



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

South East Metropolitan Language Development Centre

2017

Review Findings



**Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools**

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Veronica O'Neil
Board Chair:	Mr Chris Wiegele
School Address:	276 Epsom Avenue, Cloverdale WA 6105
Number of Students:	241
Reviewers:	Ms Donelle Church (Lead) Ms Barbara Browne
Review Dates:	9 and 10 March 2017

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the Department of Education Services' independent review is to provide assurance to the principal and school community, the board, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education and Training of the extent to which the school staff and board have met the commitments of the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA). The review verifies the degree to which there are effective processes in place bringing about improved student learning.

Review Methodology

Underpinning the review methodology is the understanding that the principal is required to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the DPA are met; school performance and student improvement targets and priorities, as detailed in the school's business plan, are assessed, reviewed annually and an annual report made publicly available. The review seeks to determine the extent to which these commitments have been met.

The principal forwarded the school self-review conclusions to the Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The Department of Education Services' reviewers supplemented the information provided by the principal with information on the school's achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which included:

- the *My School*® website
- the Department of Education's School Performance Monitoring
- Schools Online reports.

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

An agenda for the site visit was negotiated with the principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made in the school self-review statements. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students where required. Where the school belongs to an Independent Public School (IPS) cluster of schools the review considers whether the purpose of the cluster has been met and the benefits to the school.

The evidence provided by the principal, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visit, was used as the basis for judgements made in verifying how well the school staff and board have met the commitments of the DPA and business plan.

Business Plan

How effective was the business plan in responding to the school's context and improving student learning (achievement, progress and engagement)?

South East Metropolitan Language Development Centre became an IPS in 2015. The centre caters for 241 students from K–3 with Specific Language Impairment (SLI), a condition which affects language acquisition and use.

The centre has three campuses which are co-located at Cloverdale (Belmay Primary School), Maddington (East Maddington Primary School) and Armadale (Kingsley Primary School). The administrative and leadership team are located at Belmay Primary School; however, school leaders and specialist staff regularly visit the Maddington and Armadale campuses. Students share facilities with their host schools and integrate with mainstream students to play, participate in sporting activities and attend assemblies.

The centre has an outreach service that is part of the Statewide Services provided by the Department of Education and is an integral part of the centre's structure. The outreach team of teachers and speech pathologists work within the greater South Metropolitan and Goldfields Education Regions supporting schools to develop the capacity to provide sound literacy and language programs. The outreach team also works to support specialised intervention plans and strategies for Aboriginal language development in the early years. Staff includes 31 teachers (Full-time equivalent [FTE] 26.1), three speech pathologists (FTE 2.6) and 17 education assistants (FTE 15.6). The centre is well supported by its school board, Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), parents and the wider community.

Findings

- The Business Plan 2015–2017 outlines the centre's targets, focus areas, context, vision and values. Targets and focus areas in the business plan were determined after a collaborative self-assessment process which led to a strategic approach to school improvement planning. The school board endorsed the three-year business plan and had input into its development. The business plan is available to the school community on the centre's website.
- All students have an individual education plan which is monitored against their individual language plan. Success is measured against individual progress and monitoring student performance is highly individualised. In setting targets for the business plan careful consideration is given to the fact that the cohort is small, highly transient and students exit and enter at different points in time.

- The business plan's focus on continuous improvement is evident in the two academic targets which relate to Pre-primary students in 2015 improving their regular word reading, regular word spelling, blending and segmenting skills and semantics skills through to 2017. The business plan also has a non-academic target which focuses on re-engaging and improving attendance of students whose attendance rate is below 80%. Initially no conclusions were drawn in relation to the extent to which the business plan targets were achieved. However, conclusions were discussed with reviewers during the review visit.
- Five focus areas outlined in the business plan (Teaching and Learning, Students, Leadership, Community Partnerships and Environment) reflect the intent of the centre's vision 'Language for Life' and provide a framework to support the business plan's academic and non-academic targets. Focus area achievements include the implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum to which teachers have embedded additional language content. New individual language plans have been developed and implemented and social and emotional skills programs have been actioned as these skills are not always evident in language impaired students. Evidence from the Business Plan 2015–2017 Milestones and Check Points demonstrates that the centre is on track to fulfil its focus area commitments by the end of 2017.
- The values articulated in the business plan Respect, Persistence, Challenge and Confidence aim to provide language impaired students with a 'quality holistic learning environment to support independent learning and positive engagement with their school community'. Discussions with parents and teachers revealed that the centre's values are embedded in its practices and procedures.
- The business plan is supported by whole-school approaches to language development; planning that specifically targets the needs of language impaired students; explicit teaching and a targeted approach to monitoring student progress. This combined with strong school leadership, an embedded collaborative culture and an enthusiastic and dedicated staff underpins the centre's successful outcomes.

Areas of strength

- The leadership team, teachers, education assistants and speech pathologists supported by the school board collaborated well to ensure that complex academic targets were achieved.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that the school self-assessment process includes a summative assessment which draws conclusions regarding the extent to which targets have been achieved.
- Future business plans to align strategies with targets.

Teaching and Learning

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

- A comprehensive assessment schedule ensures that student progress is monitored in a considered and methodical manner by school leaders, teachers, speech pathologists and education assistants. Assessment outcomes analysed by teachers, speech pathologists and data coordinators enables staff to make evidence-based instructional decisions, provide feedback to students and plan for improvement. 2016 exit data; achievement of business plan academic targets; National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data; On-entry data and individual language plans all provide evidence that student performance has lifted.
- The business plan has two academic targets and one non-academic target.
- Target 1: 'Students in Pre-primary tested against the Emergent Literacy Profile will continue to show an upward trend in regular word reading and regular word spelling in the years to 2017. Sutherland Phonological Awareness Testing— Revised (SPAT-R) will show an upward trend in blending and segmenting in the years to 2017'. Exit data indicates that the centre has achieved the targets set for both regular word reading and regular word spelling. In relation to blending and segmenting the centre has achieved its target of an upward trend for the 2015–2016 period as indicated in SPAT-R data.
- Target 2: 'Students whose attendance rate falls below 80% will be targeted with specific strategies to re-engage and improve attendance rates in an upward trend'. This target was partially achieved. Students at moderate risk reduced from 8.2% in 2015 to 7% in 2016, but students at severe risk rose from 1% in 2015 to 3% in 2016.
- Target 3: 'In the targeted language focus area for each year students will show progress along the hierarchy of language skills as indicated on the Individual's Language Profile'. This target has been achieved as all students moving from Pre-primary to Year 3 attained the highest level of consolidation, when labelling and describing functions of objects.
- Year 3 exit data generated from the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-4) in 2015 revealed that 27% of students returned to mainstream schools with core language skills in the average range. This compares favourably with the 2015 exit data in which 7% of students were in the average range. Teachers believe that a whole-school consistent approach to

language which involves explicit teaching, repetition, feedback to students, revision and practice has contributed to the improved exit data.

- Between 2014 and 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN results demonstrated improvements in students achieving at or above the minimum standard. Spelling increased from 71% to 82%; reading 72% to 87%; writing 81% to 97%; grammar 60% to 81.4% and numeracy 75% to 90%.
- The overall attendance rate of 91.2% is below the Western Australian public schools' rate of 92.6%. The centre expects higher attendance rates and continues to implement a variety of strategies to improve attendance including appointing an attendance coordinator and assisting parents to access school bus services.
- The centre has a Behaviour Management Policy that outlines procedures for managing behaviour in a fair and consistent manner and behavioural expectations are explicitly taught. The centre implements programs to improve students' social and emotional skills and conducts a Chaplaincy program for the benefit of all students. Analysis of 2016 survey data revealed that approximately 83% of parents surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed that student behaviour is well managed and approximately 90% of parents surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that their child likes being at the centre. Parents expressed to reviewers that the centre was a safe and secure place for their children and that teachers informed them immediately if there were any behavioural issues.
- The collaborative approach to planning, monitoring and data analysis was strongly evident in discussions with school leaders, teachers, education assistants and the speech pathologist. Teachers are given time to plan, develop programs and consult with colleagues regarding the acquisition of classroom resources. Planning at all levels is collaborative, consultative and inclusive.
- All teachers agreed that collaborative planning time with the speech pathologists was crucial when developing individual language plans, monitoring student progress and analysing data. Teachers and education assistants valued interactions with the speech pathologists and all believed that the role of speech pathologists was pivotal in maintaining and improving student outcomes.
- Teachers noted that collaborative practices were valued when meeting with the occupational therapist, physiotherapist, psychologist and Disability Services personnel as their interactions with students were extremely important in relation to improving student outcomes.

- There is a very strong focus on building the capacity of all staff and this is reflected in the performance management process and its links to professional learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Protocols for classroom observations have been developed and the process is embedded in the centre's practice. Peer tutoring and peer observations are valued. Some teachers noted that their pedagogical skills had improved due to classroom observations, reflection and feedback from colleagues. A survey conducted in 2016 revealed that almost 60% of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they receive useful feedback about their work in the school.
- Teachers have participated in professional learning which enables them to implement the evidence-based *Hanen* program. They learn to observe, wait and listen when working with language impaired students who need time to process instructions. Other evidence-based programs implemented include *Talk 4 Writing*, *Literacy Booster*, *Peter and the Cat* and *Squirrel Story*.
- The centre has developed and implemented the Accelerated Literacy Intervention for Students with Special Education Needs program which is evidence-based and specific to the needs of individual students. Teaching strategies are explicit, routine, consistent and repetitive. The centre has developed resources, teacher handbooks, student workbooks and professional learning modules to support this program. Student tracking data has indicated that all students from Pre-primary to Year 3 have and will continue to benefit from this program.
- In partnership with the centre, Dr Sharon Davies from Curtin University is currently conducting research at the centre to identify effective teaching strategies to ensure a consistent approach is used, based on current and evidence-based research. In addition, Dr Davies is researching to identify a model of effective mentoring to be used in teacher induction programs. At the school level, teachers have been trialling teaching strategies, receiving feedback and having input into the research. Others have been involved in the mentoring project and have provided feedback and developed strategies to become mentors. A pre-and-post questionnaire for teachers regarding mentoring found that teachers had improved in language planning, embedding language and confidence to share new knowledge and skills.
- The centre has well embedded practices in collaboration, data collection and analysis. It has implemented evidence-based teaching programs and has well-researched performance management strategies which continually build staff capacity. The reviewers were confident that these sustainable practices will assist teachers to continually improve, share their skills with others and become leaders in teaching and learning.

Areas of strength

- Performance management practices provide opportunities for peer tutoring, self-reflection, classroom observations and capacity building.
- A partnership with Curtin University that links evidence-based research to pedagogical practices and the centre based mentoring program.
- A range of data which clearly demonstrates that student performance has lifted.

Student Performance Monitoring

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

- School performance and student improvement targets and priorities from the business plan are assessed and reviewed annually and discussed with the school board. The staff conducts ongoing school self-assessment which is linked to the National School Improvement Tool. Current effective practice is documented; data is analysed and improvement targets are determined. To reflect on the centre's progress against its focus areas in the business plan teachers and school leaders refer to the Business Plan 2015–2017 Milestones and Check Points document where completed actions are recorded and future planning considered.
- The centre has a comprehensive assessment schedule which outlines the testing program for the year. Monitoring student performance is ongoing with the main forms of assessment being linked to syntax, semantics, narrative (oral retell), pragmatics (social skills), comprehension and phonological awareness. Teachers and speech pathologists are responsible for administering most of the assessments, many of which are conducted on a one-to-one basis. Pre-primary to Year 3 students are assessed against the Emergent Literacy Profile three times a year and exit assessments for Year 3 students are conducted by speech pathologists in term four.
- In the physical education program, fundamental movement skills are monitored to determine students' skill level in a range of physical activities. Formative assessment processes links to future planning, identifies strengths and areas to be developed and informs the development of individual education plans and individual language plans.
- Teachers reported that feedback is an integral part of student learning and to this extent feedback is immediate with teachers re-phrasing, re-casting grammar errors and giving students positive reinforcement while encouraging them to reflect on their performance.
- Early childhood teachers have conducted the National Quality Standard (NQS) audit and six of the seven areas are progressing well. In addressing the NQS early childhood teachers have introduced a quiet zone, Crunch and Sip and participated in *Promoting Alternate Thinking Strategies* professional learning which links to the centre's social and emotional *Friends for Life* program. Quality area three (physical environment) has been considered but it will take time to meet as it involves a consultative process with personnel from three campuses.

The Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework has been used for self-reflection and in response, the centre has developed and implemented an Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework Development Plan 2016–2018 against the five cultural standards. The intent of the Early Years Learning Framework has been embraced with teachers incorporating aspects of the framework into their planning and teaching.

- Annual reports are prepared and made publicly available. They provide details of NAPLAN and Year 3 exit data together with student attendance data. The 2015 Annual Report has information regarding one of the centre's academic targets; however, information relating to two other targets was not evident. The report also gives an overview of behaviour management, centre highlights, outreach services and other programs offered by the centre. A financial summary is also included in the 2015 Annual Report.
- Collaborative practices; distributed leadership, school self-assessment processes and the thorough way in which the staff collect and analyse a wide range of data leads the reviewers to believe that student performance monitoring practices are sustainable.

Areas of strength

- The targeted approach to the collection and analysis of individual student data which leads to school improvement planning at whole-school, year level and individual student level.
- The strong culture of school self-assessment and reflection which is evident in all aspects of the centre's operations.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure annual reports detail performance achievements of the centre including consideration of the priorities and all targets as described in the centre's business plan.

Program Delivery

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

- The principal and leadership team, through extensive collaborative planning with staff from the three campuses have ensured that programs delivered align with the Western Australian Curriculum. All learning programs are embedded with specific language strategies which address the individualised needs of students who have been identified with a SLI.
- Reporting to parents is in accordance with requirements of *School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1997* and the Department of Education. The centre has planned to report against the Western Australian Curriculum in Semester 1 2017.
- The centre has developed policies and procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of students in classrooms; while playing outside and during excursions and incursions conducted at the centre. Student safety and welfare policies include procedures relating to bus pick-up and drop-off for students who travel to school on Public Transport Authority buses. The centre works closely with bus drivers and education assistants who travel on the buses to ensure that K–3 students arrive and leave school safely. Parents acknowledged the centre's bus safety procedures and appreciated the way in which student safety was managed.
- The pastoral care needs of students are well catered for through constant communication between teachers, parents and the student services team which includes a psychologist, chaplain and speech pathologists. Strong tripartite relationships exist between the centre, parents and students. Each student takes home a daily communication book and parents are encouraged to contact the centre immediately if any issues arise. A Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is administered to each student and results indicate improved emotional resiliency as the students progress through the school program. The centre's culture is characterised by concern, compassion and care for every student.
- Teachers from the centre and the outreach services staff support students for 12 months when they exit the program and transition to mainstream either at the end of kindergarten, Year 1, 2 or 3. Transition arrangements include orientation tours at the mainstream school, a handover file for teachers and ongoing support for the mainstream teachers and exiting students. The level of care and concern for students demonstrated by school staff was such that parents acknowledged they went through a 'grieving' process when their child exited the centre.

- The main campus, co-located with Belmay Primary School, is surrounded by a fence and gates are locked during the school day. Staff acknowledge this is not desirable in terms of providing a welcoming environment but it has been deemed necessary to ensure the safety of students.
- The centre presents a challenging scenario for efficient day-to-day management of the centre's program of delivery across three separate campuses. In addition to this the centre's outreach service staff operate in the greater South Metropolitan and Goldfields Education Regions. Teaching staff acknowledged that the principal and leadership team manage these complexities by distributing the leadership, developing strong teams and delegating responsibilities across each of the three campuses. Staff from all three campuses felt 'as one' with each other and agreed that all campuses were managed in the same manner. Teaching and non-teaching staff are given time to plan for improvement in areas identified through ongoing assessment. Professional learning that links to performance management and identified centre needs is offered to all staff and they are encouraged to undertake leadership roles including cost-centre management and the role of campus liaison officer.
- To encourage students to attend school regularly the centre offers a Breakfast Club which is sponsored through a partnership with Foodbank. The chaplain and school psychologist counsel students whose attendance rates place their education at risk. Parents receive an SMS or a telephone call if their child does not arrive at school and incentives are given for those who attend school on a regular basis.
- Security of information about students attending the centre is paramount. The centre receives requests from a wide range of medical, paramedical and others who are involved in supporting children with SLI. In response to requests for student information the centre has established and implemented explicit protocols which ensures student confidentiality is not breached.
- The centre's culture ensures that inclusion and care for individuals is paramount. It is evident that programs and practices which promote a safe and secure school environment are supportive of the centre's values and are sustainable.

Areas of strength

- The principal and staff have created a collaborative and inclusive environment which provides students with appropriate learning opportunities in a safe and secure setting.
- The day-to-day management of the centre is equitable and inclusive.
- The distributed leadership model ensures that staff have opportunities to enhance their leadership skills and that programs are sustainable.

Resourcing and Support

How well has the school established systems to monitor and review the allocation of resources to meet strategic and operational priorities?

Findings

- The principal, together with the principal of the host school, Belmay Primary School, modified the one-line budget to best fit the unique resourcing demands of both schools. The use of student-centred funding was negotiated using a percentage based approach. The model has proved to be mutually beneficial to both schools delivering streamlined, equitable and effective distribution of resources.
- Resources are directed to areas of need based on reflective practices which continually review programs. Teachers and non-teaching staff across all three campuses and the outreach service staff reported their classrooms were well resourced and they could negotiate with the finance committee to obtain additional resources if required. The centre's *Change 2* committee also provides a forum for ideas and an avenue to direct requests to the finance committee for resources.
- The centre buys additional hours for the chaplain and school psychologist. This funding will be 'topped up' if there is a need to increase time for either position. Feedback from staff and parents indicated that the roles of both the psychologist and chaplain were highly valued and beneficial to students.
- To acknowledge the importance of incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into teaching and learning programs the centre has appointed an ICT specialist to work with K–3 students across all three of the centre's campuses.
- The workforce plan adequately identifies areas of current and future staffing requirements. The plan also acknowledges staff movements due to maternity leave and long service leave. Other areas in the workforce plan include:
 - increasing deputy principal time to an additional 0.8 FTE with a view to increasing it to a possible 1.0 FTE within the next three years
 - diverting 0.4 FTE teacher time to support outreach services
 - maintaining current staffing levels for specialist science, art and physical education staff

- maintaining 2.6 FTE Speech Pathology services, but with a desire to increase time in the next two years.
- The workforce plan identifies the FTE staff allocation at each of the three campuses: Cloverdale, East Maddington and Armadale. Additionally, it identifies the FTE for Duties Other Than Teaching, administration and the outreach team. Forecasting student numbers information is used to gauge staffing requirements at the three campuses.
- The workforce plan documents a long-term and sustainable approach to human resource management. School resourcing is sustainable as budgets are well managed, endorsed by the school board and facilitated through the finance committee.

Areas of strength

- The equitable sharing of human and financial resources across all three centre campuses.
- The negotiated financial agreement with the host school which enables the centre and Belmay Primary School to share costs, replace equipment and manage utilities on a co-located site.

School Board

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

Findings

- The school board membership is representative of the school community and there is a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the *School Education Act 1999*. Board membership includes representation from the community, parent groups and centre staff. Members of the board have undergone induction training; their processes are well established and they have input into the centre's strategic planning. The turnover of parent representation is relatively high as the centre's K–3 students exit the centre at different year levels once their language skills have consolidated.
- In undertaking its legislated responsibilities, the board endorses the DPA, business plan, annual reports and the school budget. It has input into budget development, school review practices and processes to determine satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students. Evidence from board minutes; endorsed school documents and discussions with parents assured the reviewers that the board was fulfilling its responsibilities.
- In relation to the budget, the board endorsed increased funding for ICT resourcing and agreed to the extension of support time given to exiting students. The board examined the results of the 2014 parent and staff surveys and were unanimous in noting that there were high levels of satisfaction in relation to the centre and its operations.
- The board communicates with the broader community, but there are considerable challenges meeting with parents as students are transported from many different locations. However, the board communicates to the broader community electronically, personally and via the School Bulletin.
- The board receives reports, audits and reviews including relevant monthly financial reports; results of school audits and reviews and regular advice on school performance and student improvement targets, as detailed in the centre's business plan.
- Board members noted that in relation to the centre's self-assessment they felt comfortable in interrogating data, asking questions and seeking further clarification of information if required.

- The board had not reviewed its own performance, but agreed to consider to investigate ways that this could be done during 2017.
- The board chair noted that 'the dedication of staff was above and beyond expected and that the staff had a passion for our children'. Reviewers believe that the board undertakes its legislated responsibilities; has established effective practices; is extremely supportive of the centre and that its membership and practices are sustainable.

Areas of strength

- Board members demonstrated a high level of commitment to ensuring that they have input into the centre's strategic direction; performs its legislated role and is a strong advocate for the centre.

Areas for improvement

- The school board to develop a reflective process to review its performance.
- Consider broadening community representation on the board to include additional people who would be strong advocates for the centre over time.

Conclusion

The leadership team, staff and board work collaboratively to improve student learning in a culture that values individuals, promotes excellence and develops positive relationships in a stimulating learning environment.

A dedicated and reflective staff led by the principal and her leadership team ensures that challenging and innovative educational programs delivered through a language enriched curriculum reflect the individual needs of all students.

The board and parents are extremely supportive and value the centre's programs that cater for individual, group and whole-school needs.

The centre's vision 'Language for Life' drives the centre's planning and is evident in all aspects of its operations and improved student outcomes.

Reviewers believe that the centre has met its commitment to its DPA and with its sustainable practices is well placed to move forward into its next planning cycle.

Declaration

We confirm the information provided is, to the best of our knowledge, true and correct, based on the verification of the evidence provided by South East Metropolitan Language Development Centre for the Department of Education Services' independent review.

The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



Ms Donelle Church, Lead Reviewer

3 May 2017

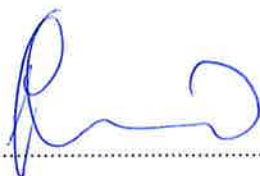
Date



Ms Barbara Browne, Reviewer

3 May 2017

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

9/5/2017

Date