



Department of Education Services

Nedlands Primary School

2012

Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

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Disclaimer

This document has been based on the findings of the independent reviewers' 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 Minister for Education, the Director General of Education, the Principal and the Board Chair.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Andrew Malcolm
Board Chair:	Mr Jon Smeulders
School Location:	35 Kingsway, Nedlands
School Classification:	PS Class 5
Number of Students:	549
Independent Reviewers:	Dr Lesley Payne and Mr John Garnaut
Review Dates:	Self-review presentation: 3rd September 2012 Review visits: 24 th and 25 th September 2012

1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Nedlands Primary School is to provide an assurance to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education and the school community 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 improved the standards of student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes student learning
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake regular self-assessment. The outcomes of these assessments form the basis for the school self-review which is presented to the reviewers for verification at the commencement of the independent review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review, reviewers are provided with information on the school's educational achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which include, but are not limited to:

- the MySchoolTM website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.

Reviewers then visited the school for a half day presentation of the school's self-review by the Principal, the Board Chair and other key stakeholders chosen by the school. Subsequently the reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of enquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for a two day review visit was negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of further evidence to clarify or confirm the claims made in the school self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school self-review claims through observation and discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, parents, students and the school leadership team.

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

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.

2. Summary

The reviewers acknowledge the commitment and effectiveness of the school self-assessment presentation and commend the school for its approach to continual reflection, accountability and focusing on success for every child. Nedlands Primary School has successfully met the challenges of competition from nearby private schools and offers an impressive range of programs to support the vision and high expectations for student learning. The school is clearly implementing a broad curriculum that challenges, engages and improves learning for students and offers a wide range of opportunities for all its students.

Observations and discussion provided the verification that Nedlands has a caring and supportive learning environment enhanced by positive partnerships with the community. The school makes effective use of resources articulated in the DPA for designated programs (Schools Plus, Learning Support Coordinator and School of Instrumental Music). The enthusiasm across the school community reflects the manner in which the Principal, leaders and staff work together in a supportive way with a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school.

The Principal, school leaders, teachers, and ancillary staff are working together to build a supportive learning environment and there is an emphasis on working with staff members to build excellence in teaching practice and engage in professional learning.

The school has a well-developed range of practices and strategies placing it in a sound position to be able to sustain its current level of performance and improve student learning.

The school is commended on the following features of the school's improvement process:

- The focus on critical, evidenced-based self-assessment.
- Second tier planning within the school is excellent - focus group plans share an effective common planning framework and link directly to the Business Plan.
- Staff re-invigoration, improved collaborative practice, and attention to whole of school approaches to curriculum content and pedagogy have resulted in enhanced standards of academic performance over recent years as demonstrated through standardised test results (NAPLAN).

- The school's response to the previous disappointing academic results in the National Testing Program through reviewing its timetabling structures to ensure a more focused approach and less disrupted learning periods. This, in association with literacy and numeracy plans, is consolidating good teaching and learning practice across the school.
- Interviews with staff members in year level collaborative teams demonstrated the effectiveness of these teams for the planning, program implementation and monitoring of student performance.
- Effective distributed leadership processes are established across the school. They are well defined and are structured to ensure leadership of the key focus areas of the Business Plan and all the learning areas. Most of the teaching staff have a leadership role in the school.
- The inclusivity, commitment and positive approach to making a difference for all students through a range of Student At Educational Risk (SAER) strategies, programs and resources used in teaching and learning.

The following areas are affirmed as worthy of continued implementation or areas for improvement identified by the school:

- Effective processes being implemented for the monitoring of targets for improvement set in the Business Plan.
- Investigation of strategies to lift the performance of boys across the school, including a focus on professional development in this area in 2013.
- Effective use of resources articulated in the DPA for designated programs (Schools Plus, Learning Support Coordinator and School of Instrumental Music).
- ICT as an area requiring further focus in the school for development and provision of resources.

The following recommendations are made to add value to the improvement process:

- In the development of the new Business Plan, review the articulation of 'targets' to provide a more focused approach and give greater support to school and teacher planning for improvement.
- Establish a formal regular staff communication process for K-3 staff to enable effective early years planning of agreed curriculum content and pedagogical approaches.

- Future annual reports to provide a more comprehensive description of the analysis of student performance information, including areas of strength, areas of concern and strategies to address areas of concern.
- School Board self-review processes consider seeking broader community perspectives on the effectiveness of the Board and its processes.

3. School Context

Nedlands Primary School was granted Independent Public School (IPS) status in 2010. The school, with an enrolment of 549 and a Socio-Economic Index (SEI) of 126.24, in the main draws children of parents in professional fields. It also attracts enrolment from the children of overseas students and staff employed at the nearby University of Western Australia and Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital. Eighteen per cent of current enrolments are cross boundary and 21.5% are from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). There is high transiency of student population (40-50% turnover in K-3 and in years 3-7). The transience is due to the proximity to the central business district, nearby University of Western Australia, Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital and the associated movement of professionals in these workplaces.

The school has off-site facilities at Nedlands Park Early Learning Centre (kindergarten and pre-primary) and the Child Study Centre on the grounds of The University of Western Australia (2 kindergarten groups, 1 pre-primary class and a special needs pre-primary group). Collaborative partnerships exist with The University of Western Australia Child Study Centre, The University of Western Australia Faculty of Education, City of Nedlands, YMCA and Shenton College.

The school vision is to provide students with a wide range of experiences and opportunities within a focus on higher order thinking skills, known in the school as HOTS, and the provision of a range of specialist programs and projects. The strong vision and ethos of the school is evidenced through articulation at different levels of the school from students, teachers, administration and parents.

The school staff is generally experienced with very low staff turnover. Many staff members have been at the school for almost 20 years. The reviewers were able to ascertain through meetings that the community appreciates the significant extra-curricular initiatives coordinated by staff such as music festivals and Tournament of Minds. The workforce development plan includes the recruitment of early childhood trained staff, improved gender balance, the attraction of graduate teachers and ensuring permanency opportunities for high performing staff.

School facilities are excellent catering for a wide range of learning, sporting and cultural opportunities including language studies in French and Mandarin, instrumental music, bands and orchestras, choirs, learning support, higher order thinking, art, dance, music, drama and intercultural exchanges.

Nedlands Primary School

The reviewers met with parents, students and the Board and found very strong community support for the school. Significant fundraising has contributed to improved facilities at the school and an effective Parents and Citizens Association supports the school.

The School Board operates within its relevant jurisdiction and has established the required policies and documentation to be effective. It has experienced and committed members who clearly articulated their roles and responsibilities.

An indicator of the high status of the school in the eyes of the community is the retention of enrolments in Year 7 classes despite the intense competition from non-government schools. The school offers an impressive range of programs to support the vision and high expectations for student learning.

4a. School Performance - Student Learning

The reviewers were able to determine through observation, documentation audits, interviews and discussion that Nedlands Primary School offers a broad curriculum aimed at offering a wide range of opportunities for students with different interests and abilities.

Since 2010 school development has been guided by its comprehensive Business Plan. The Business Plan has three key focus areas:

1. Every student is a successful student – a framework for performance improvement targets
2. Excellent teaching and learning in all classrooms – HOTS, staff capacity, accountability and standards, and leadership
3. Nedlands Primary School is a safe, caring and sustainable environment – student and staff health and well-being, community, sustainability and finance and resources.

The school's reporting of its achievements is against the performance targets of the Business Plan. Targets are generally broad and for literacy and numeracy have been based on improving performance in NAPLAN data by comparisons with like schools at Years 3, 5 and 7. Interviews with school administrators and school staff indicated effective processes being implemented for the monitoring of targets for improvement. It is recommended that in the development of the new Business Plan, targets be reviewed to provide a more focused approach to school and teacher planning for improvement.

Curriculum planning and support is through focus area committees engaged in collaborative planning to develop action plans that are clearly linked to the Business Plan. The analysis of student performance data informs the annual review of focus area action plans. This second tier focus area planning within the school is outstanding, sharing an effective common planning framework.

Academic results as represented by NAPLAN data indicate that students now consistently achieve above state average levels and as expected when compared with schools of similar socio-economic status in the areas of literacy and numeracy. These results indicate significant improvement since 2009 when a range of areas were performing below expected levels compared to like-schools. Two areas of particular concern were writing at Year 3 and 7 levels, and the general performance of Year 3 students. Staff re-invigoration, improved collaborative practice, and

attention to whole of school approaches to curriculum content and pedagogy have resulted in enhanced standards of academic performance as demonstrated through standardised test results (NAPLAN).

The reviewers commend the school's response to the previous disappointing academic results in the National Testing Program. The school has reviewed its timetabling structures to ensure a more focused approach to teaching literacy and numeracy. The 'block' approach of less disrupted learning periods, in association with whole of school literacy and numeracy plans, is consolidating good teaching and learning practice across the school.

The Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) data indicated below expected performance for Year 7 Society and Environment in 2010, and Year 5 Science in 2011. Relevant focus area committees are planning responses to this data.

The school has analysed the performance of sub-groups, particularly gender, LBOTE and transient students. Analysis indicated that the performance of boys was of some concern with regard to NAPLAN achievement and strategies are being investigated to lift boys' performance across the school. The starting point is staff professional development planned for 2013. A feature of the performance of LBOTE students is the high level of 'progress' or 'value adding' as they progress through the school. The analysis of the performance of the significant number of transient students does not indicate areas of concern.

A feature of the school is the comprehensive approach to extension for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students and those exhibiting high levels of academic performance. All teachers plan for extension activities in their regular classroom programs and implement annual common assessment tasks that stimulate higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Selected students attend district PEAC programs. The success of these programs is monitored through standardised testing processes including NAPLAN, Easymark and appropriate checklists. The Principal reports that significant numbers of exiting Year 7 students are accepted into secondary extension programs.

Specialist programs and extracurricular activities are delivered in Music, Languages other than English (LOTE) - French and Mandarin, physical education, art and performing arts involving volunteer teacher time and out of school commitments. Many students participate in the wide range of music programs offered at the school. These programs have strong community recognition and excellent support from the Department of Education's School of Instrumental Music.

Students needing learning support or at educational risk, are individually monitored through the Diversity and Learning Committee. This committee oversees the collaborative planning, program implementation and monitoring of SAER across the school. The school SAER approach involves three tiers of intervention, beginning with exemplary teaching practice, followed by in-class intervention through individual and group education plans (IEPs and GEPs) when needed. Finally when additional support is needed teachers make a 'SAER' referral. This involves a case conference approach involving teachers, school psychologist and other specialist staff. The school employs a school psychologist part time. A limited tenure withdrawal model is implemented for small groups requiring learning support interventions.

Non-academic data is analysed through attendance data, behaviour management records and parent satisfaction surveys. Areas of concern are appropriately addressed. The school did not provide any evidence of the implementation of staff and student surveys.

The school is clearly implementing a curriculum that challenges, engages and improves learning and offers a wide range of opportunities for all students.

4b. School Performance - Quality of Learning Environment

The Independent Review process was able to verify that the school vision, ethos and values have been collaboratively developed with school staff and the community and are well articulated in the Business Plan. Examples of the extent of understanding and commitment to the vision and ethos, especially "Experience the Opportunities", were confirmed through interviews with staff and students across the school and parents.

Meetings with the School Board, staff, parents and students provided verification and evidence of inclusive practices and planning to meet the learning needs of all students. A rich mix of academic, cultural and sporting opportunities was evident. There is evidence of this commitment and positive approach through the comprehensive range of extension and GATE programs and SAER strategies incorporated in the teaching and learning program.

Learning area support for teacher curriculum planning is coordinated through vertically organised focus area committees. The committees and strong review practices play a significant role in developing shared understandings and in monitoring and refining practice. This includes being engaged in the process for the

implementation of Phase 1 of the Australian Curriculum. Focus area committees provide leadership opportunities for staff.

Significant collaborative planning, curriculum delivery and the monitoring of student performance occur through year level teams. Interviews with school staff indicated that this collaboration was less strong at Year 3 level. Little evidence was presented to the reviewers indicating the effectiveness of K-3 staff collaboration in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. It is recommended that a formal regular staff communication process be established for K-3 staff to enable effective early years planning of agreed curriculum content and pedagogical approaches.

A range of strategies and resources is evident in meeting student learning needs. Professional development is accessed as needs are identified. For example the Dianna Rigg approach to spelling has been implemented school wide through extensive professional development sessions and purchase of supporting materials. ICT is an area that has been identified by the reviewers as an area for future focus.

The school makes effective use of resources articulated in the DPA for designated programs (Schools Plus, Learning Support Coordinator and School of Instrumental Music). The school provided evidence of the success of these programs.

Observations and discussion provided the verification that Nedlands has a caring and supportive learning environment enhanced by positive partnerships with the community. Community fundraising has contributed to improved facilities at the school such as playground equipment, air conditioning, enclosure of the undercover area, building of the performing arts (Altius) centre, music equipment, computer programs and swimming pool maintenance.

The Parents and Citizens Association is very supportive of the school and the enthusiasm across the school community reflects the manner in which the Principal, leaders and staff work together in a supportive way with a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school. The Principal, other school leaders, teachers, and ancillary staff are working together in a supportive way to ensure a supportive and successful learning environment.

4c. School Performance - Sustainability

The reviewers found that a culture of self-assessment and planning for improvement is evident in the school. Interviews with school leaders and teaching staff demonstrated that school self-assessment processes are comprehensive, involving a relevant range of student performance data, giving primacy to informed teacher

professional judgements. Data analysis occurs at teacher, collaborative year team and school administrator levels of the school. Concerns regarding standards of student performance are the basis for planning for improvement.

Leadership roles of the Principal and deputies, focus group leaders, learning area leaders, level 3 teachers and senior teachers are clearly articulated. The executive team encourages and supports staff in their roles as demonstrated by most staff members having a leadership role in the school and being involved in some aspect of curriculum development. Whole school planning is clearly reflected in planning documents and action plans. There is an emphasis on working with staff members to engage in professional learning and up-skill staff members to improve their teaching practices where needed.

Distributed leadership is established and supported across the school with the priority focus being the improvement of teaching and learning. The executive team effectively supports focus area leaders and year level collaborative teams. Roles are well defined and structured to ensure effective leadership of the key focus areas of the Business Plan. The school will benefit from this distributed leadership structure in times of senior school administrator turnover. The school is to be commended on the effective distributed leadership processes established across the school.

Formal collaborative team structures are evident at year levels. These structures appear effective in providing a team approach to teaching, student performance data analysis, year level planning and reporting. However there are no formal collaborative structures for teams across the years of schooling (e.g early years, middle primary, upper primary). Data analysis, planning and reporting would benefit from such a longitudinal approach. The need for these collaborative structures is most evident in the early years where the analysis of student performance data indicates higher areas of concern over the past 5 years.

Little evidence was provided to the review team of staff benefitting from professional learning associated with networking with other schools. Consideration should be given to the provision of resources for this purpose.

School administrators and members of the School Board are dissatisfied with aspects of the 2010-2014 Business Plan. They intend to review the plan from 2013, to be consistent with new directions for IPS business planning directions. The 2013 plus Business Plan will be a more concise strategic plan, with the operational detail in second tier planning documents. Some targets set in the 2010-2014 plan are very broad and lack specificity.

The Annual Report is a key accountability document for the school to report to the School Board, broader school community and Director General of Education. A key focus of the Annual Report is the description of the analysis of student performance across the school. In the 2011 Annual Report these descriptions are skeletal and do not sufficiently accentuate areas of strength, areas of concern and measures being taken to address the areas of concern. It is recommended that future annual reports provide a more comprehensive description of the analysis of student performance information.

Since becoming an IPS in 2010 the School Board has worked diligently to establish the relevant documentation and processes that ensure effectiveness. Information gleaned from school board minutes and interviews with non-board parents and teaching and community members of the Board indicate that processes are effective in mainstream board functions including planning, monitoring school performance and addressing areas of school policy. Successful sub-committee processes have been implemented. The members of the Board were clear on the targets of the Business Plan and there was a high level of involvement and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Interviews with a significant number of parents elicited one minority view relating to dissatisfaction with some communication processes. These issues are being addressed by the Board.

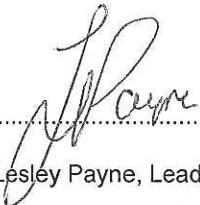
An annual self-review process has driven improvements to board processes, particularly in the induction of new members, risk management and lead-up time for annual review. Future school board self-review processes should consider seeking broader community perspectives on the effectiveness of the Board and its processes. Community members of the Board are adding value to school governance processes.

The 2011 Parent Survey (n=220) compared parent perspectives at Nedlands Primary School with parent perspectives from 38 other Australian primary schools. In this context Nedlands Primary School performed “considerably higher than the overall benchmark for each of the key areas” of guidance and support, school environment, teacher quality, school curriculum, learning environment, personal development, parent communication, technology and resources and leadership and management. The school has appropriately responded to relative areas of concern in the data.

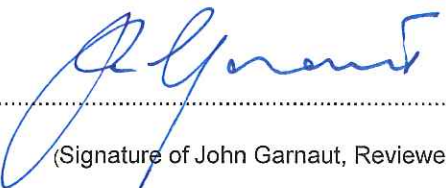
The school has a well-developed range of practices and strategies placing it in a sound position to be able to sustain its current level of performance and improve student learning.

Declaration

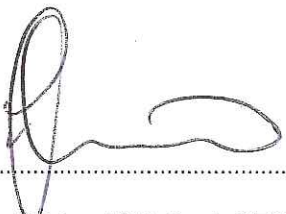
We the undersigned hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on our assessment of the evidence provided by Nedlands Primary School as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The School Principal and Board Chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.


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(Signature of Lesley Payne, Lead Reviewer)

8-11-2012
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(Date)


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(Signature of John Garnaut, Reviewer)

7.11.2012
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(Date)


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(Signature of Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services)

16/11/12
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