



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Makybe Rise Primary School

2015

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 Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Steph McDonald
Board Chair:	Mr Drew Nugent
School Location:	Makybe Drive Baldivis WA 6171
School Classification:	PS Class 5
Number of Students:	1119
Reviewers:	Ms Janine Milton (Lead) and Ms Megan Phillips
Review Dates:	19 and 20 October 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?

Makybe Rise Primary School opened in 2011 in the suburb of Baldivis, currently the fastest growing suburb in Australia. Initially, the school catered for students from Kindergarten to Year 2; growing to include Year 3 in 2012 and in 2013, the school doubled in size to include Kindergarten to Year 7 classes.

In 2013, the school became an Independent Public School (IPS) and also became the first AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) primary school in Western Australia. The school provides an up-to-date contemporary environment for student learning founded upon a strategic culture of empowerment through shared community decision making, flexibility to respond to the aspirations of the parent community and transparent, rigorous self-assessment processes.

In 2015, the school, with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1020, provides for 1119 students from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Semester two 2015 student data shows an enrolment of 560 male and 559 female students, including 16 (5%) indigenous students and 25 students receiving Disability Resourcing Services (Schools Plus) support. There are an increasing number of students requiring speech and language intervention on entry to kindergarten.

Over the past three years, the school has had an average attendance rate of 92.7%, higher than the State average of 92.3% and slightly lower than the average in statistically similar schools of 93.3%.

In March 2015, the staffing profile included a Principal and four Deputy Principals in the leadership team, 62 teachers (56.1 Full Time Equivalent [FTE]) and 35 support staff (27.8 FTE). The *Workforce Plan 2014–2016* identifies enrolment fluctuations, leave liability and staffing profiles as potentially impacting on teaching and learning. The use of IPS flexibility enables the Principal to select staff with skills and experience to match the school's needs and culture.

The Board includes four parents, four staff and two community members, one of whom is the local Member of Parliament. Under the leadership of a parent representative chairperson, the Board members are growing in their understandings of their obligations as outlined in the DPA.

The school is equipped with the latest interactive technology to facilitate student learning and also features highly practical and flexible learning and teaching spaces.

The staff is committed to excellence in academic achievement. They have established literacy and numeracy partnerships ensuring curriculum at every year level is research-based and interrogated for validity and efficacy, underpinning the belief that every child can learn and that every child brings a contribution to the community.

Building a genuine sense of community partnership and belonging, forms a vital part of day-to-day operations. Teachers, students and families all enjoy the mutual respect and caring, essential for growth and learning. They work together to accomplish a shared mission of educating friendly, accomplished and active children.

The moral compass for the school is set by the school's program—TRIBES Four Agreements: attentive listening; appreciation; right to participate; and mutual respect. There is a belief that the social/emotional curriculum is equally as important as the academic curriculum ensuring that every child every day experiences collaboration, inclusion and harmony.

The school is well resourced and enjoys the financial assistance of a proactive Parents and Citizens' Association to continually enhance the teaching and learning environment. Partnerships with Baldivis Secondary College, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Victoria University and local primary schools: Harmony, Baldivis and Comet Bay provide valuable professional and practical opportunities for networking and educational sharing across all curriculum areas.

Discussions with members of the community confirmed strong parent, student and staff satisfaction with the educational excellence being sought for students.

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?

Makybe Rise Primary School's measure of success is for every child, every day, to experience a sense of significance, belonging, enjoyment and challenge so that they may graduate into the wider community with the knowledge and skills to achieve their hopes, dreams and aspirations.

School leaders work collaboratively with staff to regularly collect, interrogate and analyse a range of student performance data in a wide range of academic and non-academic areas and use this information to inform their programs and practices. Their structure of three questions, "What are we seeking to achieve? How well are we doing? And how can we improve?" ensures appropriate accountability and responsiveness.

The staff has developed two key processes that sustain rigour in the self-review. The first is disciplined dialogue, where analysis of information is structured, thorough, triangulated and collaborative. The second process is that of developing the concept of effect size, so that impact of particular programs or approaches can be determined, facilitating critical reflection and selection of the most effective approaches.

The staff has conducted annual school self-reviews regarding the achievement of Business Plan targets and the implementation of strategies and milestones from 2012 to 2015. They also conducted and documented reviews of all learning areas and special programs using a scaffold of findings, evidence and future plans. These records of school-based reviews demonstrate a rigorous and comprehensive approach to school self-review and the provision of an accurate record of achievement and progress over time. The recording of planning intentions demonstrates a strong culture of responsive planning.

The School Board is provided with relevant data and reports to enable it to be assured of sound student academic and non-academic achievement and progress across the school. The Board demonstrates the capacity for critical reflection and strategic planning so important in sound governance.

Comprehensive reports of student achievement, progress, program highlights and recommendations for the following year are provided to the community in the Annual School Reports.

The School Board and the Principal have reflected on the implementation of the DPA, and based on evidence gained during this review, demonstrate their understanding of the requirements and compliance with elements contained therein.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The Business Plan 2014–15 outlines a school vision, beliefs and mission centred on the concept of “every child, every day”.

The staff have developed three pillars to guide their actions. These reflect their commitment to explicit teaching and learning and an emphasis on academic excellence and social and emotional growth.

Operational plans and targets were developed in selected areas of the three pillars: Academic and Instructional Excellence; Culture and Community; and Leadership.

Academic and Instructional Excellence—English and Mathematics

Three targets were each developed for both English and numeracy, based on annual National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test results. These targets were worded as progress targets with performance monitored from 2013 to 2015. Although very valid, they proved less informative than anticipated due to the sharp rise in enrolment over this time making comparative analysis problematic.

- Improving the percentage of Year 3 and Year 5 students in the top proficiency bands for grammar and punctuation, and numeracy by 2015 relative to 2013 data. This was achieved with gains of 8–12% more students in the top proficiency bands in both tests.
- Performance of Year 3 students tested in 2013 to exceed the relative achievement in all areas when tested again in Year 5 (2015). This was measured by school performance compared with the predicted mean. This target was achieved in numeracy, reading, and punctuation and grammar but not in writing and spelling.
- Improve the Year 3 and Year 5 trend lines in reading and numeracy by 2015 relative to 2013 targets. This was achieved in both tests in Year 3 but in neither test in Year 5.

Reviewers verify the staff's overall judgement that students are making good progress in English and numeracy, with high standards being achieved in early childhood and progress being made from Years 3 to 6.

The staff monitor student performance and program delivery across all learning areas with reports provided in health, science, the arts, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education, and gifted and talented education. Report data demonstrates that almost all students are achieving at or above expected standards in these areas. This demonstrates that the school is developing a wide, effective and responsive curriculum that caters for the diverse needs of their students.

Culture and Community - Attendance, AVID

Attendance

Two targets were developed by the staff to improve attendance:

- To increase the rate of attendance to compare favourably with regional and State attendance rates. This target was achieved in 2013 and 2014 and it is on track to be achieved in 2015. In 2014, the school had an average attendance of 92.5%; higher than like schools and the State average.
- To decrease the percentage of students who are deemed 'at-risk' with their attendance (students attending less than 90% of the time). This was achieved with a total decrease of 14.5% students at risk from 2012 (33% at risk) to semester 1, 2015 (18.5% at risk). The decrease in the percentage of students in the indicated 'at risk' category (students attending 70-90% of the time) from 28.1% in 2012 to 15.5% in 2015 signifies the effectiveness of targeted approaches. This is an outstanding achievement.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

AVID is a school-wide approach designed to close the achievement gap and increase the number of students who enrol and succeed in higher education and their lives beyond school. As it was introduced into the school in 2013, it is in its early stages of development.

The 2014–15 AVID target was to increase the number of students rated most highly for effort and student success skills. The staff used the semester reporting item “Students set goals and work towards them with perseverance” as a monitoring tool from Semester 1, 2013 to Semester 1, 2015. The increase of students reported to be consistently showing attitude, behaviour and effort towards achieving this goal has been exponential—from approximately 50% to nearly 90% of students.

The school also developed specific monitoring processes for four key AVID strategies: organisational tool, agenda/ planner, note taking and levels of thinking/questioning. While all strategies demonstrated improvement, note taking showed the most significant growth in students’ skills and understanding. The school demonstrated responsive actions to refine implementation of less effective strategies in the 2015 operational plan.

Reviewers verify the staff’s overall self-review conclusion that despite rapid enrolment growth, transiency and changing community demographics, the standards of learning across the school for all learning areas is extremely positive.

The achievement of other Business Plan targets in the pillars of Culture and Community and Leadership are described in the next section of the report.

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 school's vision, beliefs and mission that "every child belongs, every child excels and every child rises to challenge" is explicitly incorporated into every facet of the school operations. In interviews with school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, parents and students, they were all able to articulate the school vision and their actions within the school reflected a sound commitment to these values.

The school displays an embedded sustainable, caring and inclusive culture that promotes the learning of an increasingly diverse student population. Underpinning the culture is a strong belief in and positive response to the school's AVID program that provides a foundation approach to underpin instruction, culture, leadership and systems in the school. The explicit instructional components of WICOR (Writing to Learn, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organisation and Reading to learn) create a structured and explicit framework for students and teachers. Through interviews, reviewers found that teachers, students and parents connect with the concept of developing a growth mindset, leading to the development of an engaged learning community.

Leadership—Expert teachers

The Principal has been very strategic in developing a distributed leadership model, with an empowered team of five executives, teachers leading curriculum planning and development, a coordinator of non-teaching staff and a growing number of teachers being trained as school-based AVID coaches. In 2012, an AVID site team was established with four teachers and two school leaders. In 2015, the site team has 19 members, including a coordinator and 15 staff trained and active as AVID coaches. This growth is a planned and deliberate strategy, outlined in the Business Plan and with a target of increasing the number of AVID coaches within the school.

The AVID program is greatly strengthened by the continuation of the program in the Baldivis Secondary College where most of the students attend for their secondary education, creating a coherent K–12 approach.

Another Business Plan leadership target was to increase the number of Level 3 teachers in the school. This target has been met with three Level 3 teachers currently on staff whereas there were no teachers with this status in 2011. Reviewers were impressed with the number of staff who are engaged in higher degrees through research in their particular focus area in the school. This includes a strategic partnership with Edith Cowan University enabling five staff to participate in a Masters degree by research on the AVID program. This models the life-long learning focus and a growth mindset that underpins the school's philosophy.

Teachers collaborate and support each other through year-level teams and learning area teams, creating a coordinated whole-school strategy for curriculum development. Teachers are enthusiastic about the approach and their flexibility to focus on areas pertinent to their respective year level and needs of the class, yet ensuring a coherent school-wide approach.

It was evident the school provides for the broader development of students through the provision of health and well-being programs, and the deliberate inclusion of excellent programs in specialist areas such as music, physical and health education and art. Learning area teams showed a passion for their subject areas and demonstrated a sound understanding of evidence-based planning, assessment and teaching in-line with the Australian Curriculum and Curriculum Scope and Sequence expectations.

The school incorporates a number of strategies aimed at building a strong socio-emotional learning focus at the school. This includes high expectations of students and families regarding attendance, dress code and behaviour. The school is proactive and has a no-blame, restorative approach to support families and students. The school has a calm and friendly feeling, with many parents and students stating that it still feels like a small school where individuals are valued and students feel safe and well supported.

TRIBES is a strong foundation program in the school, with underpinning agreements ensuring respectful interactions between all members of the school community. The four TRIBE student leaders are actively involved in leading cross-grade interactions, organisation of games during lunch breaks, support for students with difficulties, mediation of minor playground conflicts and sport carnival organisation.

The school has implemented a very impressive and supportive *First Six Weeks of School* program and every class starts the day with a morning meeting, based on the TRIBES agreements. This sets a positive tone for the day and signals to students and their parents that they belong and are cared for by their teachers and classmates.

Students have a variety of active leadership roles in the school; school leaders, TRIBES leaders, playground champions and media leaders. A teacher is assigned to assist student leaders and they meet each week. Student leaders who spoke with reviewers were polite, articulate and very positive about the school and the quality of their education.

The student services team provides additional support to students who are experiencing difficulty in learning or have behaviour or socio-emotional needs that require a personalised approach. The team consists of a deputy principal, the learning support coordinator, school psychologist and two special needs assistants. They coordinate individualised support for 34 students through a focused and well-coordinated case management approach, utilising the expertise of external agencies as required. Approximately 8.5% of the student population requires personalised learning plans and these are well coordinated and monitored.

In 2015, three intervention programs are in place focusing on speech and language, occupational therapy and literacy support. The school has allocated staffing and funding and has created effective partnerships with allied services to develop and sustain these important interventions.

The school has 28 education assistants, 15 focused on special needs of individual students and 13 working in early-childhood. Reviewers spoke with a small team of education assistants regarding their appreciation of the positive support they receive through the appointment of a coordinator who facilitates collaborative meetings, appropriate training and support.

Staff commented on the good leadership and organisation of the school, the focused approaches, the personalised and team support, the targeted and timely professional learning and the strong connection with the families and community as key reasons they liked working at the school and why it operated so well. Members of the board, students and parents all verified that these were key factors for the growing success of the school and their high level of satisfaction with it.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Conversations with the leadership team and the School Board, together with written documentation including the school self-review statements and Annual School Reports, highlighted embedded self-review processes and effective responsive planning. The multi-layered analysis of valid data by the leadership team, curriculum committees, learning phase teams and year-level teachers all collaborating under the AVID mode of operation and belief system, ensures a deep awareness of significant strengths and areas requiring adjustments to teaching and learning programs.

Central to the sustainability of the high level of teacher uptake of agreed school programs is the astute use of the school's one-line budget in order to support the AVID coaching model, provide associated professional learning and continue the distributed leadership model with associated collaborative teams. The Business Plan financial target of increasing the percentage of families paying the voluntary contributions from 33% in 2013 to 54% in 2015 assists these endeavours and demonstrates a growing level of parental satisfaction with the school.

Staff are proactively engaging in research to increase their own knowledge base and practical application of the work required to ensure that the school motto "every child, every day" is sustainable. The rewards of success are already observable not only in the learning beliefs of the students, staff and parents.

Board minutes, together with discussions with the Board Chair and parent members, demonstrate the Board's growing capacity to provide critical oversight of school performance. Although Board representatives articulated processes used to enable them to confidently fulfil their governance role, there was also an understanding that more could and would be expected of them as leaders of the parent body of the school.

Board members indicated a commitment to raise community understanding of their role and responsibilities through strategies including:

- 'in-document' endorsement of key statements including the Annual Report, Business Plan and Budget
- publishing responses to survey feedback in newsletters and on the website
- publishing board meeting summaries in available communication channels.

The School Board Chair and the Principal are commended for embedding a clear separation between governance and school operations underpinned by a commitment to negotiate and clarify the agenda in advance of each Board meeting.

Conversations with staff, School Board and parents highlighted the contribution of strong, committed and engaged leadership in guiding and sustaining school improvement. Leadership growth and development is encouraged through an expanded management structure that then drives and connects the intent of the DPA and the Business Plan into all aspects of the school's operations. The distributed leadership demonstrates a flexibility to be responsive to National and State imperatives such as the National Quality Standard (NQS). The distributed leadership model enables sustainable understandings of academic and non-academic standards guided by contextually and pedagogically aware team leaders and members.

The Principal is commended for her effective strategic, pastoral and collaborative oversight of the school's continuing growth and development. The uptake of the AVID philosophy and practice by the majority of members of staff, Board members and parents is testimony to the Principal's capacity to lead a coherent reform agenda.

The use of IPS staffing flexibility has enabled appointments to address identified workforce requirements while selecting staff willing to commit to the school's mission and values. Through this process the Principal is confident newly appointed staff will sustain existing whole-school teaching and learning processes and engage positively with the support provided through coaches and the team of dedicated professional leaders.

The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership Teaching standards guide the school's professional performance and development process. This includes team and individual reflection, planning, actions such as peer observation, coaching and/or professional learning followed by personalised evidence-based feedback regarding progress. The process supports the delivery of strategies as detailed in key documents including the Business Plan, strategic plan and whole-school curriculum operational processes. The collaborative, informed and caring culture among staff provides a strong sense of unity and confidence in their capacity for ongoing improvement. Staff interviewed commented that this process was supportive, productive and worthwhile. Non-teaching staff members also participate in structured performance management.

Well selected strategic partnerships, in particular with the universities and other local schools, augers well for the sustainability of program development and stability of curriculum delivery for the students enrolled at Makybe Rise Primary School.

Conclusion

Makybe Rise Primary School has grown from a small school with 298 students and 38 teachers in 2011 to a large school of 1119 students and 103 staff in 2015. This exponential growth has been extremely well managed by strong leadership and stewardship using collaborative processes to devise powerful and effective structures and programs that enable growth with continued unity of purpose.

The school demonstrates that it has a positive learning culture, effective leadership structure and embedded self-review processes with the capacity to sustain sound teaching and learning for its increasingly diverse student population.

The school community has invested heavily in the AVID approach to teaching and learning and the establishment of a safe, caring and inclusive culture capable of supporting the learning of all students. These approaches are proving to be very successful and they have strong endorsement and support from members of the school community.

A committed leadership team, engaged and supportive staff and proactive School Board and community work collaboratively to enact the school vision and deliver contextually appropriate teaching and learning for all students.

Student results are sound and already showing signs of the excellence being sought for every student at this progressive and proactive school.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the clarity displayed by the Board Chair and the Principal of their roles and responsibilities in regard to the separation of governance and operational management of the school
- the Principal for her effective strategic, insightful and collaborative leadership of the school during a period of exponential growth
- development of tools and processes to conduct rigorous, holistic school self-review with associated responsive planning for improvement
- the uptake and continued development of the AVID approach that provides a sound and cohesive platform for school improvement and the development of an exciting learning community
- the development of an effective distributed leadership model that empowers staff, facilitates informed debate and assists collaborative decision making
- the collaborative, informed and caring culture among staff to nurture and support one another in their effort to realise the school motto: “every child, every day”
- supported student leadership that facilitates student growth and potential within a collaborative and caring culture
- development of positive and productive relationships with families, community organisations, external agencies, universities and local schools to enhance the capacity of the school to be responsive to diverse needs.

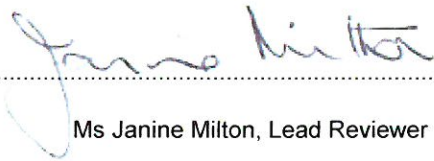
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- development of a stronger profile and greater prominence for the School Board within the school community
- development of Business Plan targets that reflect key improvement areas, increase the challenge and promote a higher level of achievement and excellence.

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 Makybe Rise 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.



Ms Janine Milton, Lead Reviewer

23 November 2015

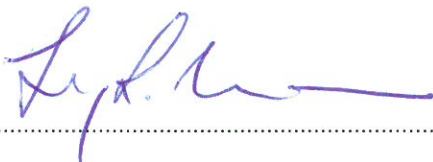
Date



Ms Megan Phillips, Reviewer

23 November 2015

Date



for Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

30.11.2015

Date