



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Noranda 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 Jeff Murphy
Board Chair:	Mrs Olivia Stead
School Location:	Walmsey Drive, Noranda WA 6062
School Classification:	PS Class 5
Number of Students:	373
Reviewers:	Dr Lesley Payne (Lead) and Mrs Aileen Jones
Review Dates:	10 and 11 August 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 and developed lines of inquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for the two review visit days was subsequently negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During these two days the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with 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?

Named after the surrounding suburb, Noranda Primary School is located in the City of Bayswater. It was established to meet the needs of children within the Noranda and Morley area. The school commenced in 1980, caters for children in Kindergarten to Year 6, and has served a diverse community for 35 years. It became an Independent Public School in 2013.

The school buildings, ranging from the original 1980 design to new early-years buildings obtained through the Building Education Revolution program, are set on a large site amongst the extensive banksia woodland reserve that adjoins the school. This natural asset forms the basis of classroom and school programs including a Bush Wardens afterschool group. Recent focus on enhancing the physical environment of the school has ensured safe, interesting and challenging play areas. The addition of space-net, exercise equipment and nature play areas now provide age-appropriate opportunities for outdoor activities where students can socialise and interact confidently within the school grounds.

The school serves a diverse community with children from 31 different ethnic groups. Anglo-Australian families make up the majority of the student population with the second most representative group being from the Asia region (China, Malaysia and Vietnam.) The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is currently 1033 (4) with 78% of students in the bottom two quartiles and 22% in the top quartile of the ICSEA distribution.

Enrolments have remained fairly stable despite the Year 7 cohort moving to high school in 2014. The enrolment at the time of review was 373 students in K-6 with the growth trend in the early years of schooling. Aboriginal students make up 3.5% of current enrolment; 37% of students have a language background other than English and 3.4% have a recognised disability. A revised attendance policy, together with actions to reduce the unexplained absence rate from 35% in 2013 to less than 2% in 2014, has been instrumental in effecting the overall attendance rate of 93.3% (91% for Aboriginal students). This rate is equal to or higher than like schools.

While there have been recent leadership changes with a new principal commencing in April 2015, staffing at the school has been relatively stable. The opportunity to employ new graduates has been taken to help manage the workforce profile into the future. Staff members are committed to providing an education that recognises and values diversity. A strong pastoral care approach, emphasising the development of the whole person whilst ensuring a structured learning environment, reflects the school's ethos of students being self-disciplined, resilient and respectful.

The school has developed a strong strategic partnership with Camboon Primary School and Hampton Park Primary School. The partnership, known as the Australian Curriculum Organising Network of Schools (ACORN), set about developing curriculum leadership in the Western Australian Curriculum for the associate principals in each school. Staff from each school have benefited through discussions, planning and assessment pedagogies in phase one curriculum areas.

The newly elected board members are representative of the culturally diverse community groupings and together with the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), the Board is proactive and actively supported by the wider community. Members of both groups enjoy a positive working relationship with the school. The School Board, in conjunction with the new Principal, is in the process of planning the construction of a new school website with an aim to effectively communicate the school's direction to parents and the wider school community.

The School's Self-Review Process

How effective was the school's self-review in accounting for its performance during the period of the DPA and Business Plan?

The self-review undertaken by the school is based on a dual approach. National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data is reviewed by the administration team first, and then at the commencement of each term collaborative teams identify strategies to improve learning. The reviewers were able to verify this process through written documentation and meetings with the school leadership team and educational staff members.

The review process was not directly related to the Business Plan although it addressed some of the Business Plan targets. It did demonstrate a commitment to school improvement and self-evaluation.

It is recommended that annual self-reviews and assessments be conducted with direct reference to the school's commitments under the DPA and its Business Plan and that the process enables regular analysis of the standards of student performance and achievements against Business Plan targets.

The school staff provided NAPLAN assessment data against four of the 15 targets. The data was tabulated with little analysis and no specific reference to areas of strength or improvement or further actions required.

Other than the use of NAPLAN data, assessment of the extent to which targets had been met was based predominantly on a review of strategic actions rather than clearly outlined and measurable goals. The administration team acknowledged this was because targets were generally not worded to provide a clear understanding of how to measure the extent to which they were achieved.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The school's Business Plan was developed by the School Board and staff in 2013 to provide a focus for improvement for the next three years. The targets are embedded across three domains: working together, student well-being and teaching and learning. The operational plan, which outlines strategies designed to achieve the targets and milestones of the Business Plan, is arranged into the same three domains; however, the links between the Business Plan targets, operational plans and curriculum strategic plans were not made clear to reviewers.

During the review visit, reviewers were provided with NAPLAN data and teacher-generated data used to measure progress towards the student learning targets in the Business Plan. The targets in the *teaching and learning* domain include achievements from Kindergarten to Year 7. The first four targets in this domain relate to achievement in phonological awareness and numeracy understandings in Kindergarten and Pre-primary. The staff has implemented phonological awareness approaches to teaching literacy in the early childhood classes. Teachers were supported by a curriculum leader working alongside the early childhood teachers, the purchase and development of relevant resources and the provision of professional learning opportunities. An analysis of the data collected by teachers shows Kindergarten and Pre-primary teaching and learning targets were achieved.

The success of literacy and numeracy targets for Years 3, 5 and 7 were determined by the extent to which '*results continue the trend to achieve State averages or above*' in NAPLAN.

The Year 3 NAPLAN results were above the State average in spelling, writing and grammar and punctuation but below in reading, and significantly below the average in numeracy. Achievement results for Year 3 are trending downward across all domains and would be of concern if no improvement was indicated in the 2015 NAPLAN results.

The targets in English and numeracy for Year 5 have been achieved, with results matching or exceeding the State average. However, there were significant falls in achievement from Year 5 to Year 7 in numeracy, reading and writing from 2011–2013 and 2012–2014 in comparison to like schools and Australian schools.

The teaching staff have utilised the strategy of cross-setting as the sole strategy to differentiate learning in spelling and mathematics and implemented a whole-school commercial mathematics program (ORIGO). Improvement of student achievement as a result of these changes is yet to be assessed.

The school's self-review did not address achievement in science, indicating targets are under review due to the Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) testing in science no longer being available. Reviewers note that Year 5 and Year 7 WAMSE society and environment and science results were similar to like schools from 2011 to 2013. The staff are currently investigating alternative options to measure Year 5 WAMSE performance.

Through discussions with the administration team, reviewers verified that analysis of student performance had taken place, which led to adjustments to whole-school strategic plans and informed classroom planning. Performance data or scope and sequence outlines for achievement of targets or identified areas of improvement for academic and non-academic areas other than literacy and numeracy were not presented to the reviewers.

A review of the National Quality Standard in Early Childhood has been undertaken by early childhood staff and on-entry assessments inform classroom planning and targeted intervention programs in the early years.

It is recommended that areas for improvement of academic and non-academic performance be identified and outlined in the next Business Plan with measurable student achievement targets for all focus or priority areas.

Data on learning improvement for cohorts or sub-cohorts of students has not been analysed and was not presented to reviewers. It is recommended that the staff analyse the learning of sub-cohorts of students, such as English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students and students at risk, in order to identify whether particular cohorts of students' learning is impacting on school performance.

The staff had reflected on student learning and achievement and identified a number of effective implementation strategies and professional learning opportunities to support learning, but stopped short of measuring progress across all learning areas. The reviewers confirm the general findings of the school's performance as contained in the self-review and the 2014 Annual Report.

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?

The school's vision '*to work together to achieve educational excellence*' and to '*challenge and support students so they have a solid foundation to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to society,*' encapsulates the evident sense of strong community, friendship and desire for knowledge sought by students, staff and parents of the school. It features prominently in the school's Business Plan.

The school motto of '*friendship and knowledge*' is a keen driver for students, staff and parents in creating a safe, friendly and welcoming learning environment. There is a calm, positive tone in the school with a diverse range of students displaying a strong sense of '*self-discipline, resilience and respect.*'

During the lifetime of the current Business Plan the staff has focused on enhancing student capacity based on three core concepts:

- Every student is a successful student.
- Every teacher is a good teacher.
- Noranda Primary School is a good school.

Students are well behaved and supported by a strong behaviour and well-being approach to learning. A strong values program recognises good citizenship qualities with the 'Terrific Kid' award and individual classroom behaviour management practices supported by the fortnightly 'Ripper Recess' reward. Target 2 in the school's Business Plan of more than 88% of students not experiencing bullying incidences was considered achieved, with 93% of students reporting they did not experience bullying incidences.

Creating an inclusive learning environment that caters for the diverse needs of students and improves student learning is a high priority for Noranda Primary School staff. The school reports it has developed a reputation within the community as a preferred location for the education of primary aged children. Classrooms are well resourced.

Key programs designed to meet the needs of students include EAL/D, Primary Extension and Challenge Program (PEAC) and the strategic use of ICT (iPads) to cater for individual needs. Students report satisfaction with their learning and show pride in their achievements.

A valued learning partnership with Morley Senior High School is the use of the science laboratories. During 2013 and 2014, the Year 7 students and teachers attended the high school on a weekly basis to conduct science lessons addressing the Western Australian Curriculum outcomes. This opportunity is now provided for Year 6 students and is of value to students in transitioning into high school.

Peer tutoring is a successful strategy employed by the school to support the development of micro-skills on an individual basis. Senior students are trained and matched to early childhood and middle childhood students on a one-to-one basis. Practice skills prepared by the teacher in literacy and numeracy provide opportunities for students to engage with one another, allowing relationships to develop across the year levels. This program has successfully run for several years and is valued by students, teachers and parents. The staff is commended on efforts to provide peer tutoring as a means to meet the educational needs of early and middle years students whilst encouraging leadership opportunities for senior students.

The Business Plan focus area of working together to ensure *'parents have a sense of connectedness and are able to add expertise and influence in the school'* is evidenced in the *Noranda Nippers* Program, a successful partnership between the school and Child and Community Health that serves to establish early communication with parents of preschool-age children and to encourage parental engagement and confidence in skill development through play. Initially started in 2010 for three year olds, the group was expanded in 2012 to include children up to three years of age. Relevant culturally-sensitive information for parents is offered on health, diet, hearing and speech and has recently included sessions for parents in maternity. This warm, welcoming and commendable program is an asset to the school as it serves to engage parents in the life of the school from the earliest age. Parents and community members report high levels of satisfaction with this service being offered through the school.

The *Noranda Nippers* program is commended for promoting parent connection and engagement, early intervention and effective transition to Kindergarten.

The focus area of student well-being includes a target to achieve greater accuracy in teacher reporting of student attributes. Whilst work has continued regarding teachers defining student well-being and resilience, the analysis of the teacher judgements in the Attitude, Behaviour and Effort framework of student reporting was consistent across the three years and therefore did not provide a contrast to determine whether the target had been met.

The staff has identified the need to adapt or change the method chosen to measure this target in the next version of the school's Business Plan.

The school is a member of the Morley Schools' Network, which has provided a forum for collegiate discussion and professional learning. The ACORN group has planned opportunities for professional learning across three schools with positive results. Staff surveys report the value of these after-school opportunities and show a high attendance rate. The linked performance development and growth of teachers with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is developed within the school through the use of peer feedback and classroom observations. Teachers report satisfaction with the current practice and it is clear that the school has developed a culture of ongoing professional learning and respect aimed at building the capacity of its teachers to be effective practitioners. The support and development of a professional learning community in the school is commended.

Noranda Primary School staff have identified and deployed resources to create an environment that is intellectually stimulating, challenging and inspires students whilst fostering their love of learning. The school leadership team facilitates programs such as *Opti-Minds*, *Night of the Notables* and a national mathematics program (AMC). The school has devoted considerable effort to ensure that the learning environment promotes the well-being of all students. Before and after-school activities include the Running Club and Bush Wardens.

Parent surveys from 2013 and analysis from 2012–2013, indicate 90% parent satisfaction with the school and its programs. Observations made during the visit, along with evidence through discussions with parents, students and teachers, confirmed positive relationships exist between the school and parents and that Noranda Primary School is working with its diverse community of learners to challenge and support students to achieve educational excellence.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

The sustainability of the school's programs and strategies for future improvements needs to be assured through embedded self-review processes, which include an analysis of the learning of all students in academic and non-academic areas. Discussions with staff confirmed there is a whole-school understanding of the need to improve student achievement, especially in literacy and numeracy.

Through discussions, reviewers confirmed school board members were supportive of the school and keen to contribute to its ongoing success, but acknowledged the need to be clearer about members' roles and responsibilities. Although data is presented annually to the Board, as evidenced through discussion and board minutes, there appears to be limited critical reflection on school performance, the annual cycle of self-review, evaluation of Business Plan targets, analysis and strategic oversight of requirements of the DPA.

The Principal and Board Chair articulated the need for the Board to include a community member in future to improve its effectiveness. The longer-term development of the Board, including implementing regular self-evaluation mechanisms and an understanding of Board roles and responsibilities, will assist in maintaining a sustainable school environment.

It is recommended the School Board review its role and responsibilities, particularly with regard to the development, monitoring, analysis and communication of Business Plan targets and strategic oversight.

The Principal and associate principals are building leadership skills and developing the expertise of teaching staff. The administration team is looking at ways to develop greater curriculum responsibility by establishing a more distributive leadership model in order to improve student learning within the school. Some whole-of-school planning was reflected in documentation.

In response to *Target 1: the establishment of professional learning communities*, professional learning teams have been established throughout the school. The collaborative strategic planning model was presented to staff in 2013 as a strategy to achieve consistency in areas such as common teaching practice and student behaviour and is now a fundamental element of the school's culture and operations. To ensure that teams have time to conduct collaborative meetings, the DOTT timetable has been structured to incorporate common time across adjoining classrooms. The staff are commended on their commitment to the collaborative strategic planning model.

Staff members have appropriate access to resources and professional learning to sustain their roles in the school and the *Noranda Primary School Workforce Plan 2014–2016* recognises the impact of a number of factors on the current workforce and outlines strategies to assist in meeting the demands of any potential future needs.

Staff and parents report there is an emphasis on collaboration to build quality in teaching practice and engagement in professional learning and the reviewers affirm that the school has a sustainable learning environment.

Conclusion

Creating an inclusive learning environment that caters for the diverse needs of students and improves student learning is a high priority for Noranda Primary School. The school's vision encapsulates the sense of strong community, acknowledged by students, staff and parents of the school.

The staff have reflected on student learning and achievement and identified a number of effective implementation strategies and professional learning opportunities to support learning.

Staff and parents report there is an emphasis on collaboration to build quality in teaching practice and engagement in professional learning. The leadership team indicated a commitment to the development of the next Business Plan incorporating specific, measurable, challenging targets and goals to facilitate effective self-reviews into the future.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the peer tutoring program for students
- the implementation of the Noranda Nippers early intervention program
- staff commitment to the collaborative strategic planning model.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- conduct of annual self-reviews and analysis of the standards of student performance and achievements against Business Plan targets
- identification of academic and non-academic areas for school improvement with measurable student achievement targets for all focus or priority areas in the next Business Plan
- analysis of the learning of sub-cohorts of students, such as EAL/D students and students at risk to identify whether particular cohorts of students' learning is impacting on school performance

- evaluation of student learning achievement for all learning areas
- review of the School Board's role and responsibilities with regard to the development, monitoring, analysis and communication of Business Plan targets and strategic oversight.

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 Noranda 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.



Dr Lesley Payne, Lead Reviewer

23 October 2015

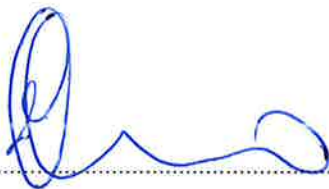
Date



Ms Aileen Jones, Reviewer

22 October 2015

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

2/10/15

Date