



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

Capel 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

Principal:	Mr Ron Crabbe
Board Chair:	Mr Twistie Venning
School Location:	21 Barlee Road Capel WA 6271
Number of Students:	374
Reviewers:	Mr Lindsay Usher (Lead), Mr Tom Campbell
Review Dates:	23 and 24 August 2016
Initial Review:	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*® 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?

Capel Primary School is located 25km south of Bunbury and a similar distance from Busselton to the south. The town of Capel is a centre for agricultural, viticultural and mining industry employment. Numbers of families also take the opportunity to live in the area because of low housing costs and many have chosen the fly-in fly-out employment option. The majority of students are drawn from the town of Capel and local area with an increasing number of parents choosing to send their children to the school from outside its traditional catchment area.

The school is set in attractive grounds with ample space for play and sporting endeavours. A mix of historic and more recent construction provides a pleasing aesthetic blend. Teaching and learning facilities are of a good standard and support the range of activities the staff has developed to engage students. The nature play area in particular provides students with the opportunity to be creative and enjoy the benefits of an unstructured bush site in a safe and well-supervised environment.

The ICSEA of 983 is indicative of the socio-educational advantage of the community. Enrolment since 2009 has demonstrated steady growth with a plateau effect since Year 7 students made the transition to secondary schooling for 2015. The stable enrolment assists in the maintenance of class groupings and delivery of educational programs. Attendance rates are at close to public school levels, including regular attendance, and the rate of severe at risk students is lower than like schools. Transition rates at 17.4% impact on the consistency of data, with the stable cohort being a preferred measure of improvement when describing student performance. The attendance rate for 21 Aboriginal students at 87.3% is consistent with like schools. The homogenous nature of the school enrolment is also demonstrated with only 15 students identified as having parents born outside Australia with no students with a language background other than English. The enrolment of 21 students with a disability (eight receiving student-centred funding) has been accompanied by high levels of support for, and integration of, students who require adjustment to their learning. This has been a positive factor in influencing enrolments from outside the local area.

Staffing at the school has undergone considerable change since 2011. Merit selection of staff has resulted in 77% being appointed to the school under this process. The school has a blend of experienced and senior teaching and support staff with males consisting of 15% of the cohort. School leadership has followed a highly considered pathway to ensure stability of the leadership team and for staff to be employed to match the specific skill sets required and ability to share the vision for the school.

The staff has ensured that partnerships with parents and the community are a key focus of the improvement agenda. Developing two-way communication and shared responsibility for the education of students has been at a whole-school, class and individual level. Student support from agencies supplying specialist services, including speech therapy, is integral to the staff's focus on meeting individual needs. Staff utilise the network opportunities offered in the region to engage in professional learning with local schools.

Since the last independent review, leadership has been able to foster a consistency of board performance and attracted parent members who are developing their understanding of their governance accountabilities and responsibilities.

The school has managed its resources to the extent that it is well equipped to support major initiatives such as information and communication technology (ICT) integration into the classroom teaching and learning program. There has been a major undertaking in developing efficiencies in expenditure, particularly in the area of utilities management, which has provided the school with opportunities to maintain and expand programs.

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 school has a strong culture of using data to support decisions on student learning at a whole-school, class and individual level. There are well-documented and actioned cycles of review and analysis of performance data and information as well as evaluations of programs.

The leadership and staff review performance against the Business Plan targets at key points in the review cycle and on an annual basis. Analysis determines the extent to which targets are being met and makes recommendations as to sub-group and individual performance that can be addressed in future plans at a cohort and individual level, including modifying and introducing strategies to ameliorate any weaknesses identified.

The comprehensive and inclusive review process is measured in its approach and ensures staff do not get overloaded with assessment tasks or analysis that does not provide information to support adjustments to teaching and learning. The self-review processes produce outcomes that support the school's improvement intentions in business and operational planning and provide evidence of meeting the DPA requirements.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The goal for business planning is for 'Capel Primary School to be a school of choice that earns the respect of the community for the quality and breadth of the education it offers'. Achievement of the goal is set out in six key objectives:

- Teaching, learning and assessment—to ensure all students achieve their potential.
- Learning environment—to use the WA Curriculum to enhance the learning environment.
- Professional learning community—enable teachers to share practice and reflect on student performance.
- Behaviour—create a positive school environment to develop mindful and respectful members.
- Community—engage the community to assist the school to reach its objectives.
- Resources—allocate resources to meet present and future needs.

Each of the objectives has key points that provide the scope of activity required to achieve the goal and provide a pathway for planning. Targets for each objective clearly set out the expected improvements and the type of data and information that is to be collected to support achievement.

Academic targets in teaching, learning and assessment are based on the stable cohort improving in performance bands in all NAPLAN assessments and in reducing the number of students with below-expected performance in early years' literacy and numeracy.

Self-review outcomes demonstrate the staff has compared performance over the time of the DPA and can demonstrate progressive improvement in achievement and progress, particularly with students in the top 20% performance band where three out of five assessments demonstrated improvement at or above the target level. The staff's analysis indicated that the transition rate impacted on the improvement level of students in the bottom 20% performance band when in 2015 improvement was made in two out of the five assessments. In 2016 assessments the data demonstrated

further progress in achieving targets in both the top 20% and bottom 20% cohorts, with eight out of ten targets achieved in Years 3 and 5. Stable cohort progress, at moderate to very high progress for the Year 2 to Year 5 target, was mostly achieved. With the exception of writing, all assessment areas showed improvement with progress in excess of the National Mean progress in 2015.

NAPLAN data for 2016 became available to the staff at the time of the independent review. Not all analysis using the data was available, particularly the fine-grained data sets the staff uses for achievement of targets. Data strongly indicated the success of the school's planning and strategies to improve student learning. Longitudinal data showed that the school had returned to a performance level above like schools in all assessments and in particular demonstrated that the percentage of students in the top 20% of performance was increasing and the bottom 20% decreasing. When compared with all Western Australian public schools, the progress and achievement by students at Capel Primary School in all assessments is in the higher progress–higher achievement quadrant, whereas in 2012, all assessments were in the lower progress–lower achievement quadrant.

On entry data, when compared to 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN, supports similar progress being made by staff in improving student learning. When compared to like schools, moderate to very high progress in reading and numeracy was above expectations and significantly low and very low progress was considerably below expectations.

Targets for improving attendance, reducing the number of at risk students with severe or moderate attendance and decreasing the number of unexplained absences, were all achieved. Overall attendance from 2012 to Semester One 2016 has improved from 90.2% to 94.5%. Unexplained absences reduced from 36% to 9% over the same period and severe/moderate categories have reduced by two-thirds to one severely at risk student and 11 at risk in the moderate category. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendance has improved from 84.2% to 90.2% over the 2012–2016 periods. The self-review recommendations for future planning are to target improvement in the regular attendance category.

Behaviour targets have focused on improvement in all categories of recorded incidents, and respond to concerns expressed about poor standards prior to the current DPA period. Strategies employed by staff have led to a major change in reported incidents, as evidenced by the calm and well-structured

classroom and playground activities that support high levels of engagement and purposeful activity. One indicator collected by the staff is a reduction in suspension days from 56 in 2013 to 3 in 2016. The targets set by the staff have been achieved and have contributed to the positive learning environment in the school.

Community targets based on satisfaction survey data have also been achieved with data demonstrating considerable positive change between 2014 and 2016. Evidence from the parent, staff and student surveys indicated high response rates and satisfaction with the operations of the school and relationships between parents, staff and students. Survey data is also used to determine progress being made in meeting the objective of a professional learning community and in assessing the quality of the learning environment. The positive direction indicated in surveys and supported through discussion with staff, students and parents, verifies the achievement of those objectives.

Resources objectives were targeted to ICT provision and improving the collection of voluntary contributions. Evidence provided indicated the school was now well resourced for ICT provision and the collection rate for contributions had risen from 72.5% in 2013 to 80.7% in 2015. Coupled with extensive strategies to improve utilities savings, the leadership has ensured that steps are taken to deploy available resources to maintain programs.

Leadership and staff have clearly demonstrated that achievement of business and operational planning goals has improved student learning (achievement, progress and engagement).

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?

Staff members and parents reflected on changes that have occurred in the school in recent years. At the time when the first Business Plan (2011–2013) evolved, there were significant behavioural challenges and a school culture that was far from positive. This is confirmed in a comparative reading of the parent, staff and student surveys of 2014 and 2016. There are significant differences in the responses indicating that a positive change has taken place over this time.

The commendations from the initial independent review provides evidence of this, indicating the leadership team and staff had been very proactive in this change process. Inclusive practices were now in place, programs had been implemented to target behaviour and attendance, and there was a focus on whole-school approaches and good teaching practice. The 2016 review has revealed that this change of emphasis has been sustained with further efforts being made to provide students with opportunities that will improve social and academic outcomes.

In reaching this goal, the impact of the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) framework implementation has been particularly significant. Upon arrival at the school, the reviewers were welcomed by costumed characters representing the schools' chosen values: Personal Best, Independence, Respect and Caring. Further observations and discussions with staff and students revealed that the characters have an important role to play in encouraging all students to do the right thing.

Staff has fully embraced PBS. They confirmed the processes have had a very positive impact on the culture of the school and particularly on behaviours both inside and outside of the classroom. One teacher commented, 'Now we can teach'.

A success indicator of the framework, in addition to the fact that the students play an important role in formulating expectations, is the part that staff play in keeping PBS to the forefront with explicit teaching of values, informal reminders and conferencing.

Parents also commented on the positive effect that PBS has had on the school culture. It was their belief that the reputation of the school had been enhanced as a result of its implementation and some indicated that the same values had become a focus in the home.

Essentially, over time, PBS has become embedded within the school culture resulting in opportunities for students to develop stronger socially and emotionally and be part of a learning environment free from distracting incidents.

The school chaplain has also had an important role to play in this positive change. Staff commented on her enthusiastic approach in working with individuals and small groups of children who are dealing with social and/or emotional issues. The chaplain is also very supportive of the programs that have been put in place to impact the health and well-being of the students.

As time has progressed, the school has implemented other strategies which result in students interacting positively. The out-of-class activities were particularly interesting. In an endeavour to ensure the children are kept engaged, the staff has established a 'Be Active' program at recess and lunch times. These are supervised games and also include opportunities for students to attend music production practice and technology activities in the library.

On a Friday afternoon the school offers a variety of clubs (mini clubs for juniors) which students attend on a rotational basis. These include the usual choice of sports with additional opportunities such as archery and fishing. Students who have not been able to meet expectations during the week are invited to join the Targeted Learning Club where they have an opportunity to discuss the actions that could have been taken to ensure their contribution to the school was a positive one. The deputy principal, who is facilitator of this club, commented that misdemeanours are now of a 'low-key' type.

The school also operates a breakfast club. This has been very successful with large numbers of students attending. From observations of the atmosphere, this activity fits well with the goals of the PBS framework.

It is clear such a variety of activities is having an impact on engagement. Students have opportunities to experience, with minimal conflict, positive interactions with others while enjoying themselves. Staff confirmed that the students come back to class refreshed, feeling satisfied with what they have achieved and ready to get on with their studies. The students commented that

they felt safe and included at the school; their learning needs were being met and they were appreciative of the extra-curricular opportunities available to them.

Similar change, enhancing the learning environments within classrooms, has taken place during the time of the current DPA. It was noted, in the 2013 independent review, that 'inclusive practices and the establishment of whole-school strategies to improve the outcomes for all students' was commendable. These initiatives have been sustained and enhanced.

Literacy and numeracy blocks have become an embedded practice, the staff has developed detailed strategic plans and an emphasis is placed on evidence-based teaching strategies. In light of concerns regarding spelling outcomes, whole-school strategies in this learning area are under consideration.

Classroom visits confirmed the implementation of other sound practice. Collaborative planning continues to be a strength in the school with pairs of teachers commonly working together to achieve best outcomes for their two classrooms. This facilitated effective teaching as well as provided an opportunity for shared organisational responsibilities. There was a sense of good classroom management throughout the school.

Teachers continue to focus on cooperative learning, take account of the inquiry learning process and direction from the strategic plans and scope and sequence documents, teach explicitly and draw from 'good practice' such as *First Steps*. The school has resourced these initiatives with a number of effective supporting programs. The reviewers agreed that this approach, along with clear evidence of differentiated learning opportunities across the school, is very sound practice.

Students requiring additional support are also well catered for. Under the direction of a deputy principal, whose portfolio includes a learning support role, a variety of services are enlisted to cater for the students' needs. The 25 students with individual education plans are monitored and parents are involved in case conferencing with the deputy principal and school psychologist. The school also has access to a speech therapist and speech pathologist who assist by identifying students requiring intervention and providing activities for education assistants working with the students.

Continuing access to technology has also had a positive impact on the classroom. The leadership team has strategically increased resources

available with up to six computers in each classroom, a significant number of tablets, interactive devices and the implementation of a *Bring Your Own Device* program. Staff have taken account of the needs of students in information technology and the value this has on enhancing lesson delivery. They have also been involved in increasing their skills through professional learning at after-school ICT cafés. Much of this work, including weekly teaching sessions for students (Years 4–6), has been undertaken by a deputy principal with the assistance of another staff member.

A specialist science program has been established with students in Years 3–6 attending a weekly session. This has proven to be extremely effective with a committed teacher who focuses her teaching on the inquiry process and accesses a variety of hands-on resources. A strong music program is also in place with students having an opportunity to perform. Other specialist areas include languages (Indonesian) and physical education. Staff has also been flexible in their deployment, making it possible for some teachers to present specialist programs in their year levels.

Sustainability also has an important emphasis at the school. With the guidance of an enthusiastic teacher, the students have an opportunity to be involved in a variety of activities including *Waterwise* and *Wastewise* projects, *Clean Up Australia*, tree planting, organic gardening and recycling.

The leadership's initiative in providing classrooms access to the expertise of education assistants has also been effective. Importantly, the education assistants are very engaged in students' learning, supporting individuals and also working with small groups. The teachers commented that this assistance was invaluable. Importantly, the relationships between the teaching and non-teaching staff are very positive with a sense of equity evident.

Parents commented positively regarding the changes that have taken place over recent years and emphasised their satisfaction with the quality of the teaching and the relationships that exist between the students and staff. A number had moved from other areas to take up places at the school and agree that the school is highly regarded. Teachers are considered very approachable and the staff take account of parent concerns, dealing with issues quickly. Parents have opportunities to discuss their child's work with the teachers and were appreciative of the end of semester interviews conducted by staff. It was also common for them to be invited into classrooms and encouraged to become involved in whole-school activities.

Effective communication with parents is maintained through various means including many classrooms having a website and the use of the *Schoolbag* app, *Edmodo* (Year 5's) and *Seesaw*. This enables staff to share student work with parents. The school also communicates through email, the newsletter, its website and information notes for parents. The annual year book is also a valued feature of school communication.

The school is supported through partnerships it has formed with the *Bendigo Bank*, the *Lions Club*, *Foodbank*, the *Hudson Community Health Centre*, the Capel Shire (which supports the chaplaincy program) and other local businesses and churches. The leadership team confirmed that this support was valued and an indication of the positive community spirit that exists.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Evidence from the 2011–2013 review of the school confirms the view that sustainability of key processes and programs has been a significant outcome. It is also clear that account has been taken of the recommendations and commendations and impacted on the current review. Importantly, there has been continuity of a sound learning program with enhancements.

A pastoral care emphasis had been critical at a time when there were numbers of students with challenging behaviours. The leadership team and staff have embraced the PBS framework and refined the strategies in place. As a result, the behaviour management processes are embedded and importantly students are fully engaged both inside and outside the classroom. With a strong PBS committee, it is likely that this initiative will continue to be a critical vehicle for ensuring the school retains its positive culture.

Similarly, the focus on whole-school approaches to curriculum delivery will provide all children the opportunity to experience a learning environment which has depth and continuity. The staff has developed detailed strategic plans, scope and sequence continua and an assessment regime. There are expectations that staff will plan collaboratively and focus on evidence-based strategies such as explicit teaching and inquiry learning.

The implementation of whole-school literacy and numeracy blocks has been successful, giving purposeful direction for teachers and consistency for students. Consideration is also being given to a whole-school approach to spelling. The reviewers concur that the emphasis on encouraging all staff to be part of a common approach should facilitate its sustainability.

With the ‘evidence-based’ programs, the commitment to effective planning and teaching, and focused approach on the individual needs of the students, it is likely that improvements in academic outcomes will continue in the foreseeable future. The administration team is stable and enthusiastic about continuing with the change process and the teaching and non-teaching staff is committed to embedding the processes and programs now in place.

The self-review carried out by staff was thorough. It was clear to the reviewers they had a sound knowledge of the process and were diligent in their

interrogation and application of the data. Staff were keen to cater for the needs of the students and were agreed that their in-depth analysis had value in informing their teaching.

The Principal provides an overview of this information to the community through the Annual Report. Although the School Board is also kept informed, there is scope for its greater involvement in this process and other governance responsibilities. This concern was acknowledged by the Board Chair and members who are relatively new to the role and though inexperienced, are enthusiastic. It is likely they will make a very positive contribution to the evolution of the new Business Plan.

Relationships with parents and the community are very positive. Parents are welcomed into the school and become involved in classroom activities. Indications are that support coming from the home will continue to be strong. A wide variety of effective communication strategies are in place and parents commented that they were kept well-informed.

Discussions with the Manager of Corporate Services and Principal confirmed the school is in a sound financial position. In addition to the strategic use of funds available, significant savings have been made with the installation of solar panels and the redirection of bore water from a nearby oval to the school grounds. The reviewers were assured that the funding for current programs and future initiatives is on track.

In reviewing its 2014–2016 Business Plan, the school's future directions include a continued focus on professional learning for teachers, maintaining a whole-school approach to behaviour management and attendance but has acknowledged that continued attention should be placed on academic progress and the raising of expectations.

Conclusion

School leadership and staff have achieved improved student learning through a planned and well-thought-out series of strategies to provide a positive and supportive learning environment and set high standards for teaching and learning that result in academic performance that, in many cases, is above expectations when compared to other schools.

The commitment of staff to these strategies, the whole-school approach and the development of a collaborative culture has ensured that students are able to engage in learning that meets their needs and has improved their performance.

Positive community partnerships are a strong feature of the school that have been enhanced by the high regard for the school and actions taken by staff to ensure parents are engaged in the education process. Support for the school is very high and its reputation has been enhanced by the positive learning environment and range of activities and academic pursuits that engage parents and students in the life of the school.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- leadership by the principal and deputies, for their commitment to change and in initiating well-researched practices and strategies that have led to improved student performance and the creation of a positive learning environment that is strongly supported by parents
- the staff, for their professional expertise and commitment to the change agenda and the positive relationships they have developed with students and the community
- the staff, for their consistency of practice in delivering a whole-school approach and implementing effective teaching and learning strategies in a collaborative manner
- leadership and staff, for the development of a safe and inclusive learning environment that supports academic learning, engages students in productive activity, promotes the values of the school and influences student attitudes and behaviour positively

- leadership at all levels, for their focus on improving student performance through proactive use of data to support planning for improved student outcomes and the sharing of expertise with colleagues to promote teacher effectiveness
- the leadership and staff, for the development of a school culture that reflects positive relationships at all levels, a focus on every child and values that support inclusion, fairness and a focus on helping every student achieve their potential.

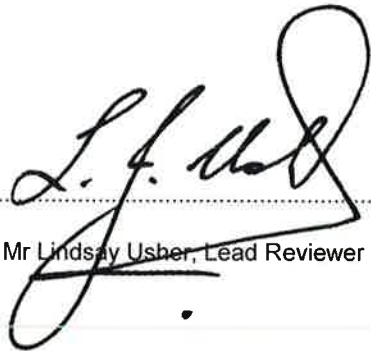
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- consideration by the School Board to strategies and practices that will raise its profile in the community and be recognised for members' roles as their representatives
- leadership, staff and the Board to consider a more strategic approach to the next Business Plan objectives and targets, with greater emphasis on operational targets being part of operational planning that contributes to strategic goals and objectives.

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 Capel 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.



Mr Lindsay Usher, Lead Reviewer

14 September 2016

Date



Mr Tom Campbell, Reviewer

14 September 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

28/9/16

Date