Currambine Primary School

2013
Independent Review Findings

Independent Review of Independent Public Schools
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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 Geoff Smith  
Board Chair:            Mr Daniel Deverlerez  
School Location:       28 Ambassador Drive Currambine WA 6028  
School Classification: PS Class 6  
Number of Students:    864  
Reviewers:             Ms Pauline Coghlan and Ms Margaret Brede  
Review Dates:          Self-review presentation: 4 September 2013  
                        Review visits: 20 and 27 September 2013

1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Currambine 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’s 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 My School™ 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’s self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school’s 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

Currambine Primary School has an enrolment of 864 students and offers a broad curriculum that focuses on the development of the whole child through a variety of social programs and a comprehensive range of academic programs that cater for individual student abilities and interests.

The school is highly regarded by the local community and as a consequence the demand for places is strong with 51% of students coming from outside the local intake area.

Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact. There is a strong culture of community, mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents.

Discussions took place with the Board Chair, Principal, board members, parents, administrative and teaching staff, support staff and students. Classes were observed by reviewers. High quality self-review documentation was also made available.

The staff comprehensively analyses student performance and is reflective and responsive to a wide variety of performance information. The school has commenced the development of a range of whole-school programs and practices that place it in a very good position to be able to further improve student performance.

The following commendations support the school’s claims of significant strengths and areas of improvement:

- the rigorous self-review process, comprehensive analysis and responsiveness to performance information
- the positive staff and parent relationships across the school community enhancing student opportunities
- the discerning leadership and clear direction from the Principal in establishing a culture that supports, motivates and reinvigorates staff
- the comprehensive proactive approach to positive behaviour management.

The following affirmations support continued implementation of strategies and initiatives or areas for improvement identified by the school:

- the ongoing work to provide more seamless connections between each of the sub-schools
the school’s interpretation of and responsiveness to data with the resultant focus on literacy and numeracy particularly in the Junior Primary years

- the provision of ongoing professional learning opportunities for all staff, linked to the school plan
- the setting of challenging yet achievable targets in the future
- the directions and the undertakings of the School Board.

The following **recommendation** is made to add value to the school’s improvement and review processes:

- that the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the pedagogical practices across the whole school are closely monitored to ensure shared understandings of the curriculum and consistent, comprehensive embedding of practices and high expectations.
3. **School Context**

Currambine Primary School is located in the Joondalup area 27km from the centre of Perth. Established in 1997 with approximately 300 students, the school currently has an enrolment of 864 students.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is 1049 placing it in the third decile of schools in Western Australia.

The school is highly regarded by the local community and as a consequence the demand for places is strong with 51% of students coming from outside the local intake area.

Currambine Primary School caters for a diverse student population. There are 38% of students (331) born outside Australia, representing 27 different nationalities. The three major nationalities are United Kingdom and Ireland (145), South Africa (73) and New Zealand (34). Ninety students are enrolled on Visa 457.

There are currently 56 students identified as having English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). There are 24 students with Special Needs receiving additional funding, half with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Physically, the campus design has seven discreet blocks. These include four air-conditioned teaching blocks; an enclosed carpeted undercover area with an adjacent canteen; a separate administration building; library and staffroom, and a music, technology, art and science block. In addition, there are 10 demountable classrooms.

Turnover of permanent staff is low. The school employs 89 staff of which 60 are teachers, 25 are education assistants and four are support staff.

There is a very welcoming and friendly atmosphere across the school. This positive interface with the community and the safe, respectful and inclusive nature of the school was very evident to the reviewers and confirmed by staff, students, parents and board members.

Currambine Primary School commenced as an Independent Public School in 2011. Parent and community board members bring considerable expertise and experience from the disciplines of business, planning, business development and administration to the school.
4a. School Performance - Student Learning

Currambine Primary School offers a broad curriculum that focuses on the development of the whole child through a variety of social programs and a comprehensive range of academic programs that cater for individual student abilities and interests. It was evident to the reviewers, through discussions with administrative and teaching staff as well as board members, that the Business Plan and 2013 self-review process has been an active vehicle to drive curriculum and policy development and the review of pedagogical practices.

The Business Plan timeline (2011–2015) and its resultant targets do not align with the DPA timeline (2011–2014), which is the key accountability document signed by the Director General of Education, the Principal and Board Chair. The duration of these documents must be in alignment. It is a role of the Board to endorse the Business Plan. In so doing the Board must be satisfied the requirements of the DPA are met. The newly appointed 2013 Principal and current Board Chair are aware of the timeline discrepancy and have indicated that it will be rectified in the next iteration of the Business Plan.

The current Business Plan identifies targets, broad strategies and specific milestones for achieving the overall strategic directions: *successful students; excellence in teaching and learning; strong, positive partnerships and a safe, supportive and sustainable environment*. The school set targets in the Business Plan for English and mathematics in Years 3, 5 and 7 to achieve equivalence to or above the Australian average NAPLAN scores. In science, the target set for Years 5 and 7 is for 20% or more of Currambine Primary School students to achieve in the top 20% of State distribution in the Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE).

For a school with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1049, the reviewers are of the view that these are indeed modest targets. The Principal acknowledges this and intends setting more challenging targets in the next Business Plan, with the expectation that the school should be performing not only at or above the Australian means but also at the level of statistically similar schools.

In both 2011 and 2012 the Year 3 NAPLAN, performance was below the Australian average in reading and numeracy. The writing performance was very close to the Australian average in 2011 and in 2012 was above it. The
Year 5 NAPLAN performance in 2011 was above the Australian average in all three targeted areas: writing, numeracy and reading. In 2012, the NAPLAN performance was above the Australian average in writing and below it in reading and numeracy. Year 7 results were close to the Australian average in all areas in both 2011 and 2012.

The target for science identified in the Business Plan requires 20% or more of Currambine Primary School students to achieve in the top 20% of State distribution in the WAMSE by 2014. The 2012 results indicate this has not yet been achieved with both year groups’ performances declining compared to the State performance.

The school presented more extensive performance information including an analysis of longitudinal trends of year groups tested in every NAPLAN area.

The reviewers affirm all of the above performance judgements made by the school.

Whilst there is a sense of dissatisfaction with the current progress towards the targets set in the Business Plan and some of the additional performance information, the rigour of the self-review process, led by the Principal with the full involvement of staff and the Board, has created a good understanding of the school’s current performance and a very clear, optimistic and constructive way forward. The school’s comprehensive analysis and responsiveness to performance information is commendable.

The school has identified the declining performance at Year 3 in reading and numeracy as a concern and has made the learning in the early years a key focus. Screening in Kindergarten by a speech pathologist has highlighted that 45% of students require a speech referral. To address this aspect and facilitate effective transition to the Kindergarten program, a Play and Learning Skills (PALS) program of activities for parents of children aged 0–4 years that provides information and support for parents along with structured learning activities for children is in operation. Weekly Baby Rhyme Time and Story Time sessions, in partnership with the City of Joondalup Libraries, have also been established. The reviewers affirm this focus on the early years as positive.

On-entry testing in Pre-primary shows a declining performance in mathematics, which has prompted the development of common tasks within content blocks supported by the numeracy coordinator. Whole-school
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Numeracy planning documents created in 2012 have been implemented this year along with increased reflection and communication opportunities within and between year levels to effect moderation and identify and share best practice.

Ongoing concern with literacy progress and achievement in NAPLAN testing resulted in the school employing a literacy specialist 0.8FTE in 2010 and 2011 as a National Partnership School. The school elected to continue this role at 0.4FTE in 2012 and 2013. During this time a comprehensive testing program to monitor student learning and the effectiveness of teaching programs through a suite of assessments was established. This data collection and subsequent analysis has enabled clearer understanding and raised expectations at each year level with increased teacher accountability, and the continued support of guided and shared reading strategies. The Direct Instruction Reading Mastery program is proving effective in raising reading levels of participating students. The reviewers affirm the school's interpretation and response to data with the resultant focus on literacy and numeracy in the Junior Primary.

The school was selected to participate in the Improving Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership (ILNNP) I Pad program. Student learning in the early years has been enhanced by the availability of hardware, software and technical support. In addition, the professional learning provided for two teachers has been invaluable. They now provide participating staff with in-class coaching for regular, timetabled sessions. This has been a significant motivator for staff and students and the reviewers observed innovative, differentiated learning opportunities in Junior Primary classes as a result of the use of tablet computers.

Whilst there is a very low turnover of permanent staff, there has been a high turnover of temporary staff, many of whom have been located in the Junior Primary years. This has impacted on the consistency of curriculum implementation and pedagogy. The school has addressed this issue for 2014 by ensuring minimal staff turnover and the movement of some permanent staff to this area of the school. This will capitalise on current staff expertise and enable further development of their capacity.

Discussions with the administrative team, curriculum leaders and teachers indicate responsiveness to the comprehensive analysis of data, programs and strategies. To better track student learning and provide more timely feedback on a whole-school basis, the school has implemented further annual testing.
This includes Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Progressive Achievement Testing in Reading (PAT-R) in conjunction with even-year NAPLAN testing, commercial testing analysis in spelling and language conventions, mathematics assessments, as well as a variety of physical education screens and health and wellbeing surveys. Numeracy and Literacy coordinators are allocated time to support, advise and model best practice for teachers across the school and lead their committees in the development and implementation of whole-school plans.

The reviewers acknowledge that the school provides a diverse and challenging curriculum to improve individual student learning within a supportive community environment. Specialist programs are delivered in art, music, physical education and French. The art program is complemented by the annual Currambine/Joondalup Art and Craft Show which is not only a major community and fundraising event, but provides inspiration for students who now display their work for sale in an associated exhibition.

Interviews with staff confirmed the uneven and inconsistent implementation of the Australian Curriculum. The early years are still in the planning phase aiming for implementation in 2014, whilst some higher years are consolidating their implementation of two years ago. It is acknowledged that there are aspects of literacy and numeracy that have been consistently and effectively implemented across all years. This fragmented approach had been noted by the Principal, who is establishing whole-school implementation planning for much of the curriculum.

It is recommended that the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the pedagogical practices across the whole school are closely monitored to ensure shared understandings of the curriculum and consistent, comprehensive embedding of practices and high expectations.

Although the academic progress against school targets has not been consistently achieved, the reviewers have seen clear evidence of targeted whole-school planning and structures in conjunction with professional dialogue, reflective practices and changing pedagogy, which give every indication that student learning and achievement will move closer to that of statistically similar schools in the future.
4b. School Performance - Quality of the Learning Environment

Through interviews with the school leadership team, staff (teaching and non-teaching), board members, parents, students and classroom observations, the reviewers were able to verify the quality relationships and positive interactions between parents, staff and students.

The friendly, welcoming community tone of the school (from the office personnel, administration, staff and students), was a common theme received by the reviewers when speaking with all groups. A positive and proactive connection with the community is illustrated by the school's innovative marketing plan, which provides direction and ensures that all stakeholders are always at the forefront of the school's consideration.

The school monitors its learning environment using the School Community Survey and has been making comparisons with survey results from 2010. For each stakeholder group surveyed (parent, students and staff) a comprehensive written analysis with recommendations is made. Any significant dissonance in ratings between parents, students and teachers is investigated. On a scale of 0 to 2.0 any items rated in the range of 1.5 to 2.0 are viewed as good, whilst those below 1.5 are more closely investigated. Staff rated only one item below 1.5 (consistency in consequences in behaviour management), students also rated one item below 1.5 (bullying), parents did not rate any items below 1.5. The mean ratings, for all stakeholders, improved when compared with 2010 survey.

Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact. There is a strong culture of mutual trust and support among teachers, school leaders and parents. Parents praised the communication between the school and home. They felt well informed about their child’s progress and received early contact from the school if there were any areas of concern.

The school values and acts on feedback. Its responsiveness is well illustrated by the reaction to the student survey. Additional, more detailed information was gathered from students to ascertain their understandings of the bullying issue. Timely and appropriate strategies have been developed and implemented.

Parent interviews further affirm the school's parent survey analysis. Those interviewed stated that they valued:
the approachability of teachers, citing their willingness to listen as a key feature
the opportunity to get involved with the school
the accessibility of the Principal, his timely responses and proactive approach
the genuine care by teachers
the support given to students with learning difficulties as well as those in need of extension
the Ambassador program, which assists students in developing social skills
the behaviour management and bullying policies
the whole-school usage of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People™.

The school is commended on its positive staff and parent relationships across the school community, enhancing student opportunities.

Building quality relationships is the principle that guides the school’s Student Care and Support Policy. This whole-school approach has achieved a friendly, safe and pleasant environment whilst proactively providing a supportive, caring and effective learning environment where desirable behaviours are encouraged and reinforced. Alongside this, support is provided when it is required to alter specific behaviours. Individual behaviour plans are very well monitored and good relationships have been established with external agencies.

A well-considered whole-school reward scheme is inclusive of both students and staff. Everyone is valued as is evidenced from the Currambine Primary School student birthday cards and staff notables. The well-managed system of small rewards gradually accumulates. The rewards include faction points, congratulatory cards, certificates and badges. Acknowledgements are comprehensive including school diary stamps, assembly recognition and reading rewards. There are no obvious behavioural issues, and when they do emerge the school has well-known and commonly-accepted strategies to quickly resolve them.

Rights and responsibilities, the Code of Conduct and staff roles and responsibilities are well understood. The systematic approach to comprehensive Classroom Management Strategies (CMS) training of two teachers every semester is invaluable. To date 16 teachers have completed the training. Recently, all education assistants have also been offered the
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opportunity for CMS training, with many indicating their desire to access it. The school has an accredited CMS trainer who is able to conduct the conferencing aspect with staff and provides welcomed support. The school is commended on its comprehensive proactive whole-school approach to positive behaviour management.

The school provides support for all students. Parents and students interviewed confirmed they value the programs for students with special learning needs and the support from education assistants. Furthermore, the comprehensive range of academic extension programs to motivate and challenge more able students, including the Get Smart Maths Club, Writers' Club, Art Club, Chess Club, performing arts opportunities and instrumental music programs were also appreciated.

Currambine Primary School’s current draft Mental Health and Wellbeing scope and sequence document, has been developed in response to its rigorous 2013 self-review and reflection. It is an excellent example of the school’s focus on continual improvement whilst building on established successful practices such as 7 Habits of Highly Effective People™. This cohesive planned approach from K to 7 provides the framework for appropriate social and emotional programs being systematically delivered across the school to support the teaching and learning environment.

Both experienced and staff new to the profession at the school are dedicated, reflective and enthusiastic. Teachers are very well supported by in-school specialist support teachers (e.g., literacy, numeracy, science, art). Education assistants are an integral part of the teaching and learning program and are highly valued and skilled.

The open and transparent 2013 school self-review process, with explicit direction and expectations has been welcomed by staff. The Principal’s leadership in both curriculum and pedagogy is greatly appreciated and highly respected. The inclusive and accountable approach, developed this year in relation to self-assessment, values the input of all staff and has created enthusiasm and optimism.

Performance management is well embedded with the AITSL teacher standards forming the framework for both self-reflection and feedback from planned and spontaneous class observations. Peer observations, as well as those of the line manager, are well accepted across the school. Staff display openness to critique by colleagues and a willingness to accept others in their
classrooms to observe their teaching. The standardised classroom observation proforma ensures that the focus of observation is linked to the school improvement areas yet also allows for an individualised focus determined by the teacher. The open physical connection between classrooms encourages a collaborative approach to planning and teaching, which was observed in action by reviewers.

The staff are provided ongoing opportunities for professional learning with both in-school professional learning opportunities and programs that are sourced externally. The willingness to deliver and undertake professional learning has been particularly evident in literacy, numeracy and tablet computer usage. Staff make presentations at network conferences, their own and other schools. Staff have presented eight First Steps in Mathematics sessions to a group of 25 teachers over a semester and have further built the capacity of others by having teachers from a neighbouring school bring their Year 1 and 2 students to the school and observe a Currambine teacher teaching them.

The gaining of Teacher Development School (TDS) status in 2012 has provided a number of opportunities for teachers to deliver presentations both within the school and the wider Joondalup District through the Joondalup Network; building staff confidence, capacity and best practice. Their willingness to build their own and others’ capacity is commendable. The reviewers affirm the school’s provision of professional learning opportunities for all staff, linked to the school plan.

4c. **School Performance - Sustainability**

Currambine Primary School has embarked on a new phase in 2013 with a new Principal, new Board Chair and seven new Board members. Significant progress has been made to establish cultural knowledge and develop blueprints for the school’s future. The tangible sense of community established over many years has provided a sturdy foundation for reflection, analysis and planning for the future.

The school enjoys a distributed leadership model with associate principals, curriculum coordinators and curriculum committees leading teaching, learning and pastoral care across the three sub-schools of Junior Primary (K–1), Middle Primary (2–4) and Upper Primary (5–7). A significant number of teaching and support staff have, by choice, been at the school for many years.
and expressed a renewed vigour for their work. These sentiments augur well for building on the current practices as they confront the teaching and learning challenges ahead. The discerning leadership and clear direction from the Principal in establishing a culture that supports, motivates and reinvigorates staff is commendable.

The school actively seeks and responds to a wide range of performance data. This includes student achievement as well as information from satisfaction surveys of students, parents and staff. All parties express high levels of satisfaction with their school experiences and attendance rates consistently exceed State statistics.

It was evident to the reviewers that the school has undertaken a rigorous self-review and is responding effectively. Curriculum committees lead the analysis of data and develop responses that identify programs and practices to be adjusted. The challenges of communication between the three sub-schools are in the process of being addressed to better share and build more consistently upon the identified best practices. Curriculum committees have moved away from budgeting and resourcing to a focus on their responsibility for driving whole-school curriculum agendas.

Curriculum leaders are now developing whole-school planning approaches to ensure timely and consistent adoption of the Australian Curriculum. This has led all year levels to be on track for full implementation of Phase 1 in 2014. Specifically, literacy and numeracy coaches have been allocated time to work with classroom teachers to improve teaching practices and support curriculum implementation in these learning areas. Effective collaborative practices are being embedded in all year levels to identify and build on best practice. School leaders are now aiming to further develop these practices across and between the three sub-schools to ensure consistency and excellence in pedagogy.

The school’s provision of professional learning opportunities to build the capacity of all staff is embedded. Considerable opportunities have been afforded staff by the school being a Teacher Development School for Middle-School Mathematics and their selection as a part of the ILNNP I Pad program. Evidence was provided through documentation and discussion with staff that significant opportunities had been provided to teachers and support staff for professional learning linked strongly to the whole-school priorities, such as the focus on CMS in which teachers and education assistants receive training.
The school is implementing a number of practices to sustain continued teacher development and professional learning. These include planned and unplanned peer observations focusing on specific areas for feedback nominated by the observed teacher. Teachers are required to reflect on their practice using the AITSL standards as a part of their annual performance management. The school currently has seven Level 3 teachers and provides a coaching model for aspirant Level 3 teachers.

The school's positive reputation has resulted in 51.5% of student enrolments coming from outside the local school boundary. The maintenance of this level of enrolments is significantly impacted by the Marketing Plan and the role of the Marketing Officer whose responsibility is the development and implementation of relevant strategies and maintenance of the school brand. As a result, the school documentation, brochures and student awards are all of a highly professional standard and enhance the school's prominent profile in the community.

Through discussion with the Board Chair and all parent board representatives, it was clear to the reviewers that the board members understand their role and responsibilities, are well informed about the Business Plan and student learning and display energy and enthusiasm for their governance role. They appreciate the educative work of the Principal whose presentations assist their understanding of the school performance data. Some board members had participated in the Department of Education’s training program; others are planning to do so. All commented on the comprehensive induction compact disc prepared by the school, containing extensive documentation relating to the school’s Independent Public School status, past board minutes and school performance data. The Board, guided by the Principal, has developed and adopted a well-planned schedule of information to be presented for discussion throughout 2013 and 2014 board meetings. The Board intends reviewing their practices later in the year. Planning for the next iteration of the Business Plan is intended to occur early in 2014. The Board is currently exploring ways to promote the role of the Board amongst the school community. The directions and undertakings of the Board are affirmed by the reviewers.

Given the clarity of leadership, the informed enthusiasm of governance, the staff commitment to reflective practice and continuous improvement within a supportive learning environment, the school is in a strong position to sustain its efforts and improve student learning to that of statistically similar schools.
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 verification of the evidence provided by Currambine 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.

26 November 2013
Pauline Coghlan, Lead Reviewer

26 November 2013
Margaret Brede, Reviewer

27/11/13
Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services