



Department of
Education

GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Dowerin District High School

Public School Review

November 2019

PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

Purpose

All Western Australian public schools are reviewed every three years by the Department of Education's Public School Accountability directorate. A review gives assurance to the local community, the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General that a school is operating effectively and delivering high quality education to its students. The review acknowledges the achievements of the school and gives feedback to support the principal and staff with their improvement planning.

The principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence gathered by the principal and staff. Information validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the school review report. The report is provided to the principal, the chair of the school board/council and the Regional Executive Director.


Expectations of schools

For all Western Australian public schools, expectations are set out in either: the Delivery and Performance Agreement, which is an agreement between the Department (represented by the Director General), school (represented by the principal) and school board (represented by the school board chair); or, the Principals' Statement of Expectations and the Funding Agreement for Schools.

School performance rating

This performance rating is based on information gained from the self-assessment submission and the validation process. It is focused on a review of the following areas of school performance: relationships and partnerships; learning environment; leadership; use of resources; teaching quality; and student achievement and progress.

The school's performance rating is:

	Effective
	The school demonstrates effective practice in creating the conditions required for student success.

	Needs Improvement
	The school has aspects of its practice below expectations and needs supported action to improve student success.

Context

Dowerin District High School is located 156 kilometres north-east of Perth, within the Wheatbelt Education Region. Established over 100 years ago, the school has been at its current site since 1958 and achieved Independent Public School status in 2013. Dowerin District High School has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage rating of 963 (decile 7).

The school currently enrolls 123 students from Kindergarten to Year 10. A noted trend of increased enrolments over successive years is testament to the positive reputation of the school. This is significant given the overall trend of depopulation, particularly of young people, in the Wheatbelt region. Students attend from surrounding farms and the towns of Dowerin and Goomalling.

The school's facilities include a purpose-built transportable science laboratory, a well-resourced library and Makerspace area, as well as a refurbished home economics room, which enhances opportunities gained through the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

An active Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), a highly effective School Board and parent volunteers provide much valued support to the school.

School self-assessment validation

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

The following aspects are confirmed:

- The principal is the network principal for the Inland Lighthouse Network and actively engaged in collegiate discussions about the school review process prior to embarking on a strategy to engage staff with the school's submission.
- The school's executive team selected the evidence for each domain of the Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT), created a summary spreadsheet and used this document in concert with the ESAT guidelines to educate staff about the review process.
- Whilst the principal uploaded all evidence to the ESAT, robust whole-staff discussions, followed by a request that every staff member add 10 comments, resulted in a frank and fearless representation of a wide range of perspectives on the school's improvement journey.
- Further review of the school's submission occurred with staff forming small domain-specific groups to reflect upon their findings and contribute to planned actions.
- The school reported that value was gained from participating in the school review process.
- Conversations with staff, students and community members during the validation visit added considerable value to the review.

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Relationships and partnerships	
A strong relationship focus in this close-knit community, as articulated by the 'Dowerin Virtues', is reinforced through an overt commitment to wellbeing for both students and staff.	
Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is held in high regard in the township. Parents engage in working parties aligned to key priority areas and such direct involvement serves to further reinforce the school's positive reputation. • A wide variety of communication tools, including regular snippets featuring in the local newspaper, ensure that the community is well-informed about student progress and the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. • Strategic partnerships, such as with Curtin University, impact directly on educational opportunities for students. Other partnerships, including the Department of Fire and Emergency Services Cadets, empower students to contribute to society in meaningful ways. • The School Board is well-trained and proactive in supporting the school's continuous improvement agenda. • The P&C is valued highly for their impressive fundraising support of initiatives such as the Year 7 to Year 10 Canberra camp.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the existing school improvement agenda to ensure clear and transparent alignment between planning and daily teaching practices. • Seek low variation in teacher communication with parents by establishing a common and shared communication strategy.

Learning environment	
A safe, orderly and inclusive learning environment, where social skills are taught explicitly, intentionally and/or integrated into the curriculum, supports fully the school's endeavour to produce socially and civically responsible citizens.	
Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance is sound and monitored closely. Attendance plans and engagement programs for students at educational risk (SAER) prove successful. • A social and emotional learning operational plan aligns various interventions, including the use of protective behaviours, mindfulness and Zones of Regulation, to ensure sustainable whole-school practices. • Teachers and education assistants invest in skill-building to cater for diverse needs using ASDAN¹, ABLEWA² and assistive technology. • Student agency is fostered through a culture of empowerment to lead.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overtly market the good standing aspect of the school's already embedded positive behaviour policy and practices. • Use the Be You framework in formalising the school's socio-emotional plan.

Leadership

The school's executive team is acknowledged for its considerable expertise and demonstrated capacity to foster a collaborative approach. This is underpinned by their trust in the ability of a high performing staff and results in a genuinely distributed leadership model.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and parents are particularly appreciative of the principal who is valued as a positive role model who cultivated the high performing team she now leads. • A continuous improvement agenda is embraced by staff. Teachers engage actively in whole-school practices and hold themselves to account to cater for students of all abilities. • A detailed literacy block structure consisting of clear learning intentions using 'We are Learning To' and 'What I'm looking For', warm ups, differentiated activities and plenary sessions, exists throughout the primary school. • As a Teacher Development School in Mathematics and Science, a team of teachers accept the responsibility to support others, in school, throughout the region and across the system. This, coupled with opportunities offered through the dynamic Inland Lighthouse Network, cements a culture of shared leadership and mentoring.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review planning documents, ensuring that all targets are SMART. • Extend the successful primary literacy intervention strategy to incorporate warm ups across the secondary setting.

Use of resources

The highly competent managers of corporate services have clearly delineated the responsibilities of this key leadership role to good effect. They work in concert with the principal to ensure that resource allocations are strategic with transparent alignment to school planning.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective marketing of the school attracts and retains students, thus guaranteeing consistency of income through the Student-Centred Funding Model. • Financial processes are sound and the School Board, in particular, value the transparency and clarity of explanations shared at board meetings. • A considered and targeted approach to workforce management meets the identified needs of the school, especially with regards to catering for SAER. • Proactive in securing building upgrades, the school elected to self-manage their facilities to gain better value for money. • Successful grant applications, a funding stream from the Dowerin Field Day and prudent use of P&C donations, result in a very well-maintained site. • Well-managed reserve accounts, coupled with an information and communications technology replacement plan, result in one-to-one access to computers for all students from Year 2 to Year 10. • Strategic partnerships with Curtin University and the Inland Lighthouse Network provide access to resources and programs that impact positively upon student outcomes.
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Teaching quality

A professional learning community ethos is embedded in the school. Teachers are empowered to identify needs, engage in research, upskill themselves and trial new methodologies. This action-research approach frequently leads to school-wide implementation of improved practice.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A culture of performance development is demonstrated through rigorous improvement planning focused on teaching quality and supported by professional learning opportunities that are conducive to improvement. • Classroom observation and feedback, coupled with student survey data about individual teaching practices, informs each teacher’s performance development plan. • The data literacy of staff is high and teachers engage in disciplined dialogue regarding set targets, why they were, or were not, met and what action to take next. • A new Kindergarten to Year 3 maths tracker, created in-house and aligned to an evidence-base, informs individual education planning for SAER and serves as a quality transition document for all students. • The use of Microsoft Office 365 software, to collaborate and share best practice, has been widely embraced by staff.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springboard from staff use of Microsoft Office 365 by introducing OneNote Class Notebooks to students, thus further embedding information and communications technology in the curriculum.

Student achievement and progress

Close analysis of data, both academic and behavioural, informs targeted interventions to ensure that all students are encouraged to thrive.

Effectiveness	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decoding and encoding is implemented from Kindergarten to Year 3 with MiniLit and MacqLit literacy programs accessed to support SAER. • Student achievement and progress, compared to like schools, is sound with the most notable improvement being from Year 5 to Year 7 where both high progress and high achievement have been demonstrated in four of the five testing areas. • Students at risk of not passing the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment engage in significant interventions and the success rate by the end of Year 10 is impressive. • Grade alignment is supported through regular moderation activities, both in-house and network-wide, using the Brightpath assessment tool. • The Reporting to Parents Special Educational Need system is valued by staff and parents as an excellent method of demonstrating progress against set targets to maintain student engagement, and build their confidence in their capacity to achieve.
Improvements	<p>The review team support the following action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect upon grade distribution at individual teacher and whole-school levels to ensure consistent judgements and a focus on continued growth.

Reviewers

Kath Ward
Director, Public School Review

Tonia Carslake
Principal, Morawa District High School
Peer Reviewer

Endorsement

Based on this report, I endorse your school performance rating of 'Effective'.

Your next school review is scheduled for 2022.



Stephen Baxter
Deputy Director General, Schools

References

- 1 Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
- 2 Abilities Based Learning Education, Western Australia