



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Narrogin 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 David Harrison
Board Chair:	Mr Trent Kensett-Smith
School Location:	Williams Road, Narrogin WA 6312
School Classification:	PS Class 5
Number of Students:	306 K to Year 6
Reviewers:	Mr Keith Newton (Lead) Dr Susan Hall
Review Dates:	22 and 23 September 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.

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 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.

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?

Narrogin Primary School, located approximately 200 kilometres south-east of Perth, caters for kindergarten to Year 6 students from the town of Narrogin and surrounding areas, including farming communities. It has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 907 (*My School*[®]), with a student population comprising 24.8% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI); 3% with language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) and 14.1% with a disability (*My School*[®]). The overall attendance rate of 89.7% for all students is below like schools (90.4%), whereas the rate is above like schools for Aboriginal students: 83.1% compared to 81.2%. Sixty-three per cent of students attend more than 90% of the time with 12.6% and 3.4% falling into the moderately and severely at risk attendance categories respectively, compared to the State average of 6% and 2%. The student transiency rate is 26.6%.

The school has a total of 45 staff. The Full Time Equivalent staffing breakdown is: a Principal, a full-time Deputy Principal, 19.1 teachers (including one Level 3 teacher who is in a part-time leadership role) and 13 school support staff.

The School Board, which is chaired by a parent representative, comprises a judicious mix of long-serving and new members who bring a wide range of business and local expertise to the role of governance and accountability.

The school buildings vary in age, reflecting the school's 110 year history. It has six linear-style rooms that open onto a large veranda and two cluster-style blocks each featuring three classrooms, linked to a common wet area. Other facilities include a new library block, a purpose-built music and art facility, a fully carpeted assembly area, an off-site kindergarten, a computer laboratory, a Noongar meeting room (Koorlanga Mia), a dental clinic and a canteen. The original Principal's residence is used as office space for three school psychologists and the School Nurse, and is used by *Amity Health* and the *Narrogin Independent Playgroup* each Friday.

The school is fully air conditioned and in recent years the school funded renovations to create a meeting room and a wet area within the old library building.

There has also been a strong focus on developing the school's information communication technology infrastructure with interactive whiteboards and iPads available for use in most learning areas.

The school has an active Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) which contributes generously to the school's requests for support. The canteen is operated by the P&C and is open every day of the week. The P&C also operates a successful market day each month.

The school shares resources and participates collaboratively with eleven other schools in the Narrogin Schools' Network.

The school's motto, 'In the Pursuit of Excellence', reflects the belief that every student can be successful and become a life-long learner. The school participates in the National Education Innovations Portal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. It is also a member of an Asian language hub and provides exposure to Indonesian language in Years 3–6, and AUSLAN in Years 1 and 2. Talented and gifted students are identified for inclusion in the Primary Extension and Challenge program (PEAC). Students with musical aptitude are able to access instrumental music at Narrogin Senior High School through the School of Instrumental Music program.

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?

Narrogin Primary School staff undertook an exhaustive self-review of performance based on the Business Plan, which was developed through an inclusive process in 2013. Staff critically analysed national, State and school-level data in relation to the four focus areas of the Business Plan:

- Successful students
- Excellence in teaching and learning
- A safe, supportive and positive learning community
- Strong and sustainable partnerships with the community.

This was evident in the self-review process, which was guided by six teacher leaders who charged self-forming teams with the task of answering the questions 'to what degree did we meet the targets?', 'what evidence do we have to support the claim?' and 'what else needs to be done?'. This was documented and reflected upon by the whole school staff.

The detailed analysis of performance against the four focus areas of the Business Plan included data collected using a range of professionally recognised tools such as the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), On-entry Assessment, and the national staff, student and parent surveys. This was confirmed by the review panel's analysis of documents, classroom observations and discussions with teachers, curriculum leaders, the executive team and the School Board and Board Chair.

This decision-making process incorporates a cycle of planning, monitoring and review. Staff are consulted and given opportunities for professional learning and to provide input into the planning.

At the time of the site visit, the Board members had not engaged in a detailed examination of the self-review findings, but were aware of the processes being used and indicated their intent of interrogating the school's review of progress towards the targets contained in the four focus areas.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The staff set a number of student achievement targets in the 2013–2015 Business Plan. These were focused on literacy, numeracy, science, and society and environment. Within this, there was an overt attention given to the early years where the staff set out to ensure the ‘average growth rate of Pre-primary to Year 1, and Year 2 student achievement met or exceeded the average literacy and numeracy growth rate, as measured by On-entry Assessment’. These targets were not met, but evidence presented by the staff suggested that they have made significant progress towards doing so.

Similarly, the literacy and numeracy target of ensuring the ‘average growth rate of student achievement from Years 3 to 5 to 7 met or exceeded the average national growth rate in all NAPLAN assessments,’ was not met; however, some progress has been made towards doing so. The 2015 NAPLAN comparative performance data was within the predicted school mean for all subjects and showed some improvement compared to 2014 data. Comparative performance for Year 3 writing and Year 5 grammar and punctuation is above the predicted school mean.

Year 3 writing has improved from 2014 with the performance being higher compared to like-schools, but similar to all WA public schools, whereas grammar and punctuation, although slightly higher compared to like-schools, is much lower compared to WA public schools.

Year 5 performance has improved in all domains compared to 2014, and is much higher compared to like-schools and slightly higher than WA public schools.

In terms of progress and achievement for 2013–2015, spelling, writing, and grammar and punctuation are in the higher progress/higher achievement quadrants compared to like-schools, WA public schools and Australian schools. Within this, reading has shown little change between 2011–2013 and 2013–2015 compared to like-schools, whereas grammar and punctuation has improved compared to like-schools. Numeracy is slightly lower compared to like schools, WA public schools and Australian schools.

The school's target of ensuring 'greater than 80% of the stable cohort of Year 3 to 5 Aboriginal students who were tested in NAPLAN in 2012 achieve at or above the National Minimum Standard in numeracy and literacy, when tested again in 2014', was not met, and nor is it likely to be within the near future.

The staff set itself two targets for science: 'greater than 55% of Year 5 students, tested in WAMSE science will achieve at or above the State achievement target by 2015'; and 'greater than 65% of Year 7 students tested in WAMSE science will achieve at or above the State achievement target, by 2014'. The same targets were set for WAMSE society and environment, all of which the staff claim to have been met. However, no substantive evidence to verify this was available as the WA Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) for science and society and environment has been discontinued. Instead, the staff relied on anecdotal evidence and school-based data pending an alternative recognised assessment regime becoming available.

In addition to the above, the staff set the following attendance targets:

- maintain high levels of student attendance rates for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students
- raise student attendance rates from 88% to equal or greater than the State average attendance (93%) by 2015
- raise Aboriginal attendance rates from 79% to greater than or equal to 84% by 2015
- raise early childhood attendance rates from 86% to greater than or equal to 91% by 2015.

These attendance targets were accompanied with a process target of 'implementing whole-school attendance strategies to reward regular attendance and continue to develop strategies to target all students in the severely at risk category.'

Although to a large extent progress was made in improving attendance, the staff acknowledge some targets were not met and that attendance still presents as an issue that will require constant attention, particularly for those who fall into the moderate to severe category, and especially for those in the early years.

Other process targets set by the staff include:

- addressing the requirements of the National Quality Standard agenda for Early Childhood Education and utilising the On-entry Assessment results for Pre-primary to inform and strengthen learning programs
- fostering collaboration across the Narrogin Schools' Network to support teachers and school leaders to develop and share strategies for implementing the Australian Curriculum
- implementing Phase One of the Australian Curriculum (English, mathematics, history and science) so they are reflected in all K–7 teaching and learning programs from 2013
- implementing a plan which fosters links with Narrogin Senior High School for the seamless inclusion of Year 7 students into the secondary setting in 2015
- continuing to raise expectations for Aboriginal students across all areas of education especially literacy, numeracy and attendance by improving engagement and developing stronger links within the community
- developing case management approaches for all students at educational risk, to ensure students are making progress against national standards
- continuing to implement Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) strategies across the school to foster a teaching and learning approach to behaviour management.

Each of these has been met, and in the case of those relating to the Australian Curriculum, transition to high school, and students at educational risk, they have exceeded expectations.

Information obtained from school documentation, interviews with school leaders and staff, and meetings with parents and students demonstrated that a rigorous analytical approach was undertaken to establish the degree to which the targets had been met. Data is systematically gathered from standardised testing and teacher-devised assessment to assess growth, plan for improvement and inform the necessity and type of group and individual student interventions required.

Where appropriate, specialist staff (e.g., School Psychologist) participate in the development and monitoring of individual education plans (IEPs) and group education plans (GEPs) through a case management approach.

Interviews with kindergarten to Year 2 staff demonstrated an understanding and commitment to implementation of the National Quality Framework and associated standards.

Evidence from interviews with parents indicated satisfaction with children's progress, and that children's learning needs are being met.

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?

Narrogin Primary School has a positive school culture that promotes student learning and reflects the four focus areas of the school's Business Plan.

The school's gradual implementation over the past three years of the PBS underpins the safe and inclusive environment which strives to make everyone feel valued and supported. The PBS incorporates the STARR program, based on embedding 'Safety, Tolerance, Academic excellence, Respect and Responsibility'. The whole-school implementation of the PBS and its STARR program has embedded a common language for positive behaviour that is taught across the curriculum. However, despite this whole-school effort, school survey data (supported by evidence from interviews) indicated that a relatively low proportion of parents (36%), staff (24%) and students (39%) who responded believe behaviour is well managed in the school, noting that the response rates to the surveys were low: 18% of parents and 47% of staff. Further initiatives within the school's PBS strategic plan are to be implemented in 2016 and beyond.

Protective Behaviour is taught in all health classes by a specialist teacher. The process of integrating this knowledge and behaviour across all school learning experiences has begun, but is not yet embedded. The reviewers did not sight a Protective Behaviours policy.

Pastoral care is very strong in the school with leaders, teachers and education support staff working in fine-tuned collaborative action to support student learning, engagement and well-being. Students at risk are provided with emotional support, food, school uniform and equipment as needed and in an unobtrusive manner so as to ensure they feel included and able to engage. Two Aboriginal education assistants provide a proactive bridge between the community and the school to increase inclusiveness, engagement and attendance.

Although all students are welcomed back to school after absenteeism, and then specifically engaged by their teachers, the staff recognise that they still need to do more to achieve State attendance standards. New initiatives towards this end are: recent training and redeployment of an education

assistant as the School Chaplain, the Breakfast Club run by education assistants and volunteers, lunchtime crafts and after-school activities once a week on 'early close day'.

The reviewer team observed that the school is adequately resourced to support student learning and engagement for its diverse student population. Its new library building is well stocked and well furnished. The 45 iPads, including some provided by the P&C, are used by each class on a rotational basis, as is the laboratory of 20 computers.

Differentiated learning is provided for students at educational risk, Aboriginal students, LBOTE students and high-ability students. This is predominantly delivered through IEPs, including Curriculum Adjusted Programs (CAP). Differentiated learning is overseen by the newly appointed learning development coordinator who reviews each IEP each term.

Narrogin Primary School is a low ICSEA school where the academic targets have previously been set at 'C' and 'D' grades for most students. However, in comparing its number of high-ability students to the 2013 and 2014 NAPLAN scores in the top 20% of all students, the staff has identified the need to teach more towards 'A' and 'B' grades to cater for students with higher ability.

Interviews with staff, parents and students, in conjunction with 2013 and 2014 NAPLAN performance data and the school's review documents, evidenced that programs that supported improved student learning included the on-entry screening and follow-up by specialist professionals; the National Quality Standard pilot review; the whole-school literacy plan, the AUSLAN program, the performing and visual arts programs and the physical education and sports program. These programs have supported improved student learning through streamlining responses to student data, increasing teaching effectiveness and increasing student engagement in schooling.

The school welcomes parents and communicates with them via a wide range of means, namely: individual parents meetings at the start of the year, before school greetings in the classroom, parent volunteers in classrooms and at excursions, the school's web page, newsletters, text messages and Facebook. Reporting is done via portfolios of work, formal student performance reports each semester, interviews and classroom open nights which also includes visual and performing arts displays/performances.

Other ways the school engages parents are: P&C fundraising auctions; the art display at the Narrogin show; assembly presentations; Endeavour Book

Awards; the Kindergarten and Pre-primary Christmas concert, and the graduation evening.

Parents commented that although the school welcomes parents, there is inconsistency in teachers' attitudes to parent involvement in classrooms, volunteering, homework books and differentiated learning in the classrooms.

National Schools Opinion survey results showed overall strong parental satisfaction. Of the 36 parents who responded, 84% thought their child was making good progress and 91% claimed their child liked being at the school. However, as already mentioned, student behaviour management was rated less positively.

Overall, parent-teacher relationships appear to be positive, with 86% of respondents stating they could talk with their child's teachers and 77% claiming the school works with them to support their child's learning. The large number of well-attended school community events attests to the community engagement with the school. Partnerships with external agencies include: the health service professions; regional and local businesses; local sporting organisations; the Department of Education Facilities Services; Narrogin Senior High School; the Narrogin Schools' Network; the P&C, and the wider Narrogin community.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

The school's self-review processes, summary of review findings and documented evidence are in general very thorough and embedded in the school's day-to-day operations. However, the reviewers did observe some variation in the extent to which the whole-of-staff review of target achievement was evidenced with teachers' opinion rather than with performance data.

The School Board explicitly expressed the need for greater clarity in its role, specifically in defining the difference between governance and management. Interviews with the Chair and Board members evidenced their strong commitment to the school as well as their desire for better access to school performance data and better involvement in matters of governance. They suggested the latter could be facilitated by the Board receiving more detailed information with sufficient lead time to enable a considered reading before the Board meetings. The Board is seeking training for all members. The reviewers agree with this decision.

Leadership at Narrogin Primary School operates predominantly on a top-down model with moves in place towards distributed leadership and succession planning. For example, the recent secondment of a Deputy Principal was used as an opportunity for the Level 3 teacher to act as Deputy Principal on a part-time basis. However, this strategy also meant that when, in 2015, the Principal became ill for several weeks, the one substantive Deputy Principal needed to act in his role, leaving the school short of a deputy principal role.

While there are no staff explicitly working towards Level 3 status or attending the Aspirant Program, a move to distributed leadership was evidenced by some staff expressing that they are supported when they propose new developments within the school and to go on and lead that initiative. An example of this is the whole-school literacy plan, with one teacher appointed as literacy coordinator and another assisting to form the literacy leadership team. Both were supported to complete a leadership training program. There is also a PBS team who developed the PBS policy and led its implementation. Given the school's low performance in mathematics, as well as the staff's request for more curriculum leadership (Annual Report 2014), consideration of

re-installing the mathematics coordinator position, which had been in place until recently, would appear to be a possible strategy.

In contrast to some staff feeling supported to suggest and lead innovations, is the 2014 Staff Survey data which claims staff are not well supported in the school (52%) and that staff opinions are not taken seriously (58%). Although the survey data represents less than half the staff (47%) it indicates that the school has more work to do in this direction.

The staff have the capacity to implement processes and procedures effectively and there is a move towards making this sustainable. The staff is a mix of experienced teachers and new graduates (five), recruited in their final year during their extended teaching practice programs through the school's partnership with the universities. Some experienced staff mentor new teachers and this is instigated on personal initiative rather than through a mentoring program. Staff expressed a desire for more professional learning and have begun to train each other through in-school workshops and presentations.

The reviewers observed that current physical and financial resources are sufficient to sustain programs and support future initiatives. The school has the teaching resources, IT equipment and classroom space to conduct current teaching programs. There is also a very able and supportive Board and a strong P&C that contributes to financial sustainability. By addressing the current curriculum leadership and senior leadership sustainability issues, the school will also have the human resources to sustain current and future programs and initiatives.

The school's embedded planning and review processes provide for planning and adjustments to classroom teaching practice at regular intervals throughout the year to improve student learning and achieve targets. Processes also incorporate whole-school review and planning for the Business Plan from 2016 onwards. The reviewers noted that although the staff achieved, exceeded or is working towards most of the 2014 targets, staff could be more confident in whole-school review and planning if all members of the staff teams making target achievement decisions, based them on student performance evidence.

Conclusion

Narrogin Primary School staff critically analysed performance data related to the focus areas and targets in its Business Plan and the obligations under the DPA. Formal self-review documents include conclusions about performance against targets, standards of student achievement and progress made.

The staff has developed a culture that analyses data, heeds feedback and responds with appropriate action. The school provides an effective learning environment for all students where decisions are grounded on contemporary thought and practice.

The school has a team of competent staff and a committed and capable Board, although the latter could be better informed in a more timely manner by the school leadership.

The school is well-regarded by staff, students, parents and the wider community. There is a strong, optimistic commitment and clear belief that the school is serving the learning needs of its students and in doing so is meeting the aspirations of the community. A commitment to the school's vision, purpose and values is evident throughout its operations.

Commendation

The following area is commended:

- the strong and collaborative team work in pastoral care supporting students at risk. This student support work, carried out predominantly by the school support staff, enacts clear school policies and is implemented in collaboration with the teachers and school leadership team.

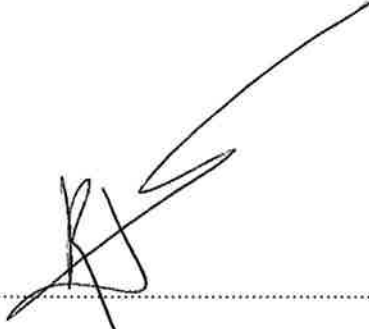
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- meet student literacy and numeracy achievement targets that have not yet been achieved
- ensure there is a timely free flow of information between the school and the Board to enable sufficient lead time for consideration of matters before Board meetings
- further development of inclusive leadership to achieve a school-wide distributed model of leadership
- address the disparities in the results of the 2014 Staff Survey data.

Declaration

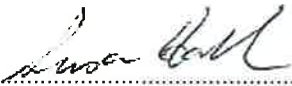
We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Narrogin Primary School as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process.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



Mr Keith Newton Lead Reviewer

19 November 2015

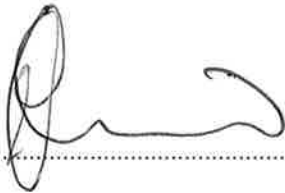
Date



Dr Susan Hall, Reviewer

19 November 2015

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

24/11/15

Date

