



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Education**

Medina Primary School

2017
Review Findings



Independent Public School Review

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Fiona Blundell
Board Chair:	Mr Ashley Towns
School Address:	Lot 636 Medina Avenue, Medina WA 6167
Number of Students:	209
ICSEA¹	879
Reviewers:	Mr Kevin Pilkington (Lead) Dr Karen Read
Review Dates:	16 and 17 October 2017

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.

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

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)?

Medina Primary School is located 37 km south of Perth in the city of Kwinana. The school was established in 1954 to provide education for children of families of the housing development associated with the expanding industrial area located nearby.

The school has a very low level of socio-educational advantage with an ICSEA of 879 (ninth decile) and has been as low as 797 in 2012 (tenth decile). Student numbers have fluctuated with local employment opportunities and over the last few years have varied between 140 and 230. Current enrolment sits at 209 with a 42.5% (ninth decile) transiency rate which makes the stable cohort of students small and the associated tracking of student progress less reliable. The students exhibit a rich cultural diversity with approximately 30% being Aboriginal, significant numbers of Maori and Filipino students and other nationalities in a representation of modern Australian society. A revamped Parents and Citizens' Association in 2017 is supporting the school in its endeavours.

A modern administration block, senior classroom block, undercover area and library are in stark contrast to the predominately 1950s buildings that accommodate most classes.

The school had two principals over the four years of the 2014–17 Business Plan. The current principal has been in the role for the period of the DPA covering 2015–17. Neither she nor the present board members played any role in the development of the 2014–17 Business Plan.

Findings

- The 2014–17 Business Plan, while cumbersome and lacking clear targets as indicators of success, has served its purpose. Staff indicated a growing understanding and appreciation of the focus areas as giving the school strategic direction. The focus areas of “quality teaching and leadership”, “student success” and “strong community partnerships and engagement” are key to the planned school improvement over the four-year period. Each focus area is supported by strategies and milestones, but they are confused in construction and mostly too ambiguous to proficiently measure success. Of more application are the operational plans that have been devised for each learning area to support the implementation of the focus areas and the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline. They contain many measurable targets that collectively provide data sets to determine the effectiveness of strategies and programs.

- The scope of this initial business plan for the school was, and remains, relevant to the areas identified by the school for improvement but, as discovered by the board and leadership team when conducting the annual cycle of self-review, it is difficult to report on progress in areas that lack specific targets. Only “student success” has specific and measurable targets that relate to student outcomes. The other focus areas have broad statements of planned actions, activities, strategies and relationships with the community but do not specify any measure of success. Due to staff transiency, a change in principal and changes in board membership, the business plan has been implemented and monitored by people who did not have input to its initial development. The board and school leadership noted that priority areas for the 2018–20 Business Plan will likely remain unchanged but there will be more attention given to the development of specific measurable targets directly affecting student academic and non-academic outcomes. The review process has been a learning course for leadership and board and both have indicated a strong desire to improve on the present plan. The establishment of a representative school improvement team is a positive step to ensuring collaborative planning of the next business plan and a shared vision for the school.
- The business plan is available on the school website and in hard copy from the front office. The principal has indicated this 2017 Review report will be made available on the school website.

Area of strength

- The establishment of a representative school improvement team is a positive step to ensuring collaborative planning of the next business plan and a shared vision for the school.

Areas for improvement

- Include in all focus areas of the 2018–20 Business Plan unambiguous, clearly measurable success indicators (targets) towards which progress can be indicated by analysis of a dataset.
- Ensure future targets predominantly reflect student outcomes in academic and non-academic performance.

Teaching and Learning

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

Findings

- Academic targets in the 2014–17 Business Plan under the “student success” focus area are based on National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results. The targets compare student achievement levels to like-schools and all Australian achievement against the triles data (top 20%, middle 60% and bottom 20%).
- The first target states that the performance of NAPLAN will align with or better than like-schools. The performance of Year 3 students indicates the target has not been achieved, other than writing which has demonstrated an upward trend and in 2017, peaked slightly above like-schools. The performance of Year 5 students indicates the school is moving towards the target with numeracy at like-schools and reading just above like-schools. It is noted that over the period of the business plan, Year 5 spelling, writing, reading and numeracy have been trending upwards.
- The second target focuses on increasing the percentage of students in the top 20% of all Australian achievement (from 5% to 15%). The school performance compared to Western Australian public schools in Year 3 was not achieved in all five aspects: grammar and punctuation 0%, spelling 4%, writing 0%, reading 3% and numeracy 0%. In Year 5 the target was not achieved: grammar and punctuation 0%, spelling 8%, writing 8% and numeracy 0%; however, it is noted that reading (14%) came closest to the target. The Year 5 cohort performed better than the Year 3 cohort.
- The third target focuses on decreasing the percentage of students in the bottom 20% of all Australian achievement to below 50%. The school performance compared to Western Australian public schools in Year 3 was achieved in all but numeracy: grammar and punctuation 43%, spelling 46%, writing 14%, reading 48% and numeracy 62%. The school performance compared to Western Australian public schools in Year 5 was achieved in all aspects: grammar and punctuation 29%, spelling 33%, writing 38%, reading 32% and numeracy 38%.
- Non-academic targets are focused on attendance. The first target aims to increase whole-of-school regular attendance to 65%. Over the 2014–16 period, the regular attendance was 54.9%, 48.3% and 69.9%. The second target aims to

increase Aboriginal attendance rates to 85%. Over the same period, the attendance average was 83.3%, 76.7% and 83.6%.

- The principal expressed concern at the lack of achievement in the priority area of “student success” and that the targets and strategies have been under review.
- The principal has developed structures and resourced teachers to be engaged in collaborative phase of learning team meetings on a fortnightly basis for 40 minutes. These meetings are led by a teacher curriculum leader with the intent to monitor the teaching and learning program. Teachers confirmed these meetings were supporting their role in the classroom with the development of cooperative learning strategies and reviewing and analysing student performance in response to the curriculum operational plans.
- Teachers and education assistants affirmed that staff meetings and professional learning days were all committed to the teaching and learning program. Modelling of practices expected in the classroom were typical at any staff meeting and/or professional learning days. There was some evidence of networking across the Kwinana federation of schools to make judgements and moderate student performance.
- Classroom pedagogy has consistent whole-school approaches being implemented. Overarching the delivery of the curriculum is a focus on cooperative learning strategies which are modelled by teachers to ensure consistency of approach while the 1-2-3 Magic program supports the development of student behaviour within the classrooms.
- The school is employing a range of strategies to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of students from Years K–6. Some of the strategies are whole-school, while others are based on individual or small-group tuition with an education assistant. Students are identified for inclusion using available data, either NAPLAN or other diagnostic testing, related to the strategy. The following strategies have been implemented to support the development of students’ literacy and numeracy: Words, Grammar and Fun, Cracking the Code (Years K–1); Magic Words Spelling, Letters and Sounds (Years PP–3); Words Their Way (Years 3–6); MacqLit (Years 3–6); First Steps Mathematics (Year 2); Junior Elementary Maths Mastery (Years 3–6); Progress for Meaning Benchmarking (Years PP–6); and Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) mathematics (Years 2–6), literacy comprehension (Years 4–6), science (Years 2–6) and social and emotional wellbeing (Years 3–6). Student performance is analysed and assessed by the curriculum leaders and reported to whole-of-school staff. It was confirmed by teachers, parents and students that the literacy and numeracy strategies are having a positive impact on student development.

- All employees participate in a well-structured performance management process with two meetings per year including classroom observation and support for their professional learning. Staff were very positive about the process and confirmed that areas for professional learning are identified to support the delivery of the teaching and learning program for which they are responsible.
- There was evidence supplied by the principal and teacher curriculum leaders that data and research are informing the development of classroom pedagogies.
- A range of structures and processes have been implemented over the life of the business plan. Central to this is the principal's commitment to a whole-school focus on the teaching and learning program through the implementation of common pedagogies, specific intervention programs for students identified at risk with literacy and numeracy and student performance monitoring. The reviewers are confident that these structures and processes will provide the catalyst for the necessary improvement of students' performance and continue to build the capacity of staff to deliver the improvements required.

Area of strength

- Resourcing to enable the collaborative meetings which are providing consistent opportunity for an ongoing dialogue about classroom pedagogies and student performance across all phases of learning, led by the teacher curriculum leaders.

Student Performance Monitoring

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

Findings

- The 2015 and 2016 annual reports contain evidence that the targets and priorities as detailed in the business plan are reviewed annually, albeit with limited input from the school board. The principal supplied a comprehensive self-review schedule aligned to the business plan which is used to guide teachers in the collection of data and analysis of student performance. Teaching staff indicated that they review student performance data and progress at their fortnightly collaborations, staff meetings and school development days. There are learning area operational plans with specific targets related to student achievement which provide the expectations of student performance.
- Teachers referred to a range of monitoring processes, which are ongoing throughout the year and support them in planning the curriculum and providing student performance feedback. Evidence provided indicated that teachers use common assessment tasks for moderating teacher judgements.
- Teacher judgement standards in English reflected in the alignment of NAPLAN/grade allocations are a cause for concern, predominately in Year 3. There is also some concern for the alignment of grades in Year 5 mathematics. Data that aligns NAPLAN to grade performance is starting to be used to support consistency of judgements and grade achievements but this is in its infancy.
- Teacher curriculum leaders responsible for whole-school literacy and numeracy programs use pre and post-testing to determine the level of progress being made by students and the effectiveness of the programs. The assessments are used as a diagnostic tool to determine the areas of intervention for student learning and to provide individual and/or small-group instruction through the identified program. Teachers referred to a range of processes used to monitor student performance including NAPLAN and PAT. While the monitoring of this data was evident, there was no evidence that it had been disaggregated to monitor the performance of specific student subgroups.
- The use of data walls has been implemented in classrooms to track student progress towards targets. The principal confirmed that the style of data walls differed across the school and that this strategy had not been achieved in all classrooms.

- The school improvement team is overseeing the progress of the current business plan and developing the next plan. The self-assessment process has included input from staff about how they are meeting the outcomes of the business plan in their classrooms. The principal has verified that self-assessment is a continuous process for all staff through the performance management meetings, collaborative meetings, staff meetings and school development days.
- The principal produces a detailed annual report mapped to the business plan which is available through the Department of Education's Schools Online. The principal confirmed that she is dealing with designers in updating the school's website which is taking longer than expected.
- Through discussions with the principal and teaching staff, it is apparent that they understand the process of student performance monitoring. Given the limitations of the student performance targets as outlined in the current business plan, a broader range of data other than NAPLAN is being collected which is showing a higher level of sophisticated data analysis by the curriculum leaders in the school to inform decisions of student support. The reviewers are confident, that with the current structures and processes, student performance monitoring will continue to develop and result in improved outcomes for students.

Areas for improvement

- Align teacher judgements of student performance with student achievement standards identified in NAPLAN results.
- Disaggregate student performance data to reflect the subgroups of students within the school.

Program Delivery

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

Findings

- The principal confirms that all programs are delivered in accordance with legislation and policy. The reviewers are confident that the implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline is on track as per the schedule but there are some continuity issues with staffing for the delivery of languages other than English to students. The school employs specialist teachers in physical education, music, technologies and health to support the delivery of the curriculum. The school is a Teacher Development School for humanities and social sciences and provides curriculum development and learning at a range of forums.
- The National Quality Standard Report indicates that the school is working towards Quality Areas 1 and 3 (educational program and practice, and physical environment) while meeting Quality Area 2 (children's health and safety) and Quality Areas 4–7 (staffing arrangements, relationships with children, collaborative partnerships with families and communities, and leadership and service management).
- The school is a pilot for KindiLink, a program for three year old Aboriginal children and their families. Family engagement with the program is very limited as confirmed by the principal and the Aboriginal and Islander education officers.
- The Department of Health's Child Development Service, through the Smith Family, provides a speech and occupational therapy program with a focus on early intervention from Kindergarten to Year 1. Staff receive training to implement strategies into the day-to-day class activities for identified students. Parent/carers are trained similarly to continue strategies at home and are provided appointments to access external health services. While the program is supporting the children, only 33% of referrals made to health services are attended. There is evidence that participation by students in this program is beneficial.
- The school is implementing the Positive Behaviour Support framework to assist students and the school community. The expectation is that the behaviours are explicitly taught to students in class. A survey of staff and students indicated that this was a work in progress which had not yet achieved whole-school implementation. The school presented as an orderly, calm and pleasant

environment. The grounds are well maintained providing a positive environment for students in out-of-class activities.

- Parents confirmed that they were very pleased with the school environment and the safety it presented for their children. They commented on the cultural diversity of the student population and how all students demonstrated respect for each other in the school. The parents were most supportive of the school and the intervention programs which had been offered to their children and the difference it had made to their progress in learning and sense of wellbeing.
- Through discussions with a range of students it was evident the pride they have in their school. They felt happy, safe and enjoyed coming to school, commenting on the friendly nature of their teachers. Students spoke positively about the breakfast club, the 1-2-3 Magic behaviour program and the initial 20-minute morning meeting to welcome all students to class each day.
- The school has a Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) who coordinates the pastoral care needs of students, personal learning plans and interagency support. The LSC meets once a term with each teacher to profile their students at educational risk class profile. Weekly meetings are held with the chaplain, nurse, psychologist and when required, an Aboriginal worker, who decide on the most appropriate intervention for the student.
- Personal learning plans for students are developed using the Schools of Special Educational Needs templates to maintain consistency across the school. Teachers are engaged in developing the plans and parents are expected to attend a meeting to discuss the learning plan. Parent engagement is problematic at times.

Areas of strength

- The implementation of strategies to identify students at risk in literacy and numeracy.
- A comprehensive approach to the management of students at educational risk.

Area for improvement

- Ensure Years K–2 teachers continue to meet and reflect on the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard.

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

- Resource allocation is informed by the identified needs resulting from analysis of the results of the self-review cycle. A representative finance committee has input to the school budget as does the board. Considerable resources have been allocated to the provision of student and staff support. Examples include funding extra time for the school psychologist, chaplain, LSC and education assistants; establishment of numeracy and literacy leaders; provision of time for collaborative team planning meetings; and purchasing of specific intervention programs and associated professional learning to address numeracy and literacy. All of the above directly impact student learning outcomes.
- Most targets for improvement in student academic performance sit within the operational plans and are not in the public arena nor are they reported upon publicly. They remain internal datasets that inform school planning. Progress towards these targets forms part of the agenda of collaborative team discussions.
- The workforce plan is future-focused and is informed by analysis of datasets known at this point, with reasonable predictions of the needs of the school as it moves forward. Recent recruitments have been focused on the acquisition of particular skill sets and are aimed at building staff capacity (eg literacy coordinator, numeracy/information and communications technology coordinator). Consideration has been given to addressing succession planning and attracting and retaining quality staff.
- The school maintains sufficient funding to sustain current initiatives into the period of the next DPA and to build upon them. The manager corporate services was positive in her outlook that the school could sustain and develop current resourcing and support for student learning. There is a clear alignment between the allocation of discretionary funds and the focus areas of the business plan.

Areas of strength

- Financial allocation and associated planning is well-managed and transparent.
- There is significant investment in providing extra resources to enable teaching and support staff to improve outcomes for students.
- There is a clear alignment of resource allocation and school priorities.

School Board

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

Findings

- The nine-member board's composition is compliant with the *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Regulations 2000* being representative of the parent body, community and staff. Parent and staff members have been co-opted and community members invited to join to represent specific groups that partner with the school. It is hoped that as the board becomes increasingly established and its purpose and functions better understood, parent and staff interest will develop enough to necessitate elections.
- The first two years of the DPA saw the membership and leadership go through considerable upheaval and dysfunction. It has taken until this year to establish a committed group who are in harmony and willing to undertake the roles and responsibilities of a board as detailed in the DPA. A new chair, who was not previously a member, has taken on the task of unification and education of members regarding their roles and responsibilities. Some members have accessed training for board members provided by the Department of Education.
- Regular attendance of members at meetings is an ongoing issue. There is no formal process of induction for new members and this is an area that the board needs to address.
- There is a growing understanding by the current board members of the roles and responsibilities associated with being an effective board. The first two years of operations of the board as evidenced by the minutes of meetings do not indicate any depth of understanding nor fulfilment of these roles and responsibilities. The deputy chair affirmed that the terms of reference under which the board operates were regularly being scheduled for discussion at meetings in 2017.
- Minutes of the 2015–17 meetings and discussion held with members confirm the board has met some but not all of its responsibilities. The board did endorse the current business plan, is signatory to the DPA, endorses but does not participate in developing the budget, is aware of and minimally participates in processes to review school performance, and is aware of processes to determine the satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students with results and analysis published in the annual report. The board played no active role in ensuring these surveys were conducted or analysed.

- The board does not currently formally communicate information about its activities to the wider school community. Discussion with representatives of the board has indicated that they are open to ideas about how this might best be achieved. This may use formal communication channels such as the school newsletter, website and Facebook to more effectively communicate with the broader school community. Minutes of meetings indicate the need to communicate with the community and some suggestions of possible ways this may occur has been discussed.
- The board has undertaken a self-review of its performance but to this point the information collated has not been analysed. It was agreed that this would be a worthwhile activity to complete and appropriately respond to as soon as possible.
- Throughout the life of the DPA the board has received accurate and up to date financial reports but minimal advice on school performance and student improvement targets as detailed in the business plan. There has been minimal participation in the identification of areas of strength and weaknesses of school performance or the identification of what needs to be improved. The board has been largely ineffectual, particularly in 2015 and 2016, due to rapid turnover of membership, poor attendance at meetings and a lack of understanding by members of their roles and responsibilities. Increasing the detail contained in minutes of meetings will effectively provide for reference points and identification of trends and ongoing areas of focus.
- The board does not currently report on progress towards the targets of the business plan in any forum apart from the annual report which it endorses but does not compile.
- The board has struggled to attract and retain parent and community members who will commit to regular attendance at meetings and fulfil the requirements of an effective board member. There was a misinterpretation of the role and powers of the board by some of the early members which resulted in them leaving disillusioned.
- There has been a realisation that steps had to be taken to enable the board to become an effective governing body that could contribute to performance and direction of the school. The reviewers received assurances from the board representatives interviewed that the board has now settled in its composition and is focused on building the capacity of its membership. Members expressed a keen interest to engage in the process of constructing the next business plan and assisting in setting the strategic direction of the school for 2018–20.

Areas for improvement

- Formalise a structured process of induction for new members.
- Consider communication strategies to better advise the school community and parents of progress towards the business plan targets and of the board's functions and activities.
- Complete a review of the board's performance and act upon the findings.
- Seek information regarding student and school performance and interrogate the information presented.
- Ensure the board scrutinises the datasets that come before it, to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Conclusion

Medina Primary School presents a challenging environment. It has a very low ICSEA, a high transiency rate and relatively poor attendance rates in comparison to Western Australian public schools. The student population reflects the diverse demographic that is the Medina/Kwinana area. Strong partnerships with community groups and interagency support contribute to creating a stable and supportive learning environment. Parents are welcome contributors within the school and there is regular interaction between staff and parents, particularly in the early years. Parent attendance at open invitation days and special days of celebration continues to be strong.

It is evident from the organisational structures that are embedded in practice that the school is an inclusive environment that values its diversity and the individuality of each student. The stated shared vision is to develop an understanding and commitment to the promotion of a “strong and smart” ethos, incorporating strength of mind, body and soul. The achievement of this vision is prominent in school planning and resource allocation. Significant resources have been allocated to support student wellbeing. The intent is that if students are well supported in dealing with social/emotional issues then they will be better equipped to meaningfully engage with the learning program.

Student performance data for the first three years of being an IPS indicates an upward trend in NAPLAN results, particularly in Year 5. This can be attributed to building staff capacity in data analysis and using that to inform classroom planning, careful financial management that has enabled strategic allocation of resources, appointment of skilled curriculum leaders and a focus on supporting all students to succeed in their learning. There is still a long way to go to reach the stated targets of the business plan and those that sit in the operational plans but there is an awareness and a willingness among the staff to successfully implement strategies that will make a difference to student outcomes.

School leadership keeps a constant focus on making a difference and closing the gap between the school's performance measured against like-schools and Western Australian public schools and has facilitated collaborative team meeting time to maintain focus and momentum towards achieving improved student outcomes. The annual cycle of self-review undertaken by the staff contributes to making judgements on the effectiveness of programs and strategies being implemented in the classrooms. Collaborative processes of analysis and assessment will inform the planning of the new 2018–20 Business Plan. The school executive, school improvement team and the board are positive in their outlook for the next three years. Together they intend to develop and implement a business plan that will support improving the quality of teaching and learning and the resultant student outcomes.

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 Medina 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.



Mr Kevin Pilkington, Lead Reviewer

24 November 2017


Date



Dr Karen Read, Reviewer

24 November 2017

Date



Mr Ken Perris, Director,
Independent Public School Review

8 December 2017

Date