Rostrata Primary School

2015

Independent Review Findings
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 Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Tom Campbell
Board Chair: Mr Aaron Lindsell
School Location: Rostrata Ave Willetton WA 6155
School Classification: PS Class 6
Number of Students: 784
Reviewers: Mrs Kerry Usher (Lead) and Mr John Garnaut
Review Dates: 12 and 13 August 2015

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General 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?

Rostrata Primary School is located in the southern suburb of Willetton 18km from the Perth CBD and adjacent to major transport routes. The school opened in 1983 to serve the expansion of housing in the suburb. The majority of Rostrata Primary School students transition to Willetton Senior High School. From its foundation the school grew rapidly reaching a population of 1000 students at its height.

The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1120 which places it in the highest band. The school enrolment is strongly multicultural with 37 different cultural backgrounds and 48% of students identified as having English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D). A small cohort of students are Aboriginal (1.3%) and 2.25% of students have a disability and receive additional support for their learning.

The school enrolment at 784 has been trending upwards since 2011 and the transition of Year 7 to secondary in 2015 has made minimal difference to the total. The proximity to transport and major infrastructure and demand from parents wanting to be located within the intake area of Willetton Senior High School are factors that contribute to the trend towards higher enrolments which is consistent across all year groups. High student performance and a reputation for quality educational outcomes for students enrolled at Willetton Senior High School impacts positively on housing prices and demand in the Rostrata area. Overall student attendance is high at over 94% and similar to like schools. Regular attendance well in excess of 80% has been recorded since 2012 and transiency is low at 12%.

Rostrata Primary School has a large staff commensurate with its enrolment. Staff are experienced and in many cases long-serving at the school. The flexibility of IPS has allowed for decisions to be made in recruiting staff to specific positions and also allowed for the retention and possible permanency of fixed term staff. Retirements, long term leave and long service leave liability management are key workforce issues managed by the administration and staff.
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The school has strong partnerships with parents, the community and local schools. In addition the school has participated in the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives by establishing partnerships with Scitech, CSIRO, The University of WA, Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, 3D Printing Studios, Sunwind Solar and Bojia International, a Chinese Solar Company. The projects undertaken with partners also support the school as a Teacher Development School (TDS) offering science professional learning in-school and to other schools.

The Rostrata School Board has made steady progress since formation and is exercising its responsibilities and accountabilities for oversight of school performance and financial management. It has also engaged in initiating programs to support community engagement and been involved in key decisions such as the Bring Your Own Device initiative. Membership has been relatively stable with six parent representatives, five staff members including the Principal and a community representative. The Board is currently engaged in the development of the next Business Plan.

The school has been cautious with its resource allocations from the Student Centred Funding model and has adopted a conservative approach to staffing and expenditure. The Board reports that the school is in a good financial position and the school is well resourced to maintain and improve its wide range of academic and non-academic 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 process of self-review at Rostrata Primary School is a multi-level approach based on responsibilities of staff as members of a range of committees and groups. The School Management Committee consisting of the leadership team and staff representatives from each cluster team is the body responsible for school review. The school has developed a Business Plan Monitoring Schedule that outlines data collection tools, personnel or associated committee’s responsibility and dates for reporting findings. The schedule covers all focus areas/strategies for student improvement targets and priority areas in the Business Plan. The school has also introduced the Grow and Glow framework based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards to assess what is working well in the Business Plan and what needs further development.

Rostrata Primary School staff have also made judgements about its performance in meeting the requirements of the DPA with links to the Business Plan and self-review. This self-review Summary of Reflections and Actions Related to the Business Plan, DPA and School Self-Assessment provides reflection and analysis against each of the DPA requirements in teaching and learning; student performance monitoring; resourcing and support; School Board; Business Plan; program delivery; and system requirements.

The rigorous self-review of the Business Plan targets and priorities reflects a detailed analysis of student achievement; social and emotional development; teaching, learning and leadership; and, innovative, inclusive and accountable culture. Student achievement and progress data and analysis reveals the high standard of student achievement and progress over time, particularly at the Year 3 level and in numeracy across the year groups. The school analysis provides direction for teaching and learning, notably in the area of students at risk, where attention to teaching and innovative programs has demonstrated success in adding value to student performance.

The school’s self-review identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement at all levels. The strong shared management structure ensures that all staff are engaged in making and responding to judgements on the school’s performance in the Business Plan.
This is exemplified by the Annual Report which provides detailed data and summary information; analysis of student achievement and priorities; an outline of performance strengths and areas of concern, with strategies to improve performance.
School Performance—Student Learning

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

Rostrata Primary School offers a curriculum that reflects the breadth and balance of the Australian Curriculum and the West Australian Curriculum, with an appropriate priority focus on literacy and numeracy. A feature of the culture at the school is a commitment to regular, evidenced-based and critical self-assessment of student performance data and curriculum programs, and a willingness to respond to the findings of this self-assessment.

Targets for student achievement in literacy and numeracy are articulated in Priority Two of the Rostrata Primary School Business Plan 2013–2015. Minutes of board meetings, school documentation and staff interviews confirmed the annual monitoring and reporting of the extent of achievement of these targets. Some targets relate to National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data, particularly focusing on taking account of the downward trend in reading scores, improving grammar and punctuation scores, maintaining standards in numeracy and improving the number of students in higher proficiency bands. The reviewers verify school self-assessment that indicated achievement of the majority of these targets.

Further targets of the Business Plan in priority two, three and four relate to implementation of the Australian Curriculum in literacy and numeracy, associated ‘best practice’ teaching strategies, information technologies being implemented in classrooms, and the implementation of innovative programs. Discussions with teachers verified school self-assessment indicating that implementation of the Australian Curriculum was consistent with required timelines. The reviewers confirmed that strategies exist to monitor teaching and learning strategies such as the use of information technologies and implementation of special programs such as the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. Recent introduction of school administrator class ‘walk throughs’ and ‘peer observation’ complement existing performance management processes to monitor teacher practice.

In monitoring and reporting on a number of targets of the Business Plan the school found it difficult to report on the extent to which targets had been achieved because of the way they had been articulated. A number of targets lacked specificity, some lacked sufficient challenge, whilst others did not describe the extent of improvement expected.
The next Business Plan should include targets that are more specific, outline the extent of achievement expected, and ensure sufficient challenge.

Curriculum K–6 operational plans are well established for learning areas including targets that are regularly monitored. Curriculum committees, with staff representation from each school block, report annually on progress in achieving targets of the operational plans. Through the use of a self-review framework (Glow and Grow) staff analyse student performance data and revise operational plans for the following year. The learning area operational plans and scope and sequence documents provide a whole-school coherence to curriculum planning across the years of schooling.

Standards of student academic performance in 2014 in Years 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy, as indicated by standardised test information such as NAPLAN, are as expected or above expected when compared to Western Australian like schools (Schools Online data). Year 3 data in particular was outstanding in 2014 with two of the five test areas being above expected. Longitudinal analysis of Year 3 data indicates very good performance in particular in spelling and numeracy with above-expected performance over the past three years. Data from the My School® website, which compares student performance with national ‘statistically similar’ schools, confirmed this good student performance.

Interviews with staff from K–2, and class visits, confirmed the cohesive and aligned curriculum that is being implemented in the early years of schooling to achieve these high standards, including agreed implementation of Guided Reading, Mini-lit, Multi-lit and explicit teaching. Staff use the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to guide their planning and practice and reported their progress in application of the National Quality Framework (NQF) for Early Childhood Education and Care. Implementation of the EYLF and the NQF, including the National Quality Standard (NQS), has resulted in a more structured focus on learning outcomes through play. Staff reported their participation in professional learning relating to the NQF and NQS.

Standardised test information from the Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) data indicates that students were performing as expected in Year 5 and 7 science and society and environment in 2013. Due to its discontinuation by the Department of Education, no WAMSE data is available beyond this date.
Forty-eight per cent of students at the school are recognised as EAL/D students. One specialist teacher and two education assistants support language programs for these students. Staff indicated, from anecdotal evidence and student achievement data, that where these students have been at the school for a number of years, their English language competence demonstrates very significant improvement. The EAL/D students add diversity and cultural awareness to the school learning environment.

Language programs at the school are impressive. All students learn Italian and can continue with this language if they enrol at Willetton Senior High School. Students can also choose to participate in the Chinese (Mandarin) language program as an extra-curricular activity, and can participate in extension Japanese language programs, through the language hub programs of Burrendah Primary School and Willetton Primary School.

Interviews with staff and class visits demonstrated the processes for differentiation of the curriculum to cater for students with varying abilities and interests, including those with learning difficulties and those capable of very high levels of academic performance. Processes for the planning of individual education plans (IEPs) and group education plans (GEPs) are well established and informed by relevant student performance data such as NAPLAN, On-Entry assessment, Mini-lit and Multi-lit. Teachers displayed their class-level planning demonstrating the in-class differentiation that occurs.

Students capable of very high levels of academic performance, including gifted and talented students, are catered for through a range of programs and initiatives such as PEAC, extension groups, 'Blue Ribbon' writing awards, *Tournaments of Minds*, the *F1 in Schools™ Technology Challenge* and Year 6 science extension. Teachers' planning includes the explicit teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), critical and creative thinking and cooperative learning strategies.

The school science program has been recognised nationally. A well-resourced science room and innovative program is extending and inspiring students to think scientifically through an inquiry approach. Parents acknowledged the valuable contribution of the program and ex-students frequently visit the science room.

Specialist programs operate effectively for drama, music, Italian language and physical education. Three school bands, a choir and programs of the School of Instrumental Music complement the core curriculum of the school.
Observations of the *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program* (for Years 4–6) and discussions with staff confirmed its valuable contribution to integrated teaching and learning, and the creation of student interest in vegetable gardening and the preparation of nutritious food. The program integrates learning outcomes from the English, mathematics, technology and health areas of learning in particular. The excellent facilities encourage community participation in programs such as *My Rostrata Kitchen Rules*.

Classroom observations indicated the variety of technologies being used to support curriculum implementation. Staff appeared confident, with a willingness to engage with new technologies. The recent introduction of the *Bring Your Own Device* program is being monitored for its effectiveness, with 25% of students participating. The School Board indicated the need for ongoing focus on learning technologies in the next Business Plan.
School Performance—Quality of the Learning Environment

*How well has the school performed in creating an environment that promotes learning and well-being for all students and the attainment of the school vision?*

The Business Plan outlines the vision as ‘Rostrata Primary School is a caring, inclusive, enterprising and innovative learning community that empowers students to reach their potential and become resilient, independent, lifelong learners’. To support that vision the school ethos is embodied in the motto ‘CARE’: Cooperation, Achievement, Respect and Endeavour. This motto underpins numerous initiatives that recognise and celebrate the diversity of the school population.

Priority One of the Business Plan is Student Social and Emotional Development with the focus areas of social and emotional well-being and resilience, and social and emotional intelligence. The school has implemented initiatives to create a learning environment that is supportive and inclusive of all students. The major program is Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). A framework for the program is being implemented to enable students ‘to participate in a safe, positive and accepting school environment’. A committee supports staff in the operations of PBS and provides leadership of the program. It also delivers professional learning and guidance and monitors the impact on student behaviour through feedback from staff, students and community. This process enables staff to monitor any concerns raised about behaviour and in particular aspects of bullying. Reviewers noted that the school had expressed concerns over 18 students who had identified as being subjected to bullying. Proactive support was being provided to the students together with strategies to minimise any impact on well-being.

Reviewers met with the PBS committee members who affirmed the school’s commitment to creating and maintaining a safe supportive learning environment. Initiatives such as the Rainbows support group to assist students who have suffered loss in their life through death, divorce and stressful transitions have trained staff to support them.

The school has a group of students who perform the role of peer mediators for students who may be involved in conflicts with other students. In meeting with the peer mediators the reviewers noted how enthusiastic and knowledgeable they were about their roles. Mediators had to make application for the position and receive training to assist them in their role.
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This process has been deemed successful by the school with conflicts resolved and a reduction in reports to duty teachers. The initiative is clearly working for students with the peer mediators benefiting from their training and leadership responsibility in the school. Peer mediators also have associated roles such as running Harmony and Bullying No Way days as well as involvement in the school's community service Project CARE. Project CARE has been initiated by the School Board to promote community service. There are two dimensions to the project:

- whole-class activities where students take on projects to help others such as the Australian Food Appeal and assistance for the Nepal earthquake victims
- individual community service where all students are encouraged to perform at least 100 hours of service during their time at the school.

Strategies supporting the PBS and the explicit focus on Cooperation Achievement, Respect and Endeavour are clearly evident in classrooms. Reviewers experienced aspects of the program in classroom visits throughout the school. Students were able to readily articulate the work they were doing as a part of CARE and teachers commented positively on the impact of the values and beliefs teaching throughout the school. The classroom environment was notable for the variety of means and media used to illustrate the CARE project being embedded in practice.

The school has also been proactive in developing a cyber-safety program in response to the risk posed by the Bring Your Own Device program for IT initiated by the school.

Intervention for students requiring additional support is a feature of the school. Reviewers were able to examine documentation detailing successful achievement by students at risk. Support programs for identified students target literacy and numeracy development, particularly for those who are of concern in on-entry testing and for those below, at or close to minimum benchmarks in NAPLAN assessments. The school uses IEPs and GEPs developed for students by staff in conjunction with the learning support team. The reviewers were able to verify the successes and improvements made to student learning.
Evidence from analysis of at-risk students who attended Rostrata Primary School from Years 3–5 (2012–2014) and Years 5–7 (2012–2014) showed that students identified as being at or below benchmark in the 2012 NAPLAN testing made progress greater than mean progress for Year 3–5 and substantial progress for Year 5–7 over the two-year period. This validates the school belief that all students can ‘achieve their potential’.

There is a strong commitment to the engagement of parents in the life of the school. Parent participation is encouraged in as many activities as possible. Reviewers met with a representative group of parents who expressed their high level of satisfaction with the education provided for their children by the school. They articulated how well staff catered for students with diverse learning needs and the manner in which all cultures and abilities were embraced in the inclusive environment of the school. Parents felt welcome in the school and the CARE focus was acknowledged as an important feature of the learning environment. Participants acknowledged the leadership of the Principal as being a major factor in their assessment of how well the school was performing and in the positive learning environment created.

Surveys are conducted regularly to gauge parent and community satisfaction. The school values and responds to parent views and reports actions in the Annual Report. Analysis from the surveys demonstrates high levels of satisfaction with the standard of education provided and the level of care for students. Reviewers noted the positive responses and the welcoming approach for new student enrollees, particularly as many do not have English as their first language. The school has also acknowledged the identification of a number of areas requiring further action including improving communication, more support for at-risk students including enrichment and further steps to minimise bullying under the Positive Behaviour Support program.

Community partnerships are a strength of Rostrata Primary School. The parent survey distributed in 2014 noted that parental involvement was a common thread within the survey. Parents felt that the school welcomes their involvement. The school has a significant number of parents and supporters involved in activities including classroom support, school banking, canteen, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden, literacy, science, the School Board and the Parents & Citizens’ Association (P&C). Discussions with parents and board members revealed that the school leadership and staff interact successfully, and regularly, with both the P&C committee and the School Board.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

Rostrata Primary School is entering a critical period with the long-serving (18 years) Principal due to retire in 2015. The Principal has overseen a successful period for the school, and established a culture, structures and processes that have ensured stability and ongoing school improvement.

The culture of the school is one that supports a very effective teaching and learning environment. Staff are professional, work collaboratively, are open to challenging their personal practice and have excellent relationships with each other, students and the parent community. A culture of respect and care pervades school operations, and decision-making at all levels is evidence-based and in consideration of accepted good practice. The inclusive philosophy caters for the educational needs of the 48% of students who are EAL/D.

School team structures are effectively established to provide opportunities for whole-school, year-level and phase-of-schooling collaborative planning. The School Management Committee, with representation from each of the blocks, meets regularly to provide whole-school direction for school development. Curriculum teams, with representation from the phase of learning areas, meet regularly to provide whole-school direction for learning area planning. Staff are active in collaborative planning through both formal and informal processes, and indicated the desire for more formal collaborative time. School leadership acknowledges the value of providing resources for collaborative meeting time for staff, and the finite school resources available for this purpose.

The distributed leadership structure of the school effectively supports student learning. Learning area, phase-of-schooling and ‘block’ leaders coordinate meetings that focus on improving teaching and learning, and collaborate in enabling communication across the school to achieve cohesive program planning. Staff leadership skills are developed through this distributed structure.

School planning processes are comprehensive, involve all staff, and occur with consideration of relevant student performance data and education research.
The Business Plan provides effective three-year strategic direction for school improvement, whilst operational plans and scope and sequence documents provide more detailed annual direction. School documentation verified that school plans are reviewed annually utilising the team structures of the school. Planning processes would be enhanced by the writing of targets that are more specific, articulating clearly the extent of improvement sought for cohort groups. Discussions with teaching staff verified the embedded self-review practices operating at the school which inform planning to improve the performance of student cohorts and individual students.

Minutes of school board meetings and discussions with board members confirmed the Board's contribution to sustainable school development. It has an active role in school governance, and members understand the separation of governance and school management. The Board is active in ratifying the Business Plan and school budgets, and in participating in school policy development and school review. It has added value to school development through a range of proactive initiatives such as Teacher Fellowships for professional learning, the Snowball Project (Project Care—community engagement) and support for specialist programs in science, music and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden. Succession planning for board membership is evident. The Board has implemented and responded to a comprehensive self-assessment process that has informed its effectiveness in planning, policy, structure and function. The Board Chair and members acknowledged the multicultural background of students and expressed the aim of developing representation from all sections of the school community in the future. The reviewers affirm the direction being sought as board membership and function would be enhanced through representation of a wider range of parents as board members.

Sustainable staff development is possible through effective performance management processes where staff reflect against the AITSL standards for effective teaching, set goals for personal improvement, and plan related professional learning opportunities. The recently implemented 'administrator walk throughs' and 'peer observation' strategies complement and inform the performance management. Staff reported that they valued these processes, indicating the high degree of trust and the good relationships that exist between staff.
The school Workforce Development Plan reflects the forward thinking of school leadership to continually improve student learning through the staff profile. The plan indicates the school’s strategic approach to a number of pending retirements, reducing staff leave liability, staff appointments and managing flexible staff work options.

Meeting with a representative group of parents confirmed the positive reputation of the school. The parent group was well informed about school operations and aware of school communication strategies that include the use of technology (e.g. Connect, Mail Chimp). The P&C, through community events, has raised funds that have made a significant contribution to improving the school learning environment. School documentation indicated the responsiveness of the school to the findings of the recent parent survey, and the contribution of parent, student and staff survey analysis to school planning. A number of community partnerships such as CSIRO Science, Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, solar energy companies and print studios also add value to the learning environment.
Conclusion

Rostrata Primary School aspires to success for each student and the development of responsible, respectful, cooperative and caring members of the community.

The school is delivering on its aspirations and providing a high standard of education and positive environment that is supported through an enriching curriculum. The school is notable for its academic performance, the focus on quality teaching and learning, the integration of IT, its focus on science and the range of specialist programs available to students. The culture is welcoming to parents and students and focuses on a strong set of values and beliefs that are embedded and visible in the life of the school.

The leadership of the school has been critical in the development of high academic standards and enriching programs developed to provide an innovative and quality education for its students. The Principal has developed a strong collaborative team focus and utilised and managed staff skills in the interests of ensuring all students are able to realise their potential. The high level of parent support and satisfaction with the standards of education provided has made it a school of choice. The challenge for the staff and the community will be in a successful transition to a new principal and the maintenance of the school’s performance and standing.
Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the cohesive curriculum that is being implemented in the early years of schooling to achieve high standards in literacy and numeracy
- the commitment to regular evidence-based and critical self-assessment of student performance data and curriculum programs, and a willingness to respond to the findings of self-assessment
- the Principal and staff for the development of a learning environment that recognises the academic and social and emotional needs of students and promotes high levels of care in supporting student achievement, progress and engagement
- the leadership and staff for the well planned and implemented Positive Behaviour Support program that is having an encouraging impact on student behaviour and the development of student well-being
- the Principal of the school for his committed leadership and development of a school-wide shared responsibility model for student learning and success
- the sustainability of school good practice and the potential for ongoing school improvement resulting from the excellent school culture; and effective governance, team, leadership and planning structures and processes.

Areas for Improvement

The following area for improvement is identified:

the next Business Plan should include targets that are more specific, outline the extent of achievement expected, and ensure sufficient challenge.
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 Rostrata 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.

Kerry Usher, Lead Reviewer
9 September 2015

John Garnaut, Reviewer
9 September 2015

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services
14/7/15