



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education Services

# Calista Primary School

2016

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 the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

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## School and Review Details

<b>Principal:</b>	Mr Craig Skinner
<b>Board Chair:</b>	Mr Dan Bolton
<b>School Location:</b>	1 Chilcott Street, Calista WA 6167
<b>Number of Students:</b>	483
<b>Reviewers:</b>	Ms Kerry Usher (Lead), Mr Noel Strickland
<b>Review Dates:</b>	29 and 30 August 2016
<b>Initial Review:</b>	2013

## Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General of the Department 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*<sup>®</sup> website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.

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

An agenda for the review visit was subsequently negotiated with the Principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During the review visit 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?***

Calista Primary School is located close to the Kwinana town centre in a culturally and linguistically diverse area that has representation from 21 different nationalities. The school has a pleasant environment with a mix of natural and introduced vegetation with facilities that cater for the education programs provided to students. Facilities are well maintained and student safety is enhanced by perimeter fencing.

The school's ICSEA of 922 is indicative of the socio-educational advantage found in the community. Enrolment in 2016 demonstrates an upward trend with significant increases which includes the current enrolment of 483 being 100 more students than in 2012. The enrolment consists of 58 Aboriginal and 39 English as a second language students. Five students receive funding for their disability and are integrated into classes. Student attendance has remained at a level (93.1%) similar to the Western Australian public school average over the term of the DPA, and higher than like schools. Regular attendance at 75.1% is just below the average with 'severe at risk' category below State average. Transiency at 17.6% is relatively high and susceptible to change in the socio-economic environment.

The school has a stable staff with the majority being merit selected. Experience ranges from 30 years plus senior teachers to new graduates. Growth in enrolments has facilitated staff change with new merit selected appointees a feature of the staff profile.

To support students and their parents the school has established partnerships to further enhance teaching and learning. There are strong links to the wider Kwinana community and, in partnership with Ngala, the school manages the Child and Parent Centre located on the school grounds. The centre works with parents of children (aged 0–8 years) in the community. The strong environmental focus in the school's curriculum fosters relationships with organisations that can support student learning.

The School Board meets regularly and under the leadership of the long-standing chair has demonstrated progress in understanding the accountabilities and responsibilities of membership. Membership consists of parents and community members.

## **Calista Primary School**

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The school is well resourced and indications from the Manager Corporate Services are that there are sufficient funds in the future to sustain current improvement intentions.

## 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 staff conducts an ongoing process of self-review based on the Business Plan 2014–2016 which outlines the school's priorities and change initiatives. Business Plan targets are set for academic and non-academic learning. Leadership and staff have considered student performance against targets over the period of the DPA. Following on from the Department of Education Services' review in 2013, the staff has focused on improving student performance by advancing pedagogy as the major change strategy. Analysis of the targets set in the Business Plan has engaged staff in accessing data, interrogating student performance and planning for pedagogical change to address weaknesses identified. Improved student performance in 2016 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments verifies achievement of improved student progress and achievement.

Achievement of the priority targets was considered through analysis of evidence with judgements made about success in meeting targets and recommendations made for improvements to data collection; explicit teaching, review of current learning strategies to achieve improvement; and, collaborative planning. Self-analysis review also considered outcomes of each priority in meeting requirements of the DPA. The connection was also drawn between the priority targets and maintaining the school culture. Targets set for student performance, particularly in literacy and numeracy using the stable cohort, clearly set expected standards of achievement and progress with recognition and actions to address perceived areas of concern identified.

Staff use the National School Improvement Tool as a framework for considering how the school is making progress towards higher levels of attainment of goals.

## School Performance—Student Learning

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

The Calista Primary School 2014–2016 Business Plan identifies six priority areas which are:

- Improving Literacy Standards
- Improving Numeracy Standards
- Science and Environmental Sustainability
- Pastoral Care
- Excellence in Teaching
- Engaging the Community.

The Business Plan 2014–2016 has seven literacy targets, four numeracy targets and four science and environmental sustainability targets.

Literacy targets one and two aimed to have less than 20% of Year 3 and 5 students at or below the national minimum standard in reading. Target 3 aimed to have less than 40% of students in Year 7 at or below the national minimum standard in reading. Six of the literacy targets use NAPLAN performance for Years 3, 5 and 7 students, with the improvement standard set as being a percentage of students being above the national minimum standard in the literacy assessment areas. Ten of these 11 targets were met. One target uses achievement in Pre-primary *PIPs* assessments. The target for the initial test was not met and the final test has not been conducted. Self-review and recommendations for literacy include continuing:

- reviewing target setting in the next Business Plan focusing on SMART targets
- the 'explicit teaching model' the school has developed
- the monitoring of literacy achievement and progress using *PIPs*, *PAT*, *Reading A-Z*, *Lexile*, teacher judgement and NAPLAN.

The numeracy target for Year 3 students aimed to have less than 5% of students below the national minimum standard. The numeracy target for Year 5 and Year 7 students aimed to have less than 35% of students below the national minimum standard. Three of the four numeracy targets use NAPLAN performance for Years 3, 5 and 7 students, with the improvement standard set



as being a percentage of students being above the national minimum standard in numeracy assessment areas. All three targets were met. One target uses achievement in Pre-primary *PIPs* assessments. The target for the initial test was not met and the final test has not been completed. Self-review and recommendations for numeracy include to continue:

- explicit teaching of numeracy and daily numeracy block across the school
- using *Mastery Maths*, *Junior Elementary Maths Mastery* and *New Wave Mental Maths* as outlined in the mathematics scope and sequence
- cross-setting ability grouping in some areas during numeracy blocks
- monitoring using *PIPs*, *PAT*, teacher judgements and NAPLAN
- reviewing targets for the next Business Plan focusing on SMART targets.

The science targets aimed to have Year 3–6 averages above the PAT science year average and for grade allocations to conform to a 20:60:20 distribution for all years. One of seven areas in these targets was met. Self-review and recommendations for science included:

- a requirement to review the delivery model of science so that a broader base of science is taught by classroom teachers across the school
- STEM should become more prominent as a priority
- maintaining an environmental focus and to develop a plan involving all classes which supports the curriculum without interfering with core learning
- develop a science curriculum for PP and K to be delivered by the DOTT teacher
- *PAT* science to continue for Years 1–6.

Outcomes achieved in the three priority areas of Pastoral Care, Excellence in Teaching and Engaging the Community are addressed in the Learning Environment section of this report.

Whilst the school's Self-review and Recommendations 2014–2016 document identified progress against the targets set in these priorities, it was noted that successive Annual Reports did not report outcomes from the self-review of the Business Plan.

Discussion with the staff indicated that there was a strong emphasis on comparative and longitudinal NAPLAN data within the school. The staff had just received their 2016 NAPLAN results when this review took place and

initial analysis was extremely positive. The school achieved above expectations in six of the ten NAPLAN tests and Year 3 to Year 5 longitudinal progress and achievement was high in all NAPLAN tests, compared with like schools. These results indicate that the school is well-placed to continue high levels of both progress and achievement in the future.

Thorough analysis of NAPLAN, On-entry and AEDC results together with school administered *PIPs* and *PAT* testing, by school leaders and class teachers, shows the performance of a significant number of Aboriginal students is above State and Australian norms. The progress of identified students at educational risk is monitored by regular review of each child's individual education plan (IEP). The staff has implemented a system whereby any child likely to be given an 'E' grade for any subject in a semester report will have an IEP written for that learning area and a separate report issued for that subject with the semester report. The school has used part of their funding, received through the student-centred funding model, to employ 1.4 FTE teachers and 0.6 FTE education assistant who provide targeted intervention for identified students.

At an operational level, the staff has developed an effective process whereby regular year-level meetings interrogate class data to identify needs of their students. This fine-grained analysis of class room data ensures the needs of all students are being met and their progress monitored.

The staff acknowledged their concerted focus on the literacy and numeracy needs of their students had diminished the time for other learning areas. As a result, the staff members are developing a model which integrates other learning areas into an 'inquiry approach' presented by classroom teachers. The Years 4 and 6 teachers are currently trialling this model. It is envisaged that this model will enable the teachers to meet curriculum requirements for their children, whilst maintaining the focus on literacy and numeracy.

## 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 Business Plan 2014–2016 has three priorities relevant to this section.

The Pastoral Care focus has ten targets. The first two targets focused on reducing self-reporting in the 'low bracket' for emotional and social skills. These were not met. Three targets focused on student attendance and two of the eleven areas were met. Three targets focused on parent and student survey responses. These were specifically responses to questions about students enjoying being at school; teachers and students caring for each other and staff and students respecting each other. These targets were achieved for 14 of the 15 areas. Recommendations from analysis of this data include:

- results from the social-emotional wellbeing survey conducted through the Australian Council of Educational Research to be further analysed
- if funding permits, maintain the employment of the SAER coordinator, school psychologist and social worker
- explore the possibility of employing a school-based speech pathologist.

The Excellence in Teaching focus has four indicators. The foci include being recognised as an Excellence in Teaching school, having all teachers following the *CPS Explicit Teaching Model*, demonstrating continued improvement in NAPLAN, *PAT* and *PIPs* assessments and teachers meeting *Professional Recognition Process* targets in *PAT* testing. The first two of these indicators were achieved. Recommendations for this priority include:

- continuing to refine the *CPS Explicit Teaching Model*
- staff to be accountable for student achievement in their classrooms
- improving teacher induction process
- continue *Professional Recognition Process*
- continue to provide leadership opportunities.

The Engaging the Community priority has three indicators. These are based on parent responses to survey questions concerning parents being informed about school activities, staff being approachable and whether the staff valued the role of parents in the education process. These were all met.

Recommendations for this priority include:

- continuing to investigate ways of involving and engaging the community; especially the Aboriginal community
- continue to work with the Child and Parent Centre to build relationships with parents.

The inclusion of these three priority areas in the Business Plan is an indication of the high level of commitment the school has to the learning environment in the overall education process provided.

Discussion with staff, parents and students, together with evidence from surveys, confirmed an embedded culture which promotes student learning and the attainment of the school motto 'Steer towards the future'.

The staff are commended for embedding a very strong culture of supported pastoral care for students attending the school and their families. Discussion with students and staff, and parent survey results confirm that the school provides a safe and caring environment. Formal programs such as Breakfast Club, Student Good Standing, Advanced Standing and You Can Do It contribute to the strong pastoral care provided by the school. Also contributing are usual school operations such as:

- camps for Year 4–7 students
- ongoing monitoring of attendance, including approaching parents of students whose attendance is poor
- using time with the gardener and art teacher as encouragement for students to modify their behaviour
- provision of a broad curriculum (including a move towards performing arts) to fully engage students
- the Principal meeting informally with parents after assembly to gather feedback
- employment of a social worker
- extra staff on duty.

Furthermore, the staff has undertaken professional development such as '*Understanding Poverty*' and '*Impact of Trauma*' so they can better understand the families with whom they are working.

The school has been successful in developing partnerships with a wide variety of organisations. These include: universities (teacher training), *Ngala* with the

*Child and Parent Centre, Foodbank, Smith Family, Gilmore College, Clontarf Academy, Strong Families, Camp Australia and the Kwinana City Council.*

Of particular importance is the strong partnership developed with the Child and Parent Centre which is co-located on the school site. This centre contributes significantly to the community by providing a wide range of student services on site. These services include playgroups, speech therapy, child health nurse, parent workshops and various activities promoting early learning.

Discussion with parents and survey feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction for the school within the parent body. Parents were very confident that the school provided a safe and supportive environment for their children. They believed the staff were all approachable and parents were encouraged to come into the school and contribute to the school community. Communication was generally very good. Parents spoke highly of the *ClassDojo* computer program which was used by most classes to communicate with parents.

The emphasis on coaching and mentoring within the staff is contributing strongly to the positive learning culture within the school. The school is a Teacher Development School which supports teacher development and practice as well as providing support to teachers in Western Australian public schools. The school has implemented an aspirant leadership group. Members of this group are supported to develop their skills and are given the opportunity to take leadership roles within the school.

During the first three-year cycle as an IPS there was a focus on developing a strong culture based on pastoral care for the families. The success of this allowed the staff to shift their focus to literacy and numeracy performance of their students during the second three-year cycle. Discussion with parents and staff has confirmed that the improvement in literacy and numeracy progress and achievement has been achieved without losing the strong pastoral care component of the school.

When discussing the strengths of the school with student leaders, terms such as: friendly, safe, one big family, students 'get on' and older students help younger students were used. This confirms, in part, that the school has been successful in developing a safe and inclusive learning environment.

## School Performance—Sustainability

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

School leaders and staff have made a significant difference in improving student performance over the period of the 2014–2016 Business Plan. There are established self-review practices evident in documentation and verified in discussions with the Principal, deputy principals and staff. Reviewers were able to determine the focus the staff places on student data. The staff has also implemented a consistent approach to assessment procedures aimed at strengthening the data collection process and enhancing the validity of results. The embedding of these processes is aimed at creating more robust and reliable data sets to support analysis and direction in improving student learning.

The school has a sound reputation within the Kwinana community with parents seeking to enrol their child at the school. This has resulted in many seeking cross-boundary enrolments and the school consequently having to accept only students from its designated catchment area. School events are well supported by parents. However, there is a hesitation amongst community members to take on or engage in higher levels of support for the school.

Board members affirmed the challenges of getting representatives of the school community to accept Board level positions. The reviewers used the opportunity to meet with board representatives to verify their participation in planning, monitoring and reviewing school performance. Members understood the importance of their role and have participated in training sessions. The Board is keen to investigate ways to engage more parents and community members to participate in board deliberations. As the school enters its next phase of planning, it is an appropriate time to consider the renewal of the Board. The next three years provides the opportunity to develop strategies to gain greater parent and community participation in the important task of oversight and in providing critical reflection on school performance.

The Principal and deputy principals have taken a strategic leadership role in working with staff to achieve the goal of continuous improvement in student learning. The areas targeted in the Business Plan have demonstrated improvement in student performance and in turn have had a positive impact on students and the school community. Reviewers in discussion with staff, the Board and students were able to verify the strong role of the Principal in

leading the change agenda. Staff are continually supported to develop their skills and knowledge with the 'Calista Primary School Explicit Teaching Model' a feature of practice. All staff are engaged in the professional recognition process which involves professional learning seminars and workshops. They also participate in coaching and peer observations. The school has been recognised for excellent teaching practice, being awarded Teacher Development Status (Excellence in Teaching) for 2016–2017 and has three coordinators working across the school supporting the implementation of effective pedagogies.

The school is well placed to sustain current programs and to fund future initiatives. Meetings with the Principal and manager of corporate services affirmed the thorough processes the school has engaged in to ensure sustainability of available funds to resource future planning for school improvement. The Board receives regular updates on financial management to provide it with the opportunity to have oversight of budgets and expenditure. The Workforce Plan ensures continuity in the allocation and provision of human resources and takes into account future scenarios for the creation of new specialist teaching areas and support for teaching and learning programs to cater for the diverse ability range of students.

## Conclusion

Calista Primary School leaders and staff have worked consistently in a coordinated manner to improve student achievement throughout the period of the Business Plan 2014–2016. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement evident which has resulted in student performance in 2016 demonstrating outcomes that meet and often exceed expectations when compared to similar schools.

The engagement of staff in planned self-review activities, with a focus on data analysis and reflection on performance in a whole-school approach, is a positive aspect of the improvement agenda. Staff provide a safe and caring classroom environment that engages students in learning and meets their individual needs. Teachers have been recognised for their excellent teaching practice.

The school has been successful in developing teaching and learning practice to the extent that academic performance and the caring learning environment have contributed to making it a successful school.

## Commendations

### *The following areas are commended:*

- principal and staff for their planning and support for student improvement and in further developing their own expertise to enhance teaching and learning
- staff for embedding a strong culture of supported pastoral care that ensures a safe and inclusive environment for students attending the school, and their families
- principal and staff for the above expected level of performance in 2016 NAPLAN assessments that verifies improved student learning
- principal and staff for the embedded culture promoting student learning and the attainment of the school motto 'Steer towards the future' through targeted activities supporting the learning, health and welfare of students
- leaders for the development of strong partnerships with groups and agencies that support student learning with particular reference to the partnership with *Ngala* through the Child and Parent Centre.



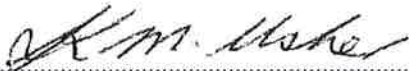
## Areas for Improvement

*The following area for improvement is identified:*

- consideration to be given to board renewal to develop strategies to gain greater parent and community participation in the important task of oversight and in providing critical reflection on school 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 the verification of the evidence provided by Calista 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.



Mrs Kerry Usher, Lead Reviewer

20 September 2016

Date



Mr Noel Strickland, Reviewer

19 September 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,  
Department of Education Services

3 / 10 / 2016

Date