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Disclaimer

This document has been based on the findings of the independent reviewers’ verification of the school’s self-review. The school’s self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The findings of the independent review are forwarded to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education, the Principal and the Board Chair.

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School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Alan Kidd
Board Chair: Dr Gavan White
School Location: Macquarie Drive, Australind WA 6233
School Classification: Level 5 Primary School
Number of Students: 762 (K – 7), Semester One, 2012
Independent Reviewers: Mr Bill Gibson and Mr Kevin Pilkington
Review Dates: Self-review presentation: 29 October 2012
Review visits: 22 and 23 November 2012

1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Kingston Primary School is to provide an assurance to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education and the school community on the extent to which the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) and associated Business Plan. The focus of the review is on:

- how well the school has improved the standards of student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes student learning
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

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

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

- the MySchool™ website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.
Reviewers visited the school for a half-day presentation of the school’s self-review by the Principal, the Board Chair and other key stakeholders chosen by the school. Subsequently the reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school’s self-review documentation and developed lines of enquiry where further verification was required.

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

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

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.
2. Summary

Kingston Primary School commenced in 2009. The school has utilised available resources to provide a range of educational experiences and opportunities for its rapidly growing student population.

Australian Curriculum implementation and school-wide pedagogical practice have received significant resources through the provision of time, professional learning and access to expertise. Under the committed guidance of lead teachers the Literacy and Numeracy committees and the Phases of Learning teams conduct whole-school analysis of student performance data and curriculum planning. This has been a key strategy in supporting staff to achieve a student-focused emphasis, through a collaborative approach toward achieving targets by means of explicit teaching.

Kingston Primary School has established a positive learning environment with an emphasis on the development of staff capacity, a commitment to a culture of high expectations and student engagement to promote student learning. The school provides an inclusive environment that reflects a culture of care for all students and is supported by a comprehensive range of partnerships with professional organisations, businesses and the community.

The reviewers can verify that the school has a well-developed range of practices and strategies placing it in a sound position to sustain its current level of performance and further improve student learning. Integral to the delivery of a quality learning experience at Kingston Primary School is a committed staff, a highly professional leadership team and an informed Board all working with the parents to embed programs to meet the needs of all students.

Commendations

- Embedding its ethos and developing a culture of high expectations.
- The proactive infrastructural and workforce planning to guide the school through establishment and initial period of rapid growth.
- The establishment of outcome-focused partnerships that enhance staff competencies, school resources and class structures.
- The development of the School Board in providing high-level oversight of both the Delivery and Performance Agreement and the Business Plan.
- The collaborative and highly coordinated approach that builds a shared understanding of curriculum expectations in the areas of literacy and numeracy.
• The commitment to data-driven school self-review at the School Board, whole-school, year cohort and classroom levels leading to implementation of innovations in curriculum and pedagogy.

• The quality of leadership in fostering a culture of professional excellence and opportunity.

• Implementation of inclusive strategies to address the needs of students at educational risk including those whose performance is impacted by poor behaviour, transiency or irregular attendance.

Affirmations

• The steps taken in developing consistency in pedagogical approaches with particular reference to the ongoing implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

• The intention to revise targets in response to student learning information to focus on improved student performance across all year levels.

• The planned progressive development of explicit whole-school scope and sequence statements for all learning areas commencing in 2013 with Science.

• The ongoing engagement and maintenance of partnerships within the school community to improve the educational experiences of all students.

Recommendations

• The development of a communications strategy to ensure community awareness of the School Board’s role, responsibilities and accountabilities in supporting the school.

• An annual board effectiveness survey be used to determine ongoing training priorities and ongoing role clarification.

• In addition to tracking the performance of the stable cohort over time, the school includes the performance of all students assessed by NAPLAN in reporting future like-school, state and national comparisons.
3. School Context

Kingston Primary School is a Level 5 primary school situated in the Kingston housing subdivision at Australind, 200 kilometres south of Perth. The catchment area includes the adjacent Treendale and Binningup Beach subdivisions. The school opened at the commencement of the 2009 school year with an enrolment of 320 Kindergarten to Year 7 students.

Fully utilised, 'state of the art', air-conditioned facilities and transportable classrooms support the teaching and learning program. Facilities include a purpose built Early Learning Centre, a visual arts room, a music room, a library and an undercover area. The school offers Year 1 to Year 7 students specialist programs in music, visual arts, Japanese and physical education. Visiting instrumental specialists funded by the School of Instrumental Music Program (SIM) extend the music program. Membership of the Japanese Language Hub (2010 and 2011), collaboration with Parkfield Primary School (2012) and the establishment of a "sister school relationship" with Takenodai Elementary School in Kobe, Japan further enhances the delivery of the LOTE program.

The school, with an enrolment of 762 students at the commencement of the 2012 school year, a socio-economic index (SEI) of 100 and an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 976, mainly draws children of parents who are working in the trades, many of whom are engaged in shift and/or 'fly in fly out' work. The variation between the SEI and the ICSEA measures impacts on comparisons between state and national like school subsets.

Significant subgroups within the student population include 3.7% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 30% born overseas, of whom 13% were born in New Zealand and 5% in the United Kingdom. A further 2.3% of enrolled students are registered for Schools Plus support. In addition the school has identified both a high, employment-driven student transience rate of over 20% annually and rapid growth (an increase of 442 students) as having a considerable impact on teaching and learning.

An integral factor in the delivery of a quality learning experience at Kingston Primary School is the commitment of both teaching and non-teaching staff to the mission, vision and values of the school. It is the belief of the school that the establishment of a positive school culture, identity and reputation will determine the ability of the school to develop strong community links and perceptions that support innovation. Staff capacity to implement programs that define their culture including
whole-school approaches to literacy, numeracy and behaviour management are enhanced by a reflective framework of accountability and performance management.

Workforce planning has identified significant trends and factors including:

- increased enrolments to peak in 2013
- the opening of a new school in Treendale in 2014
- the movement of Year 7 students to secondary school in 2015.

Careful workforce planning and proactive site management has resulted in the school being well-placed to address its predicted enrolment peak in 2013 and subsequent enrolment stabilisation beyond 2013. A distributed leadership model that utilises the commitment, experience and enthusiasm of staff has also minimised the impact of these trends. An ongoing merit selection process to select staff supportive of the vision and ethos of the school has enabled the school to sustain its culture through a period of rapid growth.

Kingston Primary School has developed a number of partnerships including: the "Kingston Internship Model" which supports teacher training and retention in partnership with Edith Cowan University (SW Campus); "Scientists in Schools" in collaboration with the CSIRO, and the Hewlett-Packard Catalyst grant to support tablet technology.

In accordance with the requirements of the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) the Kingston Primary School Council was dissolved and replaced by the School Board in 2010. Board membership includes a representative from Edith Cowan University (SW Campus). The Board operates within its relevant jurisdiction and has the required policies and documentation to be effective. It comprises experienced and committed members who understand their role and responsibilities as set out in the DPA.

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

The reviewers confirm that Kingston Primary School is proactively responding to its context. The response is underpinned by the commitment of an active parent body, engaged School Board and enthusiastic merit selected school staff.
4a. School Performance - Student Learning

The clear focus of the curriculum at Kingston Primary School in 2010 to 2012 has been on improving student learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy. While the focus is school wide (Kindergarten–Year 7), the measurement of success against stated targets in the school Business Plan relate to achievement in the early years and in particular Year 3 National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results. Complemented by specialist programs in music, art, physical education and languages (Japanese), students receive a comprehensive and engaging curriculum. The planning of curriculum delivery and monitoring of student achievement is detailed and has resulted in appropriate support strategies being introduced for building staff expertise and for intervention with individual, groups and cohorts of students.

The academic achievement targets detailed in the endorsed Business Plan relate only to Year 3. It is the view of the school that, in the original intake of students, particularly Years 4-7, many students from surrounding schools took the opportunity to make “a fresh start”: in which case the student cohort could therefore be skewed by a disproportionate number of students who exhibited poor behaviour, attitude and engagement. By focusing on the K-Year 3 stable cohort in determining the effectiveness of the teaching program, the school is able to measure the progress of students for whom Kingston Primary School has been their sole school. Students entering the school in the early years are administered a range of assessments including, for pre-primary students, the On-Entry Assessment. Monitoring and early intervention strategies are introduced immediately students are identified as being “at risk”. While students in Years 4-7 also receive appropriate interventions, support and monitoring, they do not form a part of the measurement of school effectiveness against the stated targets of the Business Plan.

The school makes a further modification when examining the NAPLAN results and reviewing performance. Students who have been identified by the school to be “at risk” and who are already on detailed individual education programs are extracted from the statistics for internal school purposes. These students do, however, remain in the statistical data for comparisons made against like schools, local schools, state and national performance.

Priorities identified in the Business Plan provide guidance for the teaching and learning occurring in the school and the allocation of resources to support the achievement of identified targets. The Business Plan identifies “The Pillars of School Improvement” with associated targets and strategies:
- Literacy (emphasis on Phonological Awareness and NAPLAN)
- Numeracy (emphasis on understanding number and NAPLAN)
- Social and Behaviour (Virtues Project, Attendance and Case Conferencing model)
- School Culture (Building community perceptions and Building Staff Capacity).

Curriculum implementation and school-wide pedagogical practice have received significant resources through the provision of time, professional learning and access to expertise. Under the committed guidance of lead teachers the Literacy and Numeracy committees and the Phases of Learning teams conduct whole-school analysis of student performance data and curriculum planning. This has been a key strategy in supporting staff to achieve a student-focused emphasis, through a collaborative approach towards achieving targets by means of explicit teaching.

Data provided based on the 2010 to 2012 NAPLAN results indicate the school has had limited success in reaching challenging academic targets. All targets relate to Year 3 performance in literacy and numeracy with targets of improvement “stretching” each year. The 2010 target of 90% of students at or above National Minimum Standard (NMS) in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation extending to 100% in 2011 and 2012 has not been met. Similarly the literacy target of 65% of students at or above state average in 2010 progressing to 75% in 2011 and 2012 has also not been met. However, as reflected in Schools On Line NAPLAN Average Score data, there has been marked improvement since the dip in Year 3 performance in numeracy, reading, writing and grammar and punctuation in 2010 compared to the school’s inaugural year of 2009. Encouragingly, the Year 3 students have improved in performance to the extent that the Average Score data in 2012 is now close to or above like-schools in all tests. Significantly, the Schools Online Student Progress and Achievement Compared with WA Public Schools (2010–2012) graph indicates all eight areas except for spelling Years 3-5 and spelling Years 5-7 (2010-2012) sit in the Higher Progress-Lower Achievement quadrant. Spelling for Years 3-5 falls into the Lower Progress-Lower Achievement quadrant while the spelling for Years 5-7 is in the Higher Progress-Higher Achievement quadrant. These results are encouraging when compared to the same graph for 2009 to 2011 where five of the eight areas fell into the Lower Progress-Lower Achievement quadrant and the remaining three were placed in the Higher Progress-Lower Achievement quadrant.

Based upon rigorous examination of the data the school has introduced a comprehensive range of strategies to improve performance in literacy:
Phonological awareness testing which was initially across the whole school will be continued in Pre-Primary-Year 2 from 2013 and be made available to students in other years as required.

All teachers are accountable for the implementation of a daily Literacy Block underpinned by First Steps philosophy and strategies. Facilitated collegiate meetings are a forum for teacher development in Literacy Block structures and strategies.

A 15-minute explicit teaching session on Phonological Awareness (PA) skills within the daily Literacy Block.

All teachers use the Literacy Net as a planning and monitoring tool to inform Literacy Block foci.

Continued use of "No Excuse spelling lists" words as a common assessment task Years 1-7 to track spelling skills.

Oral language programs to be supported by the appointment of a school based speech therapist.

A literacy specialist teacher to drive policy development and implementation, supported by the Literacy Committee that has representation from all phases of schooling.

The development of a whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy through production of a core skills document that guides the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in a planned and collaborative teacher led strategy.

The ECU (SW) interns allow for the creation of smaller focus groups for individual and group attention.

Numeracy targets are also focused on Year 3 NAPLAN results but as it is a whole-school priority the emphasis on improving numeracy outcomes is across all years. This was confirmed when the reviewers visited classrooms, observed lessons and held discussion with teachers and students. Numeracy targets have, in the main, been met with significant gains in achievement of Year 3 students when comparing 2010 results with 2012. Year 3 student achievement on average currently sits equal to the state and slightly above like schools.

Numeracy as a focus is supported in the school as follows:

- Teachers explicitly teach and assess against stated targets at all year levels, using "the read, write and say" sequence.
- Targets and final assessments from Term 1 are to be complete and reviewed in Term 4 and compared to data from NAPLAN.
The appointment of the school-funded Numeracy Specialist Teacher as a resource and leader of curriculum implementation. The Numeracy Committee, which includes representation from each phase of schooling, has developed detailed scope and sequencing of the curriculum. This has been adapted, using First Steps Numeracy to develop the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

Each teacher has received access to professional learning to enhance numeracy skills.

The reviewers affirm the school’s interrogation of the data and the resultant strategies implemented to improve outcomes. The school is commended on the establishment of teaching and curriculum teams with the focus on improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

The Business Plan also includes ten non-academic targets relating to two of the Pillars of School Improvement - Social and Behaviour and School Culture. In student attendance the data collected from the Schools Information System (SIS) and also from school information confirms the school has achieved both of the attendance targets and has identified 13 students requiring attendance improvement plans. Comprehensive case conference documentation provided to reviewers indicated the school had achieved its stated target in relation to the management of students at risk socially, behaviourally or academically. The remaining non-academic targets were assessed using feedback from Community Perception Surveys. While only two of the eight School Culture achievement targets were fully achieved in 2012, with the exception of the target relating to bullying at Kingston Primary School, survey feedback indicated a generally high level of satisfaction. Conversations with staff and the Board indicated that the concerning response to perceptions in relation to bullying was, in part, a result of the wording of the survey question and the interpretation of what constitutes bullying. While staff are committed to developing student awareness and resilience strategies, members of the Board indicated that the Board will review the survey item in advance of future surveys.

The Principal and Board Chair confirmed that the targets as stated in the Business Plan have not been amended as they are keen to focus on assessing the growth of Kingston Primary School over the three-year period. This decision was made on the premise that, if targets are continually modified or adjusted, then progress over time is more difficult to measure.

The school has strived to achieve the targets of the Business Plan in numeracy and literacy. Rigorous examination of the data and ongoing regular discussion and
planning in the teaching teams has resulted in the acknowledgement that the original targets were challenging and in need of revision. The 2012 results confirm this finding, particularly in literacy. Revised targets in the next Business Plan will reflect further improvement in this area and incorporate Years 4-7. The reviewers affirm that the targets relating to student performance will be revised and reflect challenging but achievable steps toward identified targets.

Specialist programs support student learning in Visual Art, Physical Education, Music, and LOTE (Japanese). The school has established a learning environment in which all eight learning areas of the Western Australian Curriculum are delivered, although Science, Society and Environment and Technology and Enterprise do not receive equal allocations of time in comparison to the priority areas. The reviewers affirm the school’s decision that Science will be a focus area in 2013.

The school has established sound foundations for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. There are indicators of training and planning being coordinated by strong curriculum leadership provided by team leaders. Detailed scope and sequencing, led by team leaders in phases of schooling, demonstrated advanced engagement with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum across all years. Evidence of the phased implementation of the Australian Curriculum was verified through discussion with curriculum leaders and teachers together with classroom visitation and viewing relevant documentation. The reviewers affirm the strategies being employed to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

The school is comprehensive in its analysis of data and comparison of performance in relation to national and state standards. Evidence gathered and its interrogation by teachers and the Board is commended.

It is the view of the school that comparison of current school performance data to that of like-schools is problematic due to the rapid expansion and significant transience of the school. Enrolment data confirms that Kingston Primary School has undergone rapid expansion and has a significant transience rate in excess of 20%.

The reviewers recommend that, given the school enrolment is predicted to stabilise by 2015, comparisons with like schools should guide future target setting. Further, it is recommended that, in addition to tracking the performance of the stable cohort over time, the school includes the performance of all students assessed by NAPLAN in reporting future like school, state and national comparisons.
4b. School Performance - Quality of Learning Environment

Since opening in 2009 Kingston Primary School has placed a commendable emphasis on embedding its ethos and developing a culture of high expectations. The whole-school commitment to its ethos and culture has assisted the school through its initial establishment and subsequent period of rapid growth.

Observations and discussions with students, staff and parents confirm the school has established a positive culture with the key virtues of care, respect, excellence and courage at the forefront of its operations. Conversations with recently enrolled students confirmed the school's culture assisted them to settle quickly. Significantly, playground observations and conversations with students revealed that students use the language of the Virtues Project to interact with others. Students and staff also highlighted the "Mediation Room", which was established in response to a review of behaviour management practices, as having a positive influence on student interactions outside the classroom.

The school is commended for its commitment to inclusivity. Responses to the annual community surveys, conversations with parents of students with a disability and observations in both classrooms and at a school assembly that featured an item using the language of signing provided verification and evidence of inclusive practices. The school has a comprehensive strategy to ensure students at educational risk are identified, supported and tracked through a detailed case conference model. Under the guidance of the Student Services team, the strategy currently monitors the learning of 18 students on Schools Plus, 46 students on individual education plans (IEPs) and a further 274 students on group education plans (GEPs). In addition to its focus on supporting students at, or below benchmarks and minimum standards the strategy also supports students whose performance is lessened by poor behaviour, irregular attendance and transiency.

The independent reviewers commend the collaborative and structured approach that enshrines a shared understanding of curriculum expectations. Features of the whole-school approach include:

- development of comprehensive scope and sequence charts by learning area committees to guide a whole-school literacy and numeracy delivery
- ongoing analysis of high level data by all staff
- a shared understanding of expected standards
- alignment of the school's Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Project with previously established curriculum directions
Kingston Primary School

- Australian Curriculum implementation
- teacher moderation.

A range of strategies and resources that support teaching and learning is evident including:

- the use of “On-entry” assessment data to focus early intervention in Pre-Primary and Year 1
- phonological awareness testing
- explicit teaching with a focus on “We Are Learning To” (WALT) and “What I Am Looking For” (WILF)
- a comprehensive induction process for newly appointed staff
- whole-school implementation of First Steps Literacy and Numeracy
- an ongoing commitment to the role of both the Literacy Specialist teacher and the school-funded Numeracy Specialist teacher.

The reviewers affirm a commitment that the development of the whole-school scope and sequence statements framework will be extended to all areas of the curriculum and across all phases of learning to embed a cohesive whole-school approach to all learning areas.

The development of educationally valuable partnerships is a commendable feature of Kingston Primary School. The School Board articulated enthusiastic support for a range of partnerships including the: Kingston Internship Program (with Edith Cowan University, South West campus); Hewlett Packard Catalyst School tablet technology trial; Takenodai Elementary School, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan sister school LOTE extension program; and “Scientists in Schools” program in partnership with the CSIRO. The school has established a positive relationship with its parent body with parents citing the welcoming environment and the WA ANZAC Day Award winning Dawn Service as examples of the school’s connection with its community.

4c. School Performance – Sustainability

Since opening in 2009 Kingston Primary School has developed a sustainable framework for future improvement. Kingston presented evidence to indicate the school community has:

- established a culture that is underpinned by a commitment to a highly visible set of values and virtues
• articulated an ongoing commitment to its “Pillars of School Improvement” (Literacy, Numeracy, Social and Behaviour and School Culture)
• focused on building staff capacity through professional development and targeted exchange programs
• developed school-appropriate documents to support the delivery of whole-school programs in both literacy and numeracy
• ensured that staff are conversant with, and key documents align with the Australian Curriculum
• established a rigorous, evidence-based approach to the analysis of data as the foundation for guiding student learning and resource allocation.

The commitment to self-review is commendable. The school presented a wide range of documentation and detailed data analysis that was used to support strategic planning designed to improve student outcomes, particularly in Kindergarten to Year 3 literacy and numeracy.

The school leadership team is commended for the establishment of a sustainable leadership model that embraces leadership development through:

• encouraging teachers to aspire to Level 3 status (11 Level 3 teachers on staff)
• a distributed leadership model that immerses key staff in the expectations of the DPA
• broad phases of learning representation on curriculum teams that include members of the administration team and Level 3 teachers
• succession planning within the School Board.

The success of the structure was demonstrated when the school continued to deliver an effective learning program while the principal was on long service leave for Term 3, 2012.

The school has embedded strategies to support a thorough analysis of student learning. In addition to whole-school, phases of learning and individual teacher analysis of key data, the school has demonstrated a clearly articulated process to ensure appropriate individual and group education plans are developed and monitored in consultation with parents and staff. Similarly, the non-academic targets are closely monitored and modified to determine improved outcomes. For example, through this process the school has refined its attendance tracking using the SMS attendance notification system to better communicate with families when a student is absent, thereby reducing unexplained absences.
Since becoming an Independent Public School in 2009 the Kingston Primary School Board has embraced its role and responsibilities as community representatives within the independent public school framework. The Board is commended for its high level understanding of the DPA and the targets detailed in the Business Plan. Documentation and processes have been established to support its effectiveness. Conversations with board members and staff together with meeting minutes reflect the Board’s proactive participation in the self-review and policy development processes. They interrogate presented data, analyse survey feedback and enthusiastically support the establishment of partnerships that demonstrate the potential for improved student learning.

It is recommended that the Board continue to avail its members of training opportunities and also monitor the ongoing effectiveness of its own performance.

Community understanding of the work of the Board appears to be limited. Parent conversations revealed a lack of understanding of the Board’s role. It is recommended that the Board develop a strategy to ensure the wider community is aware of its pivotal role in supporting the school.

The independent reviewers verify that the school has established strategies that will enable it to sustain and improve its performance.
Declaration

We the undersigned hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on our assessment of the evidence provided by Kingston 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.

(Signature of Bill Gibson, Lead Reviewer) 19 Dec 2012

(Signature of Kevin Pilkington, Reviewer) 19/12/2012

(Signature of Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services) 19/12/12