



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Belridge Secondary Education Support Centre

2016

Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

Disclaimer

This document reports the findings of the Department of Education Services' review and verification of the school's self-review. The school's self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The findings of the independent review are forwarded to the School Principal, the Board Chair, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

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| Principal: | Ms Jenine Wall |
| Board Chair: | Ms Wendy Langford |
| School Location: | 17 Gwendoline Drive, Beldon WA 6027 |
| Number of Students: | 106 |
| Reviewers: | Professor Chris Forlin (Lead) Dr Marion Milton |
| Review Dates: | 12 and 13 September 2016 |
| Initial Review: | 2013 |

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education on the extent to which the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) and associated Business Plan.

The focus of the review is on:

- how well the school has implemented self-review
- how well the school has improved student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes learning and student well-being
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Review Methodology

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake annual self-assessments of its performance. The outcome of these assessments formed the basis for the school's self-review. The school sent its self-review documentation to the IPS Review Team, Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

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

- the *My School*[®] website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.

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

An agenda for the review visit was subsequently negotiated with the Principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visits, was used as the basis for the verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in the DPA and Business Plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.

School Context

What are the important features of this school's context that have an impact on student learning?

Belridge Secondary Education Support Centre is a Level 5 school co-located with Belridge Secondary College in the northern suburb of Beldon in Perth, Western Australia. The two schools share a philosophy of 'two schools, one community' and there is noticeably a very strong and inclusive ethos between the schools. The centre has 81 staff members (60.8 FTE), consisting of 19 teaching staff (14.4 FTE) and 62 non-teaching staff. There has been a large increase in teaching staff since 2013 when the centre had 9.8 FTE. The Principal reports that this has resulted in greater stability with staff bringing increased diversity to the centre impacting positively on student learning. In 2016, the centre has 106 students, of which 103 have a disability, and six are local placements. The complexity of student need has increased since 2013, with a number of students in the care of Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS).

Students enrol from a wide area and access is supported by the provision of five bus services that transport 65% of the students. There has been a large increase of 24.5% in student numbers over the three year period of the DPA. This increase has been attributable to those entering lower secondary, having seen numbers rise from 49 in 2014 to 74 in 2016. Upper secondary class numbers have remained steady at approximately 30 students over the triennium; although this should increase in 2017 as students progress from Year 10 into upper school. This has necessitated the addition of six transportable classrooms and an office area. The centre staff has worked effectively to establish an inclusive environment that is embedded within the shared grounds.

Student attendance for 2015 was slightly above that of Western Australian public schools at 89%. Attendance is marginally higher than Western Australian public schools in the Indicated and Moderate At-Risk attendance categories, but below these in the Severe At-Risk attendance category. The student transiency rate is stable and low.

With the disbanding of the previous Westcoast Education Support Cluster in 2015, the centre has remained as an IPS school. The centre has established its own School Board although the original cluster schools still share the priority of addressing student transition. The board members have all

Belridge Secondary Education Support Centre

undertaken training and provide strong support for the development of the centre and effective governance.

The centre staff encourage and promote active community involvement and have established a range of collaborative partnerships, particularly within the Joondalup environment. These support student learning by providing extensive opportunities for students to engage in the Workplace Learning Program (WPL) and a range of social activities in preparation for post-school life.

The centre is well equipped with lively classrooms, excellent access to information and communication technology (ICT), a horticultural garden and a newly renovated independent living centre. Access to shared facilities with the secondary college further enable student learning.

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?

There is thorough and detailed self-review documentation linked to the current Business Plan and DPA and in response to the previous review. The self-review documents demonstrate that each target is linked to strategies, action and evidence of progress and achievement. Targets are then individually investigated according to the School Accountability Framework indicators, in five domains, including student achievement and high-quality teaching. A very useful part of this documentation is a section for each target area that indicates 'what works well' and 'even better if'. The reviewers concur with the leadership team's intention to use the 'even better if' items as a starting point in moving forward for the following year and developing targets for the new Business Plan, as these are the areas that require further development or refinement. Reviewers were informed of a number of new initiatives and a lot was happening at the centre, although it was not always clear how each initiative related to the Business Plan.

Discussions with teaching staff confirmed they are all regularly involved in collecting and interrogating data to identify priorities for each student's learning needs and in the writing of individual education plans (IEPs). Staff had succeeded in engaging students in meaningful learning activities that should give them life skills as well as achieving academic goals through their IEPs. Teachers keep detailed information on student achievement and progress towards IEP goals. This information is used in reporting to parents and fed into whole-school spreadsheets for use in annual reviews and the Annual Report. The two deputy principals, lower secondary and middle secondary, work with teams in their year levels and learning area cohorts of teachers to review this data along with the coordinator of the Year 11 and 12 Vocational Education and Training (VET), Award Scheme Development and Assessment Network (ASDAN) and WPL. Feedback on achievements and how they address areas of need is provided to the Principal.

Surveys of staff and parent satisfaction were conducted in 2015 and reported in the Annual Report. Although the results were positive on all reported measures, the response rate was only 22% of staff and 18% of parents. Discussions with the administration team confirm that they will look at more creative ways to ensure a better response for future surveys.

The Board evolved from the Cluster Board in 2014 and members have a good understanding of their role in governance and the difference between governance and school management. The Board Chair indicated that the Board unpacked the previous review and were involved in the discussions and formulation of the current Business Plan. The Board meets at least once per term and receives a detailed report from the Principal each time. Board members have established close links with the parents and keep them well informed of the centre's practices. The Principal and Board Chair indicated they work closely together and that the Board is kept well informed on centre matters, especially on monitoring student milestones and progress towards targets in the Business Plan. The Board conducted a self-review in 2015; however, members feel the need to obtain feedback that is more useful to them and are intending to conduct a more detailed collaborative review in Term 4 of 2016. Discussions confirm that all members have received board training and several, including the Board Chair, were on the former Cluster Board.

The Board is recognised as part of the centre and is visible in the community. The Board Chair participates in distributing awards at graduation and plays a role at major events, such as the Market Day and whole-school assemblies. There are regular board updates in the centre's newsletters and a statement from the Board Chair is included in the front of the Annual Report.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The centre offers a range of curricula to meet individual students' needs. The Business Plan provides targets and strategies aligned to improving student learning in academic and non-academic areas. Due to the nature of the centre, no comparisons are possible with similar schools as each student's goals and all planning is individualised. Utilising the Western Australian Curriculum, outcomes are differentiated according to individual requirements and provided through IEPs. These are produced in collaboration with teachers, parents and para-professionals. All students have an IEP which defines specific learning targets. All targets are measured individually through the use of the IEPs which are revised each semester. Three enterprise programs are offered at the centre including the weekly Cobra Café, the horticultural 'Patch' and the independent living centre. The use of ICT was evidenced in all classrooms. The reviewers were able to verify the success of targets and strategies that had been documented in the information supplied by the centre.

Baseline data are collected annually through a range of standardised and informal assessments which provide an evidence-based approach to monitoring student learning and curriculum planning. Teachers use the *Waddington* reading, spelling and mathematics standardised assessments at the commencement of students' secondary schooling, to establish a base line for planning teaching and learning tasks. Follow-up assessments are conducted with the *Waddington* tests two years later to indicate successes and areas that need more development. Positive partnerships, set up when the centre was part of the cluster, investigated a planning matrix to profile students with autism. This matrix has now been embedded into IEPs as it is useful in creating profiles for students. The profiles are passed on to the class teacher the following year.

Centre staff have worked collaboratively with the secondary college staff to offer discrete classes with specialist teachers in design and technology, home economics and dance. In the mainstream environment, the education assistants are able to provide the specialist teachers with insights into the students' learning needs. The staff from the centre and the secondary college

Principal report that these have been very successful. This was confirmed by the reviewers when speaking to the students.

Training courses are related to preparation for post-school placement and building employability skills. Since 2015, the centre has had a dedicated full-time coordinator for VET who also oversees the extensive Workplace Learning Programs (WLP). The centre offers two main streams that lead to recognised certification for the students. These include certificate courses through the North Metropolitan TAFE for Years 10–12 and access to *ASDAN* courses. *ASDAN* was introduced into Years 11 and 12 in 2014 and is gradually being offered to students in lower school years. The total number of course placements undertaken by students has increased from 25 in 2014 to 59 in 2016. The independent review process was able to verify a 100% achievement of *ASDAN* courses in 2014 and 2015. In the upper years, *ASDAN* is being used as a parallel course for students who are unable to participate in the certificate courses. All teachers, and most education assistants, are fully trained in implementing *ASDAN*.

In 2014, the centre had 32 course placements in Certificate I courses and in 2015 there were 42 placements with all students either gaining full certification or units of competency. In 2016, there are 45 course places. Certificate I in AgriFood is currently offered to Year 10 students. Fourteen students completed full accreditation in 2015 and 17 are currently participating. This is facilitated on campus by a North Metropolitan TAFE trainer. Practical components are completed in the centre's horticultural garden called 'The Patch'. Seven Year 11 students currently participate in Certificate I in Transport and Logistics. This course is offered by trained staff in the centre through ACTIV as the Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The reviewers verified that in 2015, all eight students undertaking the course achieved full certification.

Certificate I in Work Preparation and Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways were offered to 12 students in Year 12 in 2015 with 100% full achievement and nine students gaining full and three receiving units of competency, respectively. In 2016, students were able to take the Barista Skills unit towards Certificate II in Community Services by working in the onsite Cobra Caf. Students have also been able to link this course with their WLP.

There is a very comprehensive WLP in place for students in Years 10–12 as part of their curriculum. Students in Year 10 complete one day per week for a

five-week block in the WLP. In Year 11, they also complete one day per week but for an extended period of time. Students aim to complete a minimum of 55 hours as this is linked into the Authority Developed Work Place Learning (ADWPL) endorsed course with the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). In 2016, students who are unable to complete this course are able to enrol in ASDAN Workright as an alternative option. WLP involvement increases to one or two days per week throughout the year for Year 12 students, depending upon their ability, interests and the availability of placements.

During each year, students are offered work trials as part of the Transition to Work and Beyond course. An off-campus course is also available for students in Years 9 and 10 to 'try a trade'. This is a three-day introductory program for which the centre has made many partnerships within the local community. It was evident that the centre had provided effectively for students to participate in a very wide range of optional programs depending upon their individual interests and capabilities.

Reviewer's discussions with staff and the leadership team identified a range of new ideas and programs currently being trialled in 2016 with a view towards implementing them across the centre in 2017. These include explicit teaching, which is being trialled in mathematics in 2016 and in literacy in 2017. The centre is also looking to introduce *MultiLit* in Years 7 and 8 in 2017 to support the current literacy program and to provide greater consistency with assessment. The centre has been using the Special Education Needs Assessment Tool to map student progress and is considering the use of the newly released Abilities Based Learning Education, Western Australia (ABLEWA). As teachers focus on individual learning and classes are streamed, different programs have been introduced in different years. Teachers appear enthusiastic and take part in presenting new ideas and programs to the rest of the teaching staff during professional development days. The reviewers appreciate the enthusiasm of the staff to review new options. It is, however, recommended that the centre revisits the Business Plan, including the specific strategies through which the targets can be achieved to ensure that it aligns closely with the Operational Plans.

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 co-location of the centre with the secondary college adds to the quality of the learning environment via shared facilities such as the library, oval, and performing arts centre. A discussion with the principals of both schools indicated they share responsibility for all students on the site and are committed to building a cooperative and inclusive culture. There is a harmonious relationship between the staff of the two schools with supportive inclusive practices including frequent shared social occasions. Students have a common uniform with different badging, which reflects a common bond. Centre students are included in a number of secondary college activities, including a shared graduation ceremony, school ball, cruise, surf carnival and sports day.

Discussions with students confirmed they are able to mix with mainstream students on the oval, during breaks and for major events. Students also have the opportunity to be included in mainstream classes when appropriate. Further, staff share development when needs align, for example on how to manage students with autism.

The centre has adopted the secondary college motto of 'Learn, Achieve, Succeed', which adds to a sense of joint commitment. The motto links to the centre's aim, stated in the Business Plan 2014–2016, 'to encourage all of our students to be life-long learners and to provide them with the best educational opportunities to achieve their individual educational needs, dreams and aspirations'. In the absence of an articulated vision, the Principal has indicated she will revisit the aim as a vision in the next Business Plan.

A large proportion of the centre staff are education assistants whose roles and contributions are highly valued by the teaching staff and students. As well as making a major contribution in supporting students to achieve IEPs, they help in providing a safe learning environment. This adds to the notion of staff learning from and supporting each other in an inclusive environment in which everyone is valued.

The centre is well resourced and technology has been updated. Classrooms have smartboards and computers. All students are now supplied with

individual iPads. A technician installs and updates programs selected by the teachers on the iPads. This is in addition to a range of assistive communication devices available for low/non-verbal and high-needs students. A recent purchase of C-pens, used to scan and speak text, is currently being tested with low/non-readers.

'The Patch' adds to the quality of the learning environment and each class has a plot where vegetables and flowers can be grown and harvested for use in the independent living centre. Part of the garden has been established as a sensory garden with perfumed shrubs. A group of students helped to build an attractive path as they learnt design and brick laying skills.

Student well-being is an important part of the centre's brief. Students identified as being at educational risk are closely monitored. This group includes those students under the care of DCPFS. Teachers hold regular meetings to assess the situation for each identified student and generate strategies that should provide support, reduce stress and enable learning.

Pastoral care includes the students at educational risk as well as the services provided by the centre's Psychologist who conducts regular case conferences and liaises with teachers, parents and outside agencies. New projects are being implemented in order to increase staff knowledge and to give students the tools and language to increase their ability to monitor their own behaviour. A 'Protective Behaviours' project has been initiated across the centre as part of the health and physical education program which also focuses on decision-making, social skills, healthy living and participation.

Another initiative introduced recently is the positive behaviour support program, *Zone of Regulation*. Posters for students have been created and displayed in classrooms. Students are learning the language of the program and what each zone represents. This is providing a consistent whole-school approach and coherent language. When asked if they knew what the zones were about, one of the students interviewed said 'Yes, I am always in the green zone.' Students have regular training on safety, including visits from the Police such as the *Constable Care* program.

It was evident to reviewers there is a strong belief amongst staff that all students are capable of learning when provided targeted learning activities and the right support. It was evident that both low and high technology devices were used to enhance learning. These ranged from visual supports to

group switch devices and individualised alternative augmentation communication devices.

During visits to classrooms, the reviewers found students were engaged in meaningful learning activities. In a high-support area each student was busy with an assistant or teacher working on individual goals. Students in the independent living centre demonstrated their awareness of health, safety and skills. To assist students in remaining focused a number of motivating lunch time activities are provided. The class visits and discussions with students and parents confirm that students enjoy school, believe their teachers help them to learn, and what they are learning is useful.

Students and parents commented on the value of the transition program for Year 6 students entering the secondary environment. Part of the transition process is a market day, which is well attended as it helps students learn about the centre in a non-threatening and enjoyable way. Along with the more formal introduction to the new school undertaken over a number of weeks, the staff are commended on the transition program that is seen as a success by teachers, parents and students.

The transition program out of the centre is also highly regarded by parents and anticipated by students. In this program virtually all students who leave school at the end of Year 12 or during Year 13 are accepted into employment or further training. A parent of a former student told the reviewers the program had prepared and supported his son well to be successful and to retain the employment he was given. The appointment of a dedicated coordinator who oversees transition, VET and *ASDAN* for the upper years has meant a consistent approach to transition and the ability to establish and cement strong relationships with community providers. The transition coordinator also organises representatives from a range of agencies such as the Disability Services Commission, respite and life-skills services, and supported employment and open employment agencies to visit the centre once a year to provide an information session for parents. The staff is commended for the well-organised and highly valued transition programs.

Communication with parents is extensive. As well as regular newsletters, student reports, the annual reviews and detailed year books, teachers maintain a daily diary which goes home with students. Parents confirmed this keeps them well informed on what is happening in the classroom and that they value the diary and also the phone calls from teachers when clarification is needed or issues occur. Parents indicated to reviewers that they feel

comfortable in being able to contact teachers and the administration when needed. They find the staff welcoming, respectful and helpful.

Strong partnerships have been forged with a range of agencies, community services and facilities in the Joondalup area that contribute to the learning experience of students. It was noted by the staff, however, that with the closure of a few commercial businesses that were some of the centre's workplace providers, placement would become more difficult into the future. There are also strong partnerships with similar schools in the area, which was one of the recommendations from the previous review. The centre is part of the Joondalup Learning Network and retains strong links with other schools in the former cluster.

Students in Years 10–12 are enrolled in the Emergency Service Cadet Corps (ESCC) and receive instruction in a range of practical skills related to environmental awareness and health and safety in the community. Each student who takes part qualifies for school funding to resource the program's operation at the school level. The program is connected to ASDAN and linked to personal safety. A teacher is a qualified instructor who coordinates and runs the ESCC program. That teacher also coordinates the VET and WLP ensuring they have coherence as part of the overall plan.

Overall, the leadership team has addressed the recommendations of the previous independent review related to the learning environment and continued to build strong relationships with the adjoining secondary college, parents and community. Peer observation, professional learning and performance management contribute to ongoing improvement in the quality of teaching. The current self-review indicated successful implementation of a range of programs including those that build resilience, self-confidence, and help to manage conflict and emotions. The centre provides a stimulating learning environment that promotes ongoing learning and student well-being.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Self-review practices are firmly established with ongoing review of student learning against individually planned targets. Collaborative teams in lower, middle and upper secondary year levels undertake regular reviews of student achievement from individual, cohort and whole-school perspectives. All staff are appropriately trained for their role in an education support centre having, as a minimum, a post-graduate certificate in special education. It was evident to the reviewers that staff have the capacity to implement effective programs adapted to each student's unique needs.

The Principal has established an effective leadership model. A specific improvement agenda is in place to support planning and pedagogy. This is linked to increased prospects for staff to engage in professional learning. The centre's culture is positive and motivating with an enthusiasm surrounding the activities in which students engage. Staff are passionate and actively embrace opportunities for innovative change through a whole-school approach.

All curriculum decision-making is student focused. Planning is directed towards improved student learning according to ability. There is evidence of an extensive range of alternative options for students who are capable of achieving certificate courses through to those who can demonstrate their learning with ASDAN programs. An extensive network of community partnerships offers many opportunities for students to participate in alternative workplace learning and social activities in preparation for post school. The staff are actively investigating a range of new programs for potential implementation to support student learning. With the alignment of the targets and strategies in the Business Plan with the Operational Plans this should ensure that the adoption of new projects or initiatives consolidates the centre's focus for the next triennium.

Following a large increase in student and staffing numbers over the past three years, numbers are predicted to remain stable for the coming DPA. The centre is well resourced with updated ICT and sufficient resources to sustain current programs.

The Board consists of highly capable, trained members from varied backgrounds and is fully involved in all aspects of centre governance.

Conclusion

Belridge Secondary Education Support Centre has established student-focused targets and strategies to cater for the diverse needs of its student clientele. The centre offers an extensive range of courses and varied opportunities for workplace learning in preparation for transition to post school life. There is a very positive inclusive culture between the centre and the onsite secondary college with sharing of facilities and collaborative activities that all assist in supporting student learning. The newly formed Board has developed a strong governance role and is actively engaged in all relevant aspects of the centre.

The centre is meeting its targets and commitment in the DPA and Business Plan.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- supportive and dedicated staff that are enthusiastic and stable
- strong partnerships with the local community and businesses
- effective establishment of a new Board and its role in governance
- the welcoming and inclusive culture across both the centre and the co-located secondary college
- the well-organised and highly valued Year 7 transition program and the transition out which result in virtually all students who leave school at the end of Year 12 or during Year 13 being accepted into employment or further training.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- Develop a Business Plan that meets the DPA requirements, comprises clear foci, priorities, realistic/measurable/challenging targets, and strategies; setting the overall direction for the school and providing the basis for operational planning
- consolidate the number of new initiatives to be implemented and ensure they align with the Business Plan targets and operational plans, and are focused on a whole-school approach
- increase the rate of survey feedback from parents and staff to assist with informed decision-making.

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 Belridge Secondary Education Support Centre 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.

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Professor Chris Forlin, Lead Reviewer
Date

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Dr Marion Milton, Reviewer
Date

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