



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education

# Busselton Primary School

2018

Review Findings



Independent Public School Review

## **Disclaimer**

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## **School and Review Details**

<b>Principal:</b>	Mr Jeremy Shepherd
<b>Board Chair:</b>	Ms Susan Francis
<b>School Address:</b>	Avocet Boulevard, Busselton WA 6280
<b>Number of Students:</b>	286
<b>ICSEA<sup>1</sup></b>	929
<b>Reviewers:</b>	Ms Robyn Smith (Lead) Mr Stephen Gibson
<b>Review Dates:</b>	13 and 14 March 2018

## **Purpose of the Review**

The purpose of this 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://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/About\\_icsea\\_2014.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/About_icsea_2014.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 provided the school self-review conclusions to the reviewers one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The 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® website
- School Performance Monitoring
- Schools Online reports

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school 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)?*

Busselton Primary School was first established in the 1850s in the centre of town and relocated to the east end of Busselton in 1998. It is the smallest of the public schools within the City of Busselton. The school's enrolment of 286 has seen a slight increase in recent years in the number of Kindergarten students who continue their education into Year 6.

The importance of relationships is a key factor at Busselton Primary School. Students are supported by an actively-involved school community. The multicultural community is represented by approximately 16% Aboriginal students with recent total enrolment of students of Indian, Vietnamese and Pakistani backgrounds approximately 13%.

The majority of classes from Kindergarten to Year 6 operate as composite classes. The school is in a transitional staffing phase with the appointment of two new deputy principals and two new teaching staff since gaining IPS status in 2015.

The school's facilities include two recent early childhood classrooms; purpose-built classrooms for music, art and science; a spacious library resource centre; a sensory room for students with special needs; and extensive outdoor play areas including facilities which incorporate nature play activities.

## Findings

- The Business Plan 2016–18 includes a mission statement which aims to provide “quality learning opportunities within a safe, caring school community, to foster the development of the whole child.” The business plan sets out five focus areas for school improvement and self-assessment that reflect the current school context: teaching; learning environment; school leadership; resources and relationships. Improvement targets and strategies for the school community are based on systemic and school-based data and system-level strategic directions. The business plan also includes guiding principles, beliefs and understandings, and objectives.
- The business plan outlines the school's focus on arresting and reversing the downward trend of the Year 3 and Year 5 students in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), while acknowledging the importance of continuing to improve student wellbeing. Attendance, behaviour, retention and engagement are particular priorities in this school context.

- Learning environment targets and strategies designed to minimise risk and result in improved levels of attendance and student behaviour are evident. School leadership targets acknowledge the pivotal role of staff in embracing opportunities to improve individual practice.
- NAPLAN data is analysed annually as part of the school review process by the leadership group and presented to teachers at the school development day each term. Teachers investigate this and other data to inform whole-school and classroom pedagogy and student learning targets for the following year. Term 2 and Term 3 meetings provide further opportunities for staff to determine the effectiveness of strategies and to make adjustments where necessary. The Business Plan 2016–18 is available to the community in hard copy and from the school website.
- Following interviews with school leadership and the board, reviewers concluded the business plan provides consistency to the strategic direction of the school, guiding the focus of the staff and board. Staff confirmed the need to ensure that agreed business plan strategies have the maximum impact on student progress and achievement. It was noted that the business plan could have been recently modified to improve its effectiveness in developing fine-grained student performance targets for particular student cohorts.

### **Area of strength**

- The business plan's acknowledgement of the school context and the strategic importance of focusing on establishing a quality learning environment that is well resourced and strongly supported by the whole school community.

### **Area for improvement**

- Raise staff expectations of students to set realistic, yet challenging targets for students at or below the literacy and numeracy benchmarks to support all to reach their full potential.

## Teaching and Learning

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

### Findings

- There is considerable variation in NAPLAN results in 2016–17. In both years there are a number of results where the school is below the like-schools comparison (Year 3 – writing and spelling. Year 5 – grammar and punctuation, numeracy and spelling). During this period, it was noted that there were a large number of students at or below the designated minimum standard (Year 5 – grammar and punctuation, writing and numeracy. Year 3 – reading and spelling).
- In 2017, the school has achieved its target of arresting and reversing the downward trend of Year 3 cohorts in NAPLAN numeracy assessments. The school's average student achievement score is 'above' when compared to schools with similar students, with 19% achieving Band 6 or 'above' compared to 7% of students in like-schools. Staff also celebrated the Year 3 to Year 5 student 'higher progress' and 'higher achievement' results in spelling, when compared to like-schools.
- Staff indicated the Year 3 assessment improvements in numeracy are a result of a concerted improvement strategy, including targeted professional learning and a consistent whole-school focus on explicit strategies for teaching mathematics. Staff acknowledged these successful strategies need to be employed in middle and upper school mathematics, and for all aspects of literacy across the years.
- Interviews with staff and parents confirmed the impact on student learning of student attitude, behaviour and effort. Ongoing monitoring and review of these assessments has helped to build students' confidence in their ability to do well and to enhance their feelings of accomplishment.
- Interviews with staff confirmed that attention to staff professional learning, networking and on-the-ground 'mentoring' has resulted in improved teacher confidence and commitment to whole-school teaching and learning pedagogies. All staff are encouraged to contribute fully and to take responsibility for their own professional learning. Evidence was provided to reviewers of teacher collaboration (with classroom peer observation in its early stages) and of their involvement in analysing data and whole-school planning. School leadership roles and the current committee structures provide opportunities for building capability to continue to improve the quality of teaching and of student learning.

**Areas of strength**

- Improvements in NAPLAN Year 3 numeracy results in 2017.
- The combination of leaders who set strategy and direction, and pedagogical reform in a learning environment where students feel safe and behaviour is well-managed.

**Areas for improvement**

- Develop further processes to maintain student progress and achievement in one priority area while implementing changes in another.

## Student Performance Monitoring

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

### Findings

- Evidence of effective monitoring of the business plan was provided in documentation of a comprehensive review of all target areas. Progress of achievements for each target was described with recommendations made for further development and improvements. The reviewers were informed that provision for staff to review all business plan targets is included in the format of the school development days which were conducted each term.
- The self-reflection documentation provided by the school indicates the standing (“yes,” “not yet,” “close” or “heading towards”) of each of the target areas within the business plan. The reviewers were provided with considerable evidence that triangulated these judgements which were made primarily by the school leaders and staff. With regards to target areas that were “not yet” or “heading towards,” it should be noted that the school has essentially another three terms within the 2016–18 cycle to complete these targets.
- The reviewers viewed evidence that demonstrated that student performance data is collected throughout the school year. Through the facilitation of the specialist teacher role there are the beginnings of a higher level of use of this data – disaggregation, identifying trends and diagnosis. A great deal of the business plan targets pertaining to academic results was only based on NAPLAN data. There is a realisation, by the school leadership team in particular, that no single set of data can be used in isolation to provide a complete picture.
- One of the more prominent targets within the business plan centred on arresting and reversing the downward trend in NAPLAN numeracy and spelling results from Year 3 to Year 5. The longitudinal data does suggest that this decline has existed at least since the 2013–15 assessments. In an effort to address this issue the reviewers were informed that the school has put some explicit initiatives in place such as the read, understand, choose, solve, answer and check (RUCSAC) steps as the overarching process to teach all students to solve mathematical problems. While there is clarity about the expectations for spelling in Years 4–6, students of these years do not undertake the same program as the students in Years K–3.
- In terms of aligning NAPLAN results with teacher judgements, the school was quite consistent with its literacy allocations. In instances of results not aligning it

was numeracy that posed some challenges. In both the 2016 and 2017 numeracy assessments there were a number of students whose NAPLAN results were below the grade allocation. The school is aware of this data and has put steps in place to address this discrepancy.

- The school is beginning to make greater use of the data generated from the On-entry assessment undertaken by Pre-primary students at the beginning of each school year. The school leadership team is aware that this data can be linked to NAPLAN assessments thereby allowing for the tracking of progress of individual students. The 2016 data shows that a large number of students were in the 'less than 0.5' progression points range in both reading and writing. Both the literacy and numeracy operational plans include the On-entry assessment as one of the prescribed monitoring and assessment tools.
- The work undertaken in relation to the planning and implementation of the National Quality Standard (NQS) has been most commendable at this school. The reviewers were presented with evidence of an external verification report, evidence relating to each element within the standard and an internal audit report which charts the work undertaken during the 2015–17 period. Evidence was presented which indicated that six out the seven quality areas have already been 'met' with the school 'working towards' the physical environment quality area.
- Staff and parents have a realisation that an orderly learning environment established through positive means is a key contributor for continuous improvement to take place at this school. The school has developed a comprehensive data collection system relating to the monitoring of student behaviour. The reviewers were presented with data that identifies negative behaviour by individual students, indicates times when these behaviours occur during the school day, pinpoints types of disengaged behaviour and provides information to support the school's Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) framework initiative. From this data the school has been able to put into place various structures which can immediately address student behavioural issues.
- The reviewers were informed by both the leadership team and staff that conversations regarding student performance primarily took place during the phase of learning (POL) and curriculum committee meetings. These meetings are designed so that purposeful collaboration between staff can take place in responding to key questions about monitoring improved outcomes for students whether it be across phases-of-learning or year-on-year. The reviewers were also informed that during POL meetings the utilisation of the judging standards materials from the School Curriculum and Standards Authority are used for moderation purposes.

- The annual reports, available on the website, report on all target areas of the business plan. Indicators of progress for the year and recommendations for the following year are tabled. Results of non-academic assessments are clearly presented along with NAPLAN comparisons with like-schools and national benchmarks. National Opinion Survey data from staff, students and parents with a brief summary statement is also included.

### **Areas of strength**

- A well-structured and systematic approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the business plan and students' performance.
- The work undertaken as part of the NQS audit has been used effectively to upgrade activities, the learning environment and facilities.
- The use of student behaviour data supports the development of an orderly learning environment throughout the school.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Develop ways in which On-entry data is further shaped, organised and embedded at a school level so that it plays a key role in effectively diagnosing student progress.
- Develop fine-grained student performance targets which are specific to the context of the school and can be measured throughout the next business plan.

## Program Delivery

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

### Findings

- The school leadership team has ensured that there is an established program of curriculum delivery in accordance with the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline schedule. A feature of curriculum delivery at this school is the range of programs that is offered to students. The key learning areas of science, music, health and physical education, and Indonesian are taught by specialists. The reviewers noted that these specialist programs are delivered in purpose-built classrooms which is certainly appreciated by those teachers. The school provided evidence to show that the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework has been implemented.
- The school has recently experienced a growth in the number of students at educational risk (SAER) and those with special education needs (SEN). They are most aware of the need to have an adjusted approach to teaching and learning for those students experiencing difficulty in literacy and/or numeracy. There is clarity among teaching staff about the new identification, programming and reporting processes for individual education plans (IEPs) and group education plans (GEPs). While one of the school leadership team has overall responsibility for SAER and SEN students, the school has recently appointed a SAER and SEN coordinator specifically for students in the older year levels. The reviewers were informed that this role will assist classroom teachers in developing IEP and GEP documents as well as supporting with differentiating the curriculum. For the younger SAER and SEN students, in-class and withdrawal support is provided by designated educational assistants who work along-side classroom teachers.
- The implementation by all staff of the PBS framework, designed to improve behaviour and engagement but with considerable add-ons related to student achievement and community engagement, has produced some most encouraging results for the school. The reviewers were presented with comprehensive student behaviour data that identified reductions in misbehaviour referrals, major student behaviour incidents and disengaged conduct. The PBS framework has been an initiative at this school for the past five years during which time a group of staff and parents have overseen its implementation. It was acknowledged by the staff that having an orderly learning environment was certainly a precondition to improving student outcomes.

- One of the targets identified in the current business plan related to student attendance. The reviewers were presented with evidence that since 2016 'regular' attendance had increased by 11% and 'unauthorised absences' had fallen by 16%. The data available for the first six weeks of the 2018 school year indicates that both attendance business plan targets are now being achieved. The reviewers were informed that the overall school attendance rate was higher than like-schools, but 1% below the Western Australian public schools average.
- Staff and parents indicated that this school is effective in addressing the wellbeing of students. Solid foundations for routines, safety and catering for a diverse range of needs are established. The school regularly seeks the views of parents/carers and external agencies when monitoring data on attendance, engagement and wellbeing of students. The school's Aboriginal and Islander education officer and the chaplain are both well respected in the school community and play pivotal roles in the pastoral care and support for the wellbeing of students and their families.
- The school is committed to building and sustaining a safe and stimulating learning environment for all students. This is aligned with a deep understanding that meeting students' learning needs requires an acknowledgement that there are significant differences in the backgrounds of the pupils attending this school. In discussions with staff, students and parents it became quite apparent that this school is proud of developing an inclusive culture that caters for both the academic and social-emotional development of a socio-economically diverse population.
- The school regularly reviews the programs, procedures and reporting requirements in relation to child protection. A protective behaviours program is explicitly taught to students in the younger year levels. This is then consolidated and built on as part of the school health and Bounce Back (wellbeing, resilience and social-emotional) programs. The reviewers were informed by both the chaplain and school leadership that the school works with a range of external agencies to support the safeguarding of a significant number of students.
- This is a well-administered school with clear expectations for students, staff and parents. It is a school that possesses discerning leadership that fosters a focus on what matters most – quality student outcomes. Operationally, the school is very well organised, there are well established accountability systems and structures in place and there is a commitment to a transparent and systematic planning cycle of evidence-based review. School policies and practices ensure all school activities are undertaken in accordance with Department of Education policies.

- The school has a very attractive, spacious and welcoming physical environment. The well-maintained grounds include ample play areas for children including sports fields as well as nature and commercial playgrounds. There are defined areas within the playground that are supervised by the leadership team for students who may be experiencing some behavioural issues. The Little Dolphins Playgroup (0–3 year olds) is well established in this community and uses a school building to deliver their program.

### **Areas of strength**

- The PBS framework whole-school initiative has been a proactive and educative approach to improving student behaviour.
- The importance of relationships is a key factor; pastoral care structures are well established and there is an authentic sensitivity to the needs of students who may have experienced considerable instability and disorder.
- While literacy and numeracy are key teaching and learning focuses, the school provides specialist programs which are effectively taught to meet the needs of students.
- During the current business plan cycle there have been improvements in student attendance and the level of unauthorised absences.

## 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

- A range of learning committees provide an effective framework for the school's ongoing cycle of monitoring and self-review. Reviewers noted that changes to the leadership team, with each deputy principal taking responsibility for particular focus areas, have ensured evidence-based decisions are made regarding resource allocation. Unfortunately, during the period of this business plan cycle the investment in sustaining improvement is not reflected in NAPLAN performance.
- The workforce plan, with its focus on staff diversity and organisational adaptability, enables the school to grow and adapt to the changing needs of students, and to provide further opportunities for leadership. The school's strong relationship with the Aboriginal community effectively supports its objective of an inclusive learning environment for all students.
- The appointment of specialist teachers for science, music, health and physical education, and Indonesian provides classroom teachers with more time to focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy achievements and to develop skills and understandings in digital technologies and in the humanities and social sciences.
- Allocated funding for the chaplain is a proactive approach to support families in need and interviews confirmed this is a valued resource for both students and parents.
- School funding supports the implementation of teaching and learning adjustments for students with special needs. Education assistants work with classroom teachers to provide essential learning support for students. The SAER and SEN coordinator plays a key role in supporting students' learning and participating in the planning and review process of students' documented plans. The establishment of a sensory room provides a safe and welcoming learning space for SEN students.
- Funding provided for the development of the Little Dolphins Playgroup has resulted in an established resource which continues to help families build important early relationships with the school.

- Financial management practices are well established and transparent, with staff and community committee members ensuring funds are appropriately allocated. The school board receives financial statements which are also published for the school community in the school's annual reports.

### **Area of strength**

- The school's allocation of resources highlights the community as an important asset and is evidence of the strong relationships the school continues to build within the community.

## School Board

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

- The board commenced early in 2015 following a transition from the previous school council to a working party to establish a board in accordance with the requirements of becoming an IPS. The board consists of 11 members who meet four times a year, including a public meeting held annually where members of the wider school community can attend. There was a period at the beginning of 2016 without a board chair with the current chair accepting the role in June 2017.
- There is an understanding of the accountability the school holds to its board and evidence of a range of strategies to keep this group fully informed and engaged. The board has continued to develop an awareness of compliance required with the legislation and mandated obligations of the Department of Education. The board is comfortable in the fact that as the school is an IPS, it assumes significant responsibility for its own affairs.
- Members of the board are conscious of not only their role and responsibilities but also the long-term and short-term challenges facing the school. The board is also mindful that an appointment of a community member is currently required under the *School Education Act 1999* and the DPA. The board acknowledged that it has been challenging to have the board being representative of all parents/carers and their social, economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Financial reports are presented to the board at each meeting with both targeted and discretionary spending reviewed. Board members are also represented on the school finance committee. Matters which impact on the financial position of the school, for example the census of student enrolment and the income from parent contributions, are considered by the board in order to assess their impact on the school's budget.
- Evidence of reference to the school business plan in board meetings was presented to the reviewers. As such, information has been effectively used in these meetings to explain approaches regarding the provision of programs and the allocation of resources and strategies to strengthen the development of various school improvement initiatives. The latter includes discussions, particularly focusing on student performance data, curriculum focus areas and National Opinion Survey data from parents, students and staff.
- The board is a positive advocate for the school and it was noted that a member was part of a selection panel for teaching staff in 2016–17. The reviewers were

informed that this not only built the capacity of that particular board member but also presented a parental perspective to assist with ensuring that this process was aligned to the direction of the school.

- The reviewers noted that the board had a sound understanding of the PBS framework which has been a key initiative at the school during the tenure of the current business plan. The board indicated that from their observations, the PBS framework had provided a more consistent and constructive approach to student behaviour issues and concerns at the school.
- It was acknowledged that there is still considerable work to be undertaken in relation to a number of board functions. These include raising its governance profile within the school community, reviewing its own effectiveness, developing a greater understanding of its role in school strategic planning and undertaking specific training to assist the members to further their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There is a need to scope out a formation program during the next business plan cycle so that the board can be more effective in communicating the vision, ethos and direction of the school.

### **Areas of strength**

- The board has been most supportive of the efforts of the school leadership team in developing an agenda for continuous improvement, including a business plan which outlines a school-wide approach to improvement.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Ensure that board formation is an identified target to be undertaken during the next business plan.

### Conclusion

Busselton Primary School delivers an educational program which endeavours to meet the diverse needs of its learners in a complex environment for a significant number of the students and their families. As an IPS the school has made significant progress in changing its culture to focus on collaboration, establishing collective approaches to school improvement and professional learning. Leadership has demonstrated great commitment to a transformation at the school to enhance the commitment of staff and so provide academic and non-academic benefits to students.

The PBS framework has shown an early noticeable effect on the school learning environment and the staff have worked collaboratively to gain a consistency of approach in dealing with student behaviours. Parents, students and staff have reported that there is a significant and positive change in the day-to-day operation of the school because of these changes. The school provides effective learning through an explicit improvement agenda, a commitment to a student-centred focus and effective pastoral care structures.

A vision for the school to become a safe and happy place is well founded. Families are made welcome and a strong valuing of culture and backgrounds is embedded into school practices. An energetic Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) and board work hard to ensure parent involvement is supporting the strategic direction that has been enabled by utilising the flexibilities afforded since becoming an IPS.

## **Declaration**

We confirm the information in this document is, to the best of our knowledge and based on the verification of the evidence provided by Busselton Primary School, true and correct.

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 Robyn Smith Lead Reviewer

..... 9 April 2018 .....

Date



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Mr Stephen Gibson, Reviewer

..... 6 April 2018 .....

Date



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Mr Ken Perris, Director,

..... 11 April 2018 .....

Date