



Department of
Education

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Balcatta Primary School

Public School Review

May 2021



PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

Purpose

All Western Australian public schools are reviewed by the Department of Education's Public School Accountability directorate. A review gives assurance to the local community, the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General about the performance of public schools in delivering high quality education to its students. The review acknowledges the achievements of the school and gives feedback to support the Principal and staff with their improvement planning.

Initially conducted on a three-year cycle, subsequent reviews are determined to occur on a one, three or five-year timeframe.

The Principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence from the school. Information to be validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the school review report and determines when the next review will occur. The report is provided to the Principal, the Chair of the School Council/Board and the regional Director of Education.

Expectations of schools

The Statement of Expectation (Statement) makes clear and public the expectations and responsibilities of schools and the Department in student achievement and progress.

The Statement is between; the Department of Education, represented by the Director General; the school, represented by the Principal; and is noted by the school council/board, represented by the Chair.

The Statement sets out the expectations of Principals in relation to the delivery of the 2020-2024 strategic directions *Every student, every classroom, every day*, and *Building on Strength*.

The Statement will underpin each school's strategic planning and self-assessment and will form part of the school's Public School Review, as well as the Professional Performance Review of the Principal.

Public School Review – The Standard

A Standard has been developed across the domains of the School Improvement and Accountability Framework to describe essential indicators of performance. The selection of the indicators is based on literature research and historical reviews of school performance in Western Australian public schools.

The purpose is to better ensure that judgements about student performance are standardised and objective. Indicators describe what is evident in schools functioning 'as expected' within each domain.

The Standard defines the expected level of school performance. Judgements are made in relation to the Standard. External validation is also based on evidence presented relating to the Standard.



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Context

Balcatta Primary School is located approximately ten kilometres from the Perth central business district, within the North Metropolitan Education Region.

Opened in 1964, the school boasts a proud heritage and positive engagement with the multicultural community that represents up to 20 different cultural backgrounds. In 2020, Balcatta Primary School became an Independent Public School.

Over recent years, the school has been the beneficiary of a capital works program, with the construction of a purpose-built undercover assembly area and state-of-the-art canteen.

Educational programs are provided for students from Kindergarten to Year 6. Currently, 255 students are enrolled. Balcatta Primary School has an Index of Community and Socio-Educational Advantage of 1047 (decile 3).

Parent involvement in the school is encouraged and the School Board and Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) have overseen improvements including the installation of air-conditioning in classrooms.

School self-assessment validation

The Principal submitted a comprehensive and rigorous school self-assessment.

The following aspects of the school's self-assessment process are confirmed:

- The Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT) submission **provided** an extensive account of the current school context and actions planned for the future.
- Staff were fully involved in the preparation of the ESAT submission and had an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the evidence submitted.
- The school's self-assessment was enhanced by conversations with members of the school community, who contributed their reflections and engaged actively during the validation visit.
- The Principal and staff demonstrated a genuine, deep understanding of the context of the school, its history and the direction for its future.

The following recommendation is made:

- Consider using the ESAT on an ongoing basis to record performance evidence as part of the continuing school self-assessment process.
- Maintain a focus on the Standard as a constant reference point for ongoing school performance reflections.

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Relationships and partnerships

The school's mission is predicated on a deep belief of service to the community. The leadership team has built a collegial culture based on mutual respect, trust and support amongst staff, students and families.

Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- School Board representatives are strongly supportive of the school's direction and understand its role in the community as advocates for parents and students.
- A visible relational ethos of staff engagement is amplified through participation in Professional Learning Communities, strengthening their appreciation of the empowering impact of authentic collaboration.
- Over an extended period of stable leadership, the school has nurtured strong and enduring partnerships, adding significant value to school programs, energising student engagement and fostering a sense of belonging.
- A close relationship with Balcatta Senior High School provides relevant and authentic opportunities for students to engage with the next phase of their learning, assisting with their transition.
- Strong ties have been fostered with external agencies such as an onsite playgroup, Yorgum Healing Services (a holistic support service for Aboriginal students) and the Christmas Shoebox Project, each augmenting learning and wellbeing development and a sense of connection.

Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Consider expanding the composition of the School Board through elections or targeted, time-limited co-option.
- Continue to look for the most inclusive strategy for maximising stakeholder communications.

Learning environment

The school's ethos focuses on developing the 'whole child'. It prides itself on creating a safe and caring environment for students and staff, underpinned by a determination to provide quality learning and positive behaviours.

Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- While the school was built well before the turn of the century, the Principal has persisted with undertaking regular building upgrades to meet contemporary standards for a 21st century learning environment.
- The focus on staff wellbeing reflects the belief that students benefit when staff are 'on point'.
- The inclusive, safe and caring environment meets the multi-layered needs of vulnerable students.
- There has been a highly respected and dedicated English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) teacher for 20 years, providing support for the 70 per cent student composition with a first language other than English.
- All teaching staff are supported by equally devoted and very professional education assistants.

Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Engrain inclusion concepts based on the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework, to strengthen authentic relations with local Aboriginal families.

Leadership

Effective leaders do not settle for what is in front of them, focusing instead on a combination of context, relationships and mutual professional dependencies to guide their leadership. There is collective confidence in the school leadership team, who are described as informative, supportive, visible and united.

Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- An ethos of collective leadership underscores significant levels of shared responsibility, transparent decision making, accountability and unanimity of direction.
- Work values incorporate two-way trust and respect between the Principal and staff. New initiatives are implemented systematically, with staff taking on leadership roles and providing peer feedback on practice.
- Leaders actively promote and communicate to the whole-school community that all students can be successful. They set high expectations for student engagement and achievement.
- Leadership aspirants are encouraged to take on new responsibilities, knowing there is a genuine level of support available to seek advice and guidance as they grow into their role.
- The development of the business plan and operational plans has been an ongoing consultative process.

Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Continue to promote the importance of positive personal attributes as critical to leadership success.

Use of resources

The collective leadership provides multiple perspectives to resource management decisions. Decision making is based on agreed fundamental principles to ensure the best outcome for students.

Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Resources are managed through formalised procedures by the Principal, manager corporate services and Finance Committee. These processes optimise the oversight of resource allocation.
- Staff appreciate the levels of transparency, integrity and probity that guide the decision making at the core of resource allocations.
- Resources are linked to the school's business plan priorities and are deployed using the singular premise that 'students come first'.
- Student characteristics funding targets students' needs and a coordinated approach to the distribution of educational resources is carefully monitored for impact.
- Planning for the provision of ICT¹ and associated resources is effectively managed. The school is well resourced, with a range of contemporary technologies aimed to support teaching and learning.

Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to build School Board capacity to make informed contributions to discussions on the relationship between school planning and budget management.
- Give consideration to leadership succession as part of the school's workforce planning.

Teaching quality

An emerging vein of pedagogical continuity exists across the phases of learning. The willingness for staff to safely contest ideas, creates the conditions for rich disciplined dialogue.

Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Staff have a positive relationship with student performance data, acknowledging it is the key to targeted intervention and genuine differentiation.
- Professional learning opportunities have added value to the staff's capacity to deliver contemporary curriculum lesson design and delivery.
- The school keeps abreast of research on effective teaching, particularly for English as an Additional Language or Dialect students, ensuring a broad range of teaching strategies are utilised to maximise student learning.
- Staff demonstrate an eagerness to build their knowledge through collaboration, to increase their collective impact on student success.
- Education assistants provide exceptional support to teachers. They contribute to planning discussions with teachers, who acknowledge the skill and expertise they bring to those discussions.

Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Continue to embed existing peer observation protocols.

Student achievement and progress

The school collects a wide range of systemic and school-based data, which inform reflection against school success, teachers' planning and strategic planning.

Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- A frank assessment of recent student achievement and progress, has forged a determination by staff to identify multiple strategies to target student needs.
- The leadership promotes the view that granular data analysis is the driver of student success. To that end, the school has developed a schedule for the collection of a range of data to monitor and assess student achievement and progress.
- Moderation processes have been established with other schools to support teacher judgements.
- Following an extended period of NAPLAN² student success, concerns relating to recent trend changes in student performance have been addressed with the school resetting some teaching approaches.
- A high priority has been given to refreshing staff data literacy for timely identification of students at risk.

Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to interrogate grade allocations to ensure alignment to assessment data and Judging Standards.
- Explore options to engage with larger schools in the local network to validate NAPLAN judgements relating to grade allocations.

Reviewers

Rod Lowther
Director, Public School Review

Emma Bancroft
Principal, Collier Primary School
Peer Reviewer

Endorsement

Based on this report, I endorse the commendations and recommendations made by the review team regarding your school's performance.

Your next school review is scheduled for Term 2, 2024.



Melesha Sands
Deputy Director General, Schools

References

- 1 Information and communications technology
- 2 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy