above average at 1107 based on family background, parental occupation, and education. The Principal and Board Chair advised that parents are very supportive of the school, enthusiastically volunteering for school activities and raising significant funds through an active Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C).

Workforce planning indicates that many staff are very experienced and long-serving members of the school community. Through its planning the administration has complemented these experienced staff with a number of

recent graduates—many employed as a result of their teaching practicum experience at the school. The administration is also preparing for the challenges of staff nearing retirement, expectations to take long-service leave and any staff changes that may be necessary as a result of the Year 7 transition to secondary schooling in 2015.

The transition to School Board from School Council was achieved at the time the school became an Independent Public School in 2012. The Terms of Reference indicate that the number of members 'shall be at least five but not more than 15'. Currently, there are four parent members (including a P&C representative) and four staff members on the Board which meets at least twice per school term. The Board has been carrying out its accountability role through involvement in the self-review process. The Board has also been actively initiating a code of conduct and reviewing the school's vision and values in preparation for consultation with the wider school community.

The school is very well resourced and is in a strong position to provide a range of quality educational experiences and opportunities to support its vision and high expectations for students to reach their full potential.



## 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 Principal, staff and board members indicated that the school has developed a thorough planning and self-review process in which the school meets the commitments under the DPA and Business Plan 2012–2015. The reviewers were able to verify that this process is an annual cyclic review and involves planning, implementation and sustainability, evaluation and review. This comprehensive review of the Business Plan is based on a variety of student performance data and is closely aligned to the seven student performance targets and numerous milestones in the focus areas of students, staff, partnerships and environment. In summary, the school annually reviews its performance against the seven targets and approximately 80 milestones.

The targets are in the areas of numeracy, reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and science. The reviewers saw ample evidence that indicated staff were fully engaged in the analysis of student performance and the resultant progress towards the targets set in the Business Plan. As a result of each annual cyclic review, the staff set a number of specific foci for each of the target areas and these form an important component of the operational plans for school improvement in the next year.

The reviewers verified that a comprehensive range of data is analysed by all teaching staff and discussed at learning area and sub-school committee meetings. The School Board is included in the cycle of self-review and offers critical analysis of the Principal's report on the school's performance. The annual school report provides the school community with a thorough analysis against the targets set in the Business Plan. The school is commended on developing a thorough planning and self-review process with a sharp focus on a comprehensive range of data with a clear objective to improve student performance.

The administration team and Board Chair indicated that the next Business Plan (2015–2017) would focus on improved educational targets that have been identified through its planning and self-review processes. Further reference to this matter is reflected in the Sustainability section of this report.

## School Performance—Student Learning

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

Davallia Primary School's self-review process provides a comprehensive summary of the extent to which the student learning targets, set out in the Business Plan, have been achieved. The school's 2013 Annual Report also provides a very comprehensive assessment stating that all Business Plan targets for literacy and numeracy have been achieved. Targets set in the 2012–2015 Business Plan have been supplemented by the availability of 2014 NAPLAN data which has been analysed to provide supporting evidence of achievement of literacy and numeracy targets. Literacy targets are set in terms of increasing the percentage of students in the top 20% and decreasing the number in the bottom 20%. Based on this, the reading targets for Years 3 and 5 have been achieved, the writing target for Year 5 has been achieved and spelling, grammar and punctuation targets for Years 3 and 5 have been achieved. The numeracy targets for Years 3 and 5 have also been achieved. Each of the learning targets set in the Business Plan has been fully reviewed and an in-depth analysis of the accompanying data provides the foci for future planning and addressing areas identified as of concern.

To validate and support the school's judgements that the learning targets have been achieved, data for verification is collected from a broad range of system sources including NAPLAN, the Student Assessment Information System (SAIS), Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE), proficiency bands, First Cut and the Education Assessment Reporting System (EARs). The school sources include On-entry assessment, *Best Performance*, *Progressive Achievement Tests* (PAT), *Common Assessment Tasks* (CATs), *iMaths*, *Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills* (THRASS) and internal moderation. The data obtained from these sources is thoroughly analysed and carefully disaggregated to identify specific strengths and concerns. The analysed data has been compared with Australian, State and, to a lesser extent, like schools. Based on the processes used and the data provided by the school, the reviewers verify that the school has achieved the learning targets set in the current Business Plan. Targets that involve closer comparison with like schools and a focus on the students' whole education including both academic and non-academic performance are recommended for the 2015–2017 Business Plan.



In addition to the learning targets, the Business Plan also includes broad strategies and accompanying milestones to achieve the identified strategies. Milestones related to student learning are more focused on improving learning outcomes for all students across the spectrum of academic and non-academic achievements. These milestones have been monitored and an update provided as part of the school's self-review indicates broad achievement of the milestones for student learning. Whole-school trends and directions identified are a focus for school planning days. Sub-school block meetings and curriculum committee groups engage in specific performance analysis as it pertains to their year groups to formulate plans for improvement.

A well-established distributed leadership structure provides support across the school for operational planning and committees that are focused on improving student learning.

Special education needs (SEN) students are well supported by an onsite unit with students spending the morning on specific learning programs and the afternoon session in mainstream classes. A designated teacher and education assistants with a clear passion for SEN students provide a highly effective learning program which was demonstrated to reviewers during discussion with the SEN teacher and then verified by education assistants. Discussion with teaching staff indicated that the mainstream focus was successful and that the milestone had been achieved.

The Primary Extension and Challenge Program (PEAC) is available to students from Years 2 to 7 and ability grouping at the classroom level, supported by group and individual education plans, specifically meets the differentiated learning needs of identified students.

Early intervention occurs in kindergarten and pre-primary with students and parents assisted to access specialist support as the need is identified. The school's aim to enhance rigour in kindergarten and pre-primary has resulted in a seamless team approach across ECE with a focus on collaborative planning, effective use of on-entry testing data and implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum.

A small number of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) students (currently two) are provided with specialist assistance on an individual needs basis.

Implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum across all learning areas has enabled a whole-school re-invigoration of teaching and learning and a focusing on key student learning outcomes. Related programs and

implementation is supported by relevant and targeted professional learning for all staff. This is strategically linked to staff performance management processes and a strong staff collegial network.

School organisational structures supporting student learning include early close schedule and accompanying planned activities and DOTT (duties other than teaching time) and block sessions enabling sharing of content planning, assessments and moderation. A strong focus on collaboration at learning team and whole-school level supports a culture of sharing and collegial professionalism. The staff is commended for progressively embedding the Western Australian Curriculum with strong links to whole-school learning strategies and a focus on improving student performance.

A whole-school phonics approach using the THRASS program appears to be having a significant impact on spelling and reading fluency in Years 1–3.

The success of this program arises from:

- all teachers and education assistants having undertaken professional learning
- parent workshops being conducted to enable parents to support their children
- resources being purchased to support the program
- strong links across the curriculum with history, science and literature.

The school's analysis of mathematics performance data from a variety of sources indicated deficits in the areas of statistics and probability, and measurement and number. In tandem with the implementation of the Australian Mathematics Curriculum the school implemented a range of initiatives to address the deficiencies. These included a number of targeted workshops for staff and parents, trialling and implementation of the *iMaths* program to complement the Australian Mathematics curriculum and the purchasing of additional mathematics resources. The 2014 NAPLAN results indicate that these actions are resulting in significantly improved student achievement across the mathematics area and, in particular, the areas identified as deficient.

Systematic storage of student performance data including *THRASS*, *PAT*, classroom-based assessment, *Schonell* and grade information is available to all staff on the school's shared computer drive. Transfer of student performance information at end of year/beginning of new year handover is very comprehensive, including: On-entry testing data, moderated tasks, *PAT*



data, student ability grouping information, classroom-based assessment, timed reading assessments, *THRASS* data, behaviour management plans, individual education plans, student portfolios and *iMaths* testing data.

Implementation of Australian Science Curriculum—Primary Connections is impressive and well supported by a science learning area coordinator. Whole-school science planning is progressive with staff engagement at all levels. The implementation is further supported through:

- the use of the *Primary Connections* program
- a high level of targeted resourcing
- cross-curriculum linking (literacy, ICT, maths)
- systematic review of targets to identify areas in need of focus
- use of concept mapping
- extension of high ability students
- networking with Carine Senior High School and local schools cell (for moderation).

The school is commended for the comprehensive level of implementation and whole-school engagement in the Western Australian Science Curriculum.

Monitoring of major student learning outcomes is well documented, coordinated, monitored and reviewed in the areas of English (literacy), mathematics (numeracy) and science and well supported with relevant student performance data.

A music specialist works with all primary classes and instrumental music programs are offered to talented students from Years 3 to 7 through the School of Instrumental Music. An immersion-focused French language program using the *AIM Gesture Method* for students from Years 1 to 7 is provided to achieve LOTE learning outcomes. All students in Years 1 to 7 participate in specialist physical education programs with the school performing well at interschool level in athletics, soccer and Australian Rules football. The *Jump Jam* program is used to support improved fitness and movement skills across the school. In 2014, the school initiated specialist visual arts curriculum delivery that alternates with drama on a semester rotation in some year levels. Learning outcomes for ICT are addressed by classroom teachers. Grade allocations for these subjects were provided as part of the school's self-review and these are consistent with expected distributions.



## 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?*

The Davallia Primary School vision “to create an engaging and stimulating learning community where individual difference is acknowledged and celebrated” was evident to reviewers and supported by input from School Board, parents, staff and students. A central focus of the school in achieving its vision is educational excellence involving contemporary teaching which targets individual need and provides for rigorous academic engagement. The school leadership team is encouraging a school culture that is supportive of quality teaching and high standards of student achievement. Leadership is well distributed with learning team leaders/curriculum coordinators responsible for resources, planning and review in their areas. This is supported by a working committee structure for the key learning areas with responsibility for the dissemination of committee decisions and support for each sub-school learning team. There is a strong focus on identifying areas of concern in student achievement and implementing strategies to address them.

The school values of care and respect underpin a safe and inclusive learning environment and were clearly evident to reviewers across all levels of the school's operation. The school decision to have no specific values program is validated by the success of their philosophy to create a culture based on a whole-school community modelling care, respect and inclusivity. The integration of SEN students with mainstream classes for the afternoon sessions each day has engendered a strong climate of inclusivity and shared responsibility.

The school has identified and deployed a broad range of strategies and resources to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing.

The whole-school approach to students at educational risk, supporting all students in need with targeted interventions focused on social, emotional and educational improvement, contributes to a low incidence of serious behaviour management issues. The school employs a suite of strategies led by the associate principal and supported by a student-at-educational-risk committee, to ensure a strategic approach to delivery of student services and pastoral care programs. The associate principal and committee coordinate and monitor the brokerage of essential support services, training of staff on key issues,

case conferences, Schools Plus referrals, PEAC programs, student medical conditions and pastoral care programs.

Pastoral programs include peer mediation, the *Rainbows* grief support program, a thorough new student induction process and a comprehensive post-primary school transition to high school. These programs, and the strong caring approach modelled by school leaders with their high level of visibility and engagement, was viewed by parents and staff as a major contributing factor to the school's successful attainment of its aim to achieve a whole-school learning community.

Parents commented that teachers were always willing to support and help students and communicate with parents regarding student progress. This was confirmed by discussion with teachers indicating their willingness to contact parents regularly, often and in a timely manner through the use of emails and text messaging. An increasing number of staff are using Smartphone Applications including the *Dojo* behaviour management program to inform parents regarding student behaviour and the *Showbie* homework program to keep parents informed of student homework requirements.

Classroom visits by reviewers confirmed an attractive, well-resourced learning environment enhanced by effective use of learning technologies.

Small hubs of computers and interactive whiteboards are available for all classrooms. *iPads* are progressively being introduced with an aim to provide access for all students in the period of the next Business Plan.

Reviewers observed first hand through participation in a whole-school assembly, the strong level of parental involvement and the school's acknowledgement of the parents' contribution. The school is further assisted by a significant financial input from parents via the Parents and Citizens' Association for the purchase of learning program resources; a current example being the provision of *iPads* in ECE and Year 4.

The school has conducted the Parent Satisfaction Survey to determine perceptions regarding student performance, welfare, and to inform school planning. This data has been carefully analysed and comprehensively discussed in the 2013 Annual Report. In general, parents indicated a high level of satisfaction. Similar positive feedback regarding the school's performance was validated by reviewers during parent interviews.

The school has a strong focus on fostering beneficial partnerships with the wider community. The Business Plan sets out broad strategies and milestones



to be achieved and the self-review provided an update on achievement of the Partnership milestones. Links with Edith Cowan University via the *Partnership In Action* program enables the school to benefit from strong pre-service teachers. Information and communication technology is enhanced through involvement with the *Promethean* (Centre of Excellence) staff development. Transition programs and science networking with Carine Senior High School facilitate a seamless movement to high school. Sponsorship from local businesses has contributed to the provision of additional learning resources.

A strong extra-curricular program supports classroom learning and engages students in a variety of additional learning experiences. Excursions, camps at Rottnest Island, *Adopt a Coastline* project, *Zoo Snooze Experience*, and a range of curriculum-related incursions all add a rich texture to the learning experience. The staff are commended for their passion and enthusiasm and the exceptional level of commitment to providing students with an outstanding range of educational experiences.



## School Performance—Sustainability

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

The reviewers were able to verify that the school has established clear annual planning and review processes that engage all staff in a rigorous analysis of a range of student performance data. As a consequence, the whole school is involved in identifying areas for specific focus, to improve student learning. Following discussions with many staff members, the reviewers believe that the staff feel empowered by the administration team to be innovative and to be fully engaged in the annual review cycle. This high level of staff involvement contributes to the school's success. The reviewers were assured that the school's planning and self-review processes are applied in practice and are a sound model for sustained review and school improvement.

Following extensive consultation with the full School Board the reviewers were assured members demonstrated that the Board is fulfilling its role competently in relation to monitoring the school's budget, setting fees and charges and interrogating progress towards the targets and milestones set in the Business Plan. The Board has been progressive in reviewing its role and function, terms of reference, setting a code of conduct, reviewing the school's vision and values and regularly scrutinising its own performance. Discussion with the administration team and board members indicated that in developing the first iteration of the school's Business Plan there was limited input by the Board and the staff. It is therefore recommended that the 2015–2017 Business Plan includes greater input from the Board and staff.

Following discussions with the Board and a number of school parents, it was clear to the reviewers that the community does not understand the role and profile of the School Board. It is recommended that the Board develops a strategy to ensure that the wider community is aware of the profile of Board members and the Board's function and accountability role in supporting the school. As the Board evolves, the Principal and current members acknowledge the need for wider community representation on the Board to ensure it is more inclusive.

The quality of leadership throughout the school, where individual leaders are clear as to their particular roles and expectations, was impressive. This was evident through the comprehensive self-review documentation, discussion with the administration team, learning area and student-at educational-risk

coordinators, *THRASS* and pastoral care leaders, educational assistants, and visiting teachers in their classrooms. The administration team has developed and is continuing to implement collaborative teams in the school resulting in a range of benefits for student learning. The quality and performance of the collaborative teaching and learning activities across all teaching and learning areas gives rise to confidence that the school is in a strong position to sustain and improve its performance. The Principal, supported by the administration team, is commended on developing a very capable and collaborative distributive leadership model where staff are empowered to innovate and to improve the learning environment. The school is in the process of developing a *Growth Coaching Model* to support the performance management and professional development of staff. The reviewers believe the school is in a strong position to sustain these initiatives with a good mix of experienced and young highly competent and motivated staff.

The school places a high priority on ensuring parents are an important component in the educational journey for their children. There is a range of programs and strategies employed to build relationships between parents and the school. The reviewers sighted many parents engaged in classroom activities at the start of the school day, particularly in the early education years. Assemblies and parent/teacher meetings are well attended by parents. These actions and a very active P&C help to strengthen the efforts of the Principal and staff in improving student learning and creating a harmonious environment.

Issues identified in the Workforce Plan will present a number of challenges during the life of the next Business Plan. Significant issues include the number of long-serving teaching staff nearing retirement age and the long-service leave liability. The administration is carefully monitoring this and issues relating to the transition of Year 7 students to high school in 2015.

The reviewers were able to verify that the school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance during the period of the next Business Plan. Collaborative teams with a strong distributive leadership model, an integrated school planning and self-review cycle, and a teacher focus that aims to improve teaching so that all students reach their full potential, support this. The highly committed staff, complemented by very active parent and community support and a progressive School Board will assist the school in sustaining and improving its performance.



## Conclusion

Davallia Primary School is making significant progress in achieving its vision to develop resilient individuals who strive to reach their personal potential, live by the school's values and contribute to the school community. The school is facilitating this by nurturing all students academically, socially and emotionally and by expecting them to live by the school motto—'Grow with Respect'. The personalised approach for each student to reach their full potential and a positive student/teacher relationship is a key element of the school.

The school is in a sound position to sustain and improve its performance through the quality of the collaborative teaching and learning activities across all teaching and learning areas. The school has an effective planning and self-review process that aims to improve teaching and learning at the whole-school and classroom level. The planning and review process involves the analysis of a range of comprehensive data and is used to track individual student progress and student cohort gain.

A strong collaborative and distributive leadership model engages all staff in good teaching practices, rigorous analysis of data, building capacity of teachers and education assistants who are highly committed and motivated to provide quality learning experiences to improve the learning outcomes of all students. The school is progressively implementing the Western Australian Curriculum, including a range of specialist subjects, which challenges and engages all students.

A very positive student/teacher relationship exists throughout the school. This is reinforced by a strong focus on appropriate values that reinforce good behaviour patterns. A positive, calm and purposeful atmosphere is evident throughout the school.

An enthusiastic parent body and a well-informed and proactive School Board support the school. As a consequence, there exists a strong unity of purpose throughout the school to collaborate to enable all students to reach their full potential. The parent community places the school in high regard and values the efforts staff make to improve student achievement and personal growth.

Davallia Primary School is in a sound position to be able to sustain its current level of performance and improve student learning.



## Commendations

*The following areas are commended:*

- development and implementation of a comprehensive planning and self-review cycle with a clear focus on identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement
- progressive embedding of the Western Australian Curriculum with strong links to whole-school learning strategies and a focus on improving student performance
- comprehensive level of implementation and whole-school engagement in the Western Australian Science Curriculum
- passionate and enthusiastic staff with an exceptional level of commitment to providing students with an outstanding range of educational experiences
- development and implementation of a highly effective collaborative distributive leadership model where staff are empowered to innovate and to improve the learning environment.

## Areas for Improvement

*The following areas for improvement are identified:*

- develop targets that involve closer comparison with like schools and a focus on the students' whole education, including both academic and non-academic performance, for the 2015 to 2017 Business Plan
- include greater input from the Board and staff in the 2015–2017 Business Plan
- improve the wider community's awareness of the membership, role and function of the Board in supporting the school.

## 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 Davallia 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.



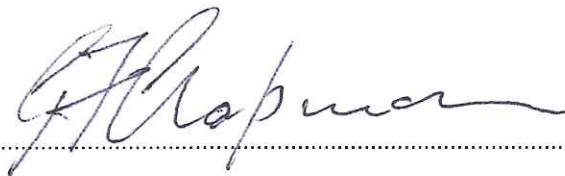
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Mr Graham Rixon, Lead Reviewer

2 December 2014

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Date



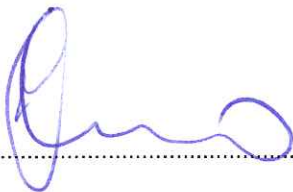
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Mr Gerry Chapman, Reviewer

2 December 2014

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Date



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Mr Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services

9/12/14

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Date



