



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education Services

# Piara Waters Primary School

2017

Review Findings



Independent Review of  
Independent Public Schools

## Disclaimer

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## School and Review Details

<b>Principal:</b>	Ms Ruth Proslmeyr
<b>Board Chair:</b>	Dr Kenneth Nathan
<b>School Address:</b>	440 Wright St, Piara Waters WA 6112
<b>Number of Students:</b>	874
<b>ICSEA<sup>1</sup></b>	1052
<b>Reviewers:</b>	Ms Janine Milton (Lead) Dr Lesley Payne
<b>Review Dates:</b>	14 and 15 June 2017

## Purpose of the Review

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

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

## Review Methodology

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

The principal forwarded the school self-review conclusions to the Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

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

- the *My School*<sup>®</sup> website
- the Department of Education's School Performance Monitoring
- Schools Online reports.

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

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

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

## Business Plan

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

Piara Waters Primary School opened in 2011 and became an IPS in 2015. Student enrolments steadily increased to peak in 2015 and notwithstanding the transfer of Year 7 remain high with large numbers of students enrolled in the early childhood years. The student population is very diverse, with almost half speaking languages or dialects other than English. In 2015, the school became a Teacher Development School for the new curriculum area of media arts. Regular attendance has increased from 76.6% in 2014 to 86.6% in 2016, to be higher than like-schools and the Western Australian Public School average. The transiency rate has fallen from a high of 31% in 2012 to 12% in 2016.

## Findings

- The school's vision had been developed through an extensive consultative approach with all school stakeholders from 2012–2014 using the Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in School program.
- The 2015–2017 business plan clearly outlines a long-term strategic approach for the school and describes the vision, direction and six key focus areas each with a short description, objectives, core strategies and performance indicators. The focus areas have been collaboratively and strategically selected to drive contextually-relevant improvement, progress key strategic Department of Education initiatives and raise the overall performance of the school. The plan is an effective driver of contemporary learning and evidence-based improvement.
- The business plan includes four academic performance targets in literacy, numeracy and science with comparisons to like-school performance and three non-academic targets related to students' social-emotional status, student behaviour, social skills and bullying, and school promotion of safety and relationships.
- The academic targets focus on improving average performance, improving student growth and progress, and improving the extent of high achievement (top two proficiency bands) in reading, writing and numeracy. Measurement by annual National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy Program (NAPLAN) testing of students in Year 3 and Year 5 is stated in two of the targets. There is a lack of specificity in the other two targets leaving them open to interpretation as whether like-schools are State or national and what specific tools and measurements are to be used. The school identified some dissatisfaction with

targets based only on NAPLAN testing. Consideration could be given to triangulation of NAPLAN, On-entry and school-based assessments to enable greater data reliability and usefulness.

- The inclusion of three non-academic targets is positive and demonstrates a willingness to be explicit regarding effective implementation of the school's values and expectations. These targets identify three measurement tools to be used, some of which have proven to be more difficult than expected in the quantification of improvement.
- School staff, school board, parents and community members collaboratively developed the business plan in 2015. It is available to all members of the school community on the school's website. It is regularly referred to by all stakeholders in the development of operational plans and when making school improvement decisions.
- The business plan is regularly reviewed by staff members and the school board, with two major reviews conducted and documented in mid-2016 and mid-2017. In response to the 2016 review, an additional focus area of 'high support, high care' was added as it was seen that support of students, families, staff and community relationships was central to the achievement of their school vision of 'Community, Collaboration and Contemporary'.

### **Area of strength**

- Development of a concise and well-crafted school business plan that has provided an effective strategic platform for evidence-based school improvement.

### **Area for improvement**

- Greater specificity of how academic and non-academic targets are to be measured to best quantify progress over time with consideration of inclusion of a wider range of assessments.

## Teaching and Learning

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

### Findings

- Student performance in all Year 3 and Year 5 NAPLAN assessments shows a steady positive trend over the past five years. Average scores in Year 3 and Year 5 in numeracy, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar have risen from below like-schools in 2012 to above like-school comparisons in 2016. Reading results show higher average scores in 2016 than previous years, although Year 3 average scores remain below like-school comparisons. All NAPLAN literacy results for students in Year 3 in 2014 to Year 5 in 2016 show higher progress and higher achievement than like-schools.
- Individual education plans are developed for students requiring teaching and learning adjustments. These plans are reviewed by staff with parents or caregivers every three to four weeks and contain documented targets and progress reports. This process is comprehensive and very well monitored. Staff have created an electronic database which details student intervention and ensures that essential information is accessible to all teachers. Teaching staff have been trained in the use of Special Education Needs Assessment Tool documents to guide planning and reporting for target students.
- The school has developed a contemporary learning framework outlining key aspects of connected practice of 'an engaged learner, an engaged teacher and an engaged parent'. This guides a visible and explicit approach to teaching and learning focused on the development of self-regulated and self-directed learners.
- The school holds a three-day induction program for all new staff ensuring that there is shared understanding of the vision, values, expectations, pedagogical beliefs and understandings underpinning the school's curriculum provision and agreed whole-school approaches. This is very thorough and establishes a culture of high expectations from the outset of appointment to the school.
- Teachers and students have adopted the common language of iStar to enable them to articulate and discuss learning in an explicit and visible way. There is a common approach to lesson delivery, informing students of the purpose of the lesson, development of whole-class goals and explicit use of criteria to judge learning success. De-privatising of classrooms through collaborative practice, peer-to-peer observations and regular classroom walkthroughs by school leaders ensures that this approach is actively practised in all classrooms.

- Whole-school practices are in place regarding the provision of quality and timely feedback to students to inform their learning goals. Feedback about student learning is provided to parents and staff through regular formal and informal reporting mechanisms and there is effective ongoing communication and support available to families through web-enabled media.
- Curriculum development, planning and implementation is monitored, supported and reviewed by collaborative teacher-led curriculum operational groups in all learning areas. These include teacher representatives from different phases of the school and are managed and supported by a deputy principal. They meet monthly to develop comprehensive curriculum policies and plans, present at staff meetings and organise relevant professional learning for staff. Operational plans contain specific performance targets that demonstrate high expectations. These are regularly monitored and reviewed and guide operational strategies. This highly effective and accountable model has enabled a high degree of ownership, passion and commitment to develop within the staff.
- In 2016, the school became a Teacher Development School (TDS) for media arts. As this is a new curriculum area, and one taught through an integrated approach with other curriculum areas, it is in its initial phases with all teachers at the school attending professional learning and trialling approaches individually and collaboratively. The TDS staff have developed a K–6 media arts scope and sequence to assist in implementation of the second phase of the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline. This places the school in a positive position to become a system leader in this innovative and contemporary curriculum area.
- With an increasingly high percentage of students with English as a second language or dialect, the school provides a supportive environment for students to learn English along with a culturally respectful approach to maintaining pride in home languages and cultures. The school is being very innovative in the way in which it is developing home language cultural programs as well as a range of languages including French and Noongar.
- There are formalised literacy and numeracy blocks, with a whole-school approach to warm ups and iStar lesson design. Modelling, sharing, trialling and coaching are strategies employed throughout the school to ensure consistency and fidelity to agreed approaches. There is a common approach to phonics from Kindergarten to Year 6 and guided reading is now the focus of collective development to improve reading levels in line with business plan targets.
- In 2016, the Department of Education Office of Early Childhood conducted an audit of early childhood provision against the National Quality Standard. The

school received an overall rating of 'very good', meeting the requirements in six of the seven quality areas, with outdoor learning environments being a work in progress. The school recognises the importance of early learning success.

- Collaborative learning teams use the iStar discourse format to develop six-weekly collaborative action learning cycles to progress targeted learning outcomes within their year levels. This reflective approach includes baseline assessment, specific actions, peer observation, support, post-action assessment and review. This process has strengthened teacher accountability and supported teacher growth and peer leadership. Teachers, especially graduates and teachers new to the school, report that these teams provide invaluable guidance and personal support and enhance their professional efficacy and satisfaction.
- Performance management processes in the school are based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers using a cycle of reflection, action, feedback and review. Managers actively support staff through classroom observations around agreed goals with documented feedback, along with coaching, mentoring and classroom walkthroughs to provide a supportive professional partnership focused on individual professional growth. The school executive leaders actively develop and encourage teacher leadership development through a distributed leadership paradigm, supported aspirant programs and provision of a range of short and long-term leadership roles and opportunities.

### **Areas of strength**

- Significant improvement in student learning as shown by positive growth in literacy and numeracy NAPLAN assessments.
- Effective collaborative processes for students at educational risk.
- Development of a common pedagogical approach and language to enable whole-school discourse and connected practice across the school.
- Effective collaborative practices to develop responsive curriculum operational plans in line with contemporary expectations.
- The development of a highly professional culture based on high expectations and quality support.

## Student Performance Monitoring

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

### Findings

- The staff of Piara Waters Primary School regularly engage in rigorous school self-review at multiple levels—whole-school, curriculum operational groups, year-level collaborative learning teams, individual classes and individual students. Information from each level is triangulated to form a very robust, dynamic and well-informed view of school and student performance. This enables monitoring of progress regarding business plan priorities and strategies and the development of responsive planning for improvement.
- The documentation of the 2017 review is extensive and thorough. Analysis of performance against the DPA expectations and responsibilities are cross-referenced to key priorities within the business plan with each section containing a written narrative including context, actions, outcomes (impact), reflections and next steps. Findings are referenced to data, key documents and other evidence.
- Delegation to relevant school leaders and associated teacher teams regarding the collation of evidence and documentation of sections of the school self-review has developed strong collective ownership of this review. This is highlighted by the high level of knowledge, understanding and pride shown by staff in discussing findings within their classroom or teacher teams regarding whole-school focus areas.
- Teachers demonstrate a sound ability to analyse student performance data using a variety of student performance information. This is an embedded practice and expectation of all teachers at the school.
- Members of the curriculum operational groups use a myriad of whole-school assessments, diagnostic tests, School Curriculum and Standards Authority judging standards, school-based curriculum standards and moderated samples to enable them to collectively assess, plan and review whole-school curriculum delivery and implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline. This provides a comprehensive evidence base for decision-making and whole-school planning across all learning areas.
- The school has developed two part-time positions for teacher whole-school data coaches to ably assist personnel both in key school improvement structures of

collaborative learning teams and curriculum operational groups to understand and use data effectively. This provides valuable support for time-consuming data collection and collation and increases the efficacy of evidence-based practices.

- The effectiveness of the two interactive committees, together with the role of the coaches and the oversight of the school leadership team enhances the sustainability of sound evidence-based planning and review at the operational level.
- Annual reports are comprehensive, easy to read and informative. However, not all business plan targets are reported within relevant sections of these reports, making it difficult to track progress and achievement of targets over the lifespan of the business plan. Development of a target monitoring and reporting mechanism would provide school executive leaders and board members greater clarity regarding the impact of the business plan to improve identified strategic areas of the school and greater capacity to be responsive to changing needs over time.

### **Areas of strength**

- Use of cross-referenced processes of whole-school curriculum operational groups and collaborative teacher teams to build evidence-based discourse, reflection and school self-review focused on improvement.
- Integrated documentation of the school self-review against the DPA and school business plan demonstrates a high level of strategic understanding which has permeated through the school due to the collaborative and distributed manner with which it was developed.
- The embedded practice of staff to analyse student performance data and use collaborative evidence-based decisions.

### **Area for improvement**

- Develop a monitoring and reporting mechanism to track progress and achievement of business plan targets over the lifespan of the plan.

## Program Delivery

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

### Findings

- A comprehensive range of programs has been established by staff to meet the needs of students and support student learning, engagement and wellbeing in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Focus Area 6 of the school's business plan, 'high support, high care', outlines a range of strategies that have been implemented across the school to assure the safety and welfare of students. A group of student leaders spoke confidently about feeling safe, both on and away from school premises. Students' medical files and action plans are updated regularly and communicated to relevant personnel. There is a whole-school approach to the explicit teaching of protective behaviours. The positive perception of a safe and inclusive learning environment by parents and students was further affirmed by an analysis of satisfaction survey data.
- The *Friendly Schools Plus* social and emotional program underpins the school's code of conduct developed as a Behaviour Expectations Matrix organised under five key values, namely: demonstrate respect; actively participate; engage collaboratively; take responsibility; and show generosity. This guides the behaviour and responsibilities of all students, staff and community members. This matrix is embedded across classrooms through environmental signage and explicitly taught lessons and underpins the behaviour reward system. Sustainability is ensured through staff access to *Friendly Schools Plus* professional learning each year. The reviewers affirm high standards of student behaviour through data analysis and discussions with parents and students.
- Student leadership has been greatly enhanced in 2016, as a key strategy within Focus Area 6 of the business plan to build the social and emotional learning of students. Selected students lead weekly whole-school collaboration sessions with groups of multi-aged students to undertake collaborative social skills lessons and activities under the guidance of a support teacher. Other student leadership roles include roles as councillors, faction leaders, class collaboration leaders and cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) ambassadors. This has created powerful opportunities for students to develop confidence and capacity as well as building a friendly culture of connectedness across the school.

- The school shows significant commitment to developing positive community partnerships through the establishment of a Community, Family and Student Services Centre. They have also collaboratively developed a Parent and Community Relationship Framework to explain different ways people can be involved with the school. The appointment of a parent community liaison officer provides excellent ongoing support to students and families, including support and training of parent liaison volunteers for each class. The second appointment of a media communication officer has enabled the development of an interactive school website and high quality communication strategies with parents and community.
- The school demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity and developing positive respect and understandings of cultural diversity. The development of CALD student ambassadors, the appointment of ethnic education assistants and the range of events celebrating cultural diversity effectively help develop a harmonious and inclusive learning environment.
- An extensive and strongly established distributed leadership model supports the sustainability of school programs with opportunities for all staff to become leaders. Day-to-day operational management of the school is efficient and effective, resulting in a calm and supportive learning environment and a place where children and families feel welcome and comfortable.

### **Areas of strength**

- The embedded approach to behaviour and social/emotional development across the school.
- The Behaviour Expectations Matrix effectively promotes and supports student safety, engagement, inclusivity, behaviour and mental health and wellbeing.
- The whole-school collaboration sessions promote peer-led collaborative approaches to learning.
- The establishment of a Community, Family and Student Services Centre with associated appointments has been an effective enabling strategy to build strong supportive relationships.

## Resourcing and Support

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

### Findings

- Financial and human resources are used to deliver education programs that provide all students with opportunities to meet their learning needs. Resourcing is well aligned to school priorities and operational school planning. The corporate services manager is a member of the school board and provides regular financial reports and advice and ensures appropriate financial statements are published in the school's annual report.
- Financial and human resources are used effectively to deliver education programs that provide all students with the very best opportunities to achieve high levels of proficiency. The programs developed by the student services team to support students at educational risk demonstrate this well. The school receives disability resourcing for 15 students with a diagnosed disability. These students all have special needs education assistants who work collaboratively with teachers to provide relevant curriculum, teaching and learning adjustments. Additionally, there are many other students for whom differentiated curriculum and teaching adjustments need to be made. The student services team manages an extended student support program including support from an experienced learning support teacher, highly trained education assistants, access to a school psychologist and the monitoring of individual and group education plans developed and implemented by classroom teachers.
- In 2013, school leaders used resources to introduce intensive withdrawal MiniLit classes for identified students with specially trained staff. Impressive results have been achieved with most students catching up to expected level after six to eight months in the program with minimal regression over time.
- The appointments of a 0.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) media communication officer and a 0.6 FTE parent community liaison officer demonstrate an innovative resources strategy to effectively build positive partnerships with parents and community.
- Over the last few years, unpredictable change due to exponential population growth in the area and the opening of a new school nearby has necessitated flexible and responsive workforce planning. Currently a strategic workforce plan is under development to identify and address current and future staffing needs.

- The reviewers are confident there are sufficient resources to sustain current and intended program delivery and provide for student improvement.

### **Areas of strength**

- The effective use of financial and human resources to address the needs of students at educational risk.
- Innovative allocation of human resources to build supportive partnerships with parents and community.

### **Area for improvement**

- Development of a workforce plan to identify and address current and future staffing needs.

## School Board

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

### Findings

- Through discussions, reviewers confirm that school board members are very supportive of the school and willing to contribute to its ongoing development. Board membership is representative of the school community including teacher, parent and independent community members with a range of expertise and skills ensuring compliance with the *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Regulations 2000* which specify membership categories and composition.
- In 2017 most of the parent and community representatives on the board are new, including the board chair. Significant support was provided to the previous board members to build knowledge and capacity and there are plans for this to occur for the new board members. The school recognises that for continued sustainability, it is preferable to have staggered tenures and this is now being implemented.
- Board members were originally involved in developing the strategic plan. It is clear from board minutes that the principal has engaged members in discussion on many appropriate governance topics including budgeting, staffing, enrolments, the National Quality Standard, results of parent and staff surveys and NAPLAN performance data.
- Annual reports include an endorsement by the board but do not include information or reports from the board or the board chair.
- Board members indicated that they are well informed about school programs, performance and operations. They receive and endorse relevant monthly financial reports and the results of any school audits. School and student performance data is presented to the board, as evidenced through discussion and board minutes. However, not all business plan targets have received critical interrogation or evaluation.
- The board chair agreed that the board could be more effective in its participation in the school self-review process and response to school assessment data in identifying what is working well and what needs to be improved. Due to the recent changeover of board members, a review of board performance has not yet been completed.

- Reviewers acknowledge the value of the in-depth review undertaken of the requirements of the DPA. In discussion, members acknowledged the need for more critical evaluation of strategic plan targets and the need for further training and formal induction. Such processes would assist with the sustainability of its membership and practices.
- Community members brought significant experience, knowledge and skills to the board, including assisting with strategic planning, financial management and the development of specialised support programs, such as Genius Hour. Their capacity to add value to the school was acknowledged and supported by the school.

### **Area of strength**

- The commitment of board members to support the school improvement agenda of developing positive community partnerships, progressing inclusivity and building an adaptive and effective learning environment.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Development, analysis and monitoring of business plan performance and student improvement targets.
- Annual self-review of board performance.
- Increasing sustainability of board effectiveness through staggered tenure and appropriate induction and training to ensure clarity of role and understanding of relevant accountabilities.
- Use of the annual report to communicate with the broader school community regarding the board's function and activities.

## **Conclusion**

The staff, parents and community of Piara Waters Primary School justly show pride in the school and what it has achieved over the past three years. Their motto of 'Community, Collaboration and Contemporary' is positively and explicitly enacted in their integrated processes, programs and relationships.

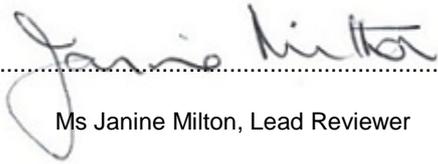
A culture of high expectations and high achievement has resulted in a steady improvement of student results in literacy and numeracy to be now predominantly higher than similar schools in Western Australia.

The learning environment is vibrant and culturally respectful, providing students with a range of learning opportunities and experiences. The school is well led and managed with effective sustainable improvement and self-review practices evident.

## Declaration

We confirm the information provided is, to the best of our knowledge, true and correct, based on the verification of the evidence provided by Piara Waters Primary School for the Department of Education Services' independent review.

The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



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Ms Janine Milton, Lead Reviewer

24 July 2017

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Date



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Dr Lesley Payne, Reviewer

24 July 2017

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Date



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Mr Ken Perris, Director,  
Independent Public School Review

28 July 2017

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Date