Oberthur Primary School

2013

Independent Review Findings
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Disclaimer

This document has been based on the findings of the independent reviewers' 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 Minister for Education, the Director General of Education, the Principal and the Board Chair.

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Oberthur Primary School

School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Tim Bamber
Board Chair: Mr Steve Reynolds
School Location: Nicholls Crescent, Bull Creek WA 6149
School Classification: PS Class 4A
Number of Students: 503
Reviewers: Mr Graham Rixon and Mrs Megan Phillips
Review Dates:
  Self-review presentation: 16 May 2013
  Review visits: 4 and 5 June 2013

1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Oberthur Primary School is to provide an assurance to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education and the school community 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 improved the standards of student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes student learning
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake regular self-assessment. The outcomes of these assessments formed the basis for the school’s self-review which was presented to the reviewers for verification at the commencement of the independent review.
Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review, reviewers were provided with information on the school's educational achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which include, but are not limited to:

- the My School™ website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.

Reviewers visited the school for a half-day presentation of the school's self-review by the Principal, the Board Chair and other key stakeholders chosen by the school. Subsequently the reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of enquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for a two-day review visit was then negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of further evidence to clarify or confirm the claims made in the school's self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school self-review claims through observation and discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, parents, students and the school leadership team.

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

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.
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2. Summary

Oberthur Primary School offers an impressive range of academic and non-academic programs that are complemented by effective teaching strategies and supported by a good range of educational resources. The school's ultimate aim is to support its vision and expectations for improving the education for all students.

The school has implemented a curriculum that challenges, engages and improves student learning. It is able to gauge its success through a strong self-review culture that monitors a range of well thought out strategies to ensure improved student achievement, progress and engagement. The 2014-2016 Business Plan should reflect improved educational target setting, monitoring and flexibility in addressing the key priorities that the school has identified through its review processes.

The school has developed a quality learning environment with strategies and actions that are socially inclusive and engage students in learning whilst providing an atmosphere that fosters care and wellbeing to a very high level.

The school's practices and strategies place it in a sound position to be able to sustain its current level of performance and improve student learning.

The following commendations support the school's claims of significant strengths and areas of improvement:

- establishment of teaching teams, phase meetings and curriculum leaders with the focus on improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy
- strategies developed to improve outcomes for individuals, groups and cohorts of students
- evidence gathered and its thorough analysis by the Principal, executive team, teachers and the Board
- for developing and embedding a vision for learning based on high expectations, an effective virtues and pastoral care structure, responding to individual differences, integrating technology in learning and developing strong partnerships between the staff, students, parents and the community
- its innovative approach to developing a wide range of activities, strategies and resources that benefit student learning needs
- the implementation of a Code of Conduct for Board members.
The following **affirmations** support continued implementation of strategies and initiatives or areas for improvement identified by the school:

- interrogation of the data and the resultant strategies implemented to improve outcomes
- integration of the Immersion Program throughout the school which is complemented by robust self-review and research
- strategies being employed to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum
- use of the On-Entry assessment program to enhance the tracking of students
- review and consideration of the educational programs for the more able students
- the Principal and executive team’s action to monitor and review the timetable and workload of staff and students to monitor wellbeing
- the positive culture and inclusive environment that values and supports all students
- success of the strategies used by the school in developing a positive, calm and purposeful environment that was evident across the school
- the actions of the Board to seek further training in order to better service the needs of the school community
- the intention that staff be consulted in developing the targets of the next Business Plan and that the new targets be clear, challenging, measurable and achievable with a more defined focus on the students' education and performance.

The following **recommendations** are made to add value to the school’s improvement and review processes:

- the school include like-school data comparisons in the Annual Report.
3. School Context

Oberthur Primary School's vision is to form an inclusive community of parents and teachers who collaborate to teach the school’s children.

Oberthur Primary School opened in 1979 with 296 students and 9 full-time teachers, growing to a peak of 530 students in the 1980s. With other schools in neighbouring Leeming built to meet the needs of these rapidly developing southern suburbs, enrolment numbers decreased until the school was reclassified to a Level 4 school in 1998 with approximately 280 students.

Since then numbers have steadily increased again with the suburb’s proximity to both Curtin and Murdoch University and the increasing movement of professional families from many overseas countries into the suburb. The school has a growing reputation as an achieving school. In 2013, student numbers had increased to 500, including 52 kindergarten students and another 50 children on the waiting list.

The data on the cultural background of students indicates 66% from countries other than Australia. The majority of these students are from China, Malaysia and India (30%).

The school’s Index of Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) 1123.01 is similar to other schools in the area.

The school buildings and grounds are of a high standard with the old tiled roof progressively replaced with metal roofing during the 2011/2012 summer holiday break. A kitchen garden project is adding value to the meticulously cared for gardens and grounds, providing a delightful environment and enhancing the learning areas available to the students.

Two early childhood transportable buildings were added to the school's early learning block in 2012 to cater for the increasing numbers of kindergarten and pre-primary students seeking enrolment. The grounds, to be shared by over 110 children, were significantly upgraded with extra grass and reticulation, upgraded play equipment and rubber soft-fall as well as other refurbishments. The school Parents and Citizens’ Association contributed funds to these extensions to the playground area and provided equipment to assist with the physical requirements (research showed the early-years children required climbing and reaching equipment designed to strengthen their upper bodies).
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By the beginning of 2013 there were two kindergarten buildings, three pre-primary buildings and 14 primary classrooms for the Year 1 - Year 7 students.

Since achieving Independent Public School status in 2010, 14 additional and replacement staff have been recruited. These recent additions have increased the diversity and expertise of staff to better advance the rich curriculum the school delivers to its students.

The school has a total school staff of 59; including Principal, associate principal, teachers and support staff.

Adding value to the education offered to the students at Oberthur Primary School is a rich, in-school music and instrumental program and the only immersion Chinese language program, being introduced progressively across all year levels from PP-Year 6, in operation in Western Australia. These programs alone are attracting out-of-area interest in enrolment in the school – 57% of students enrolled at Oberthur Primary School come from out of the school's boundary.

The school also offers a comprehensive raft of after school physical education options and parents and staff together take responsibility for weekend sporting activities.

The school is a founding member of the Rossmoyne Chinese Language Hub involving seven local primary schools and Rossmoyne Senior High School with the school's Chinese language teacher coordinating the local Chinese Teachers' Network.

Reviewers noted a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere across the campus during the visit. Further, all members of the community, students, teachers and parents all commented on the positive, respectful nature of the environment as being a high point of their involvement with the school.

Through well-planned and thorough collection of data, community involvement and staff training, the School Board has supported the school administration in its efforts to develop programs to encourage the view of Oberthur Primary School as the school of choice for the local as well as the wider community. This augurs well for its continued progress and development as an Independent Public School.
4a. School Performance - Student Learning

Oberthur Primary School has a comprehensive strategic plan that underpins and complements the Business Plan. Additional support documentation includes operational plans, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and detailed self-assessment working documents for the areas of teaching, leadership, learning environment, relationships and resources. There is a very strong culture of a whole-school approach to developing a relevant curriculum that ensures all students are successful. Thorough analysis of achievement and progress by phases of education (K to Year 2 and Years 3 to 7) and individual students is clearly evident. The school has been detailed in its assessment of how the students are achieving and has initiated appropriate strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students. Literacy, numeracy and thinking skills are key priority areas in all classrooms from Kindergarten through to Year 7.

The Principal and Board Chair confirmed that although the objectives, as stated in the Business Plan, have not been amended over the three years the school has a Strategic Plan (2011-2014), supported by annual self-assessment and operational plans, that more clearly identify areas to be addressed. This Strategic Plan (2011-2014) contains more specific targets and has been altered where necessary. Priorities identified in the school’s Strategic Plan provide guidance for the teaching and learning occurring in the school and the allocation of resources to support the achievement of identified targets.

The structuring of teaching teams in early childhood education (K-Year 2) and upper primary (Years 3-7) and the appointment of an associate principal and team leaders have been key strategies in supporting staff to achieve a student focused approach. Due to its IPS status the school has been able to have a level 3 staff member as the learning support coordinator; employ a literacy support specialist and employ specialists to conduct speech and language screening. Evidence of distributed leadership exists across the school with members of the executive team providing guidance and support to teaching staff. Data provided, based on the 2010 to 2012 National Assessment Plan – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) results, indicate the school is doing well in achieving its targets. Some slight variations below set targets are explained by being due to the cohort of that year however, overall, the students do better than like-schools. Measures of success relate to reducing percentages
of students below national minimum standards in reading and numeracy and increasing the percentage of students in the top 20% of national standards. In general, the 2012 results indicate success in achieving these targets. Progressive gains of cohorts from 2010-2012 also indicate that students are progressing at a similar rate or better than State gain. There is a strong emphasis and a collaborative approach to explicit teaching toward achieving the targets. The reviewers affirm the school's interrogation of the data and the resultant strategies implemented to improve outcomes. The school is to be commended on the establishment of teaching teams, phase meetings and curriculum leaders with the focus on improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Teachers commented to the reviewers that they valued these meetings and benefited from the sharing that took place.

Whilst the self-review documentation indicates that the school utilises comparison with like-schools, this is not evident in the Annual School Report. In order to ensure transparency in the community the reviewers would recommend that the school include like-school data comparison in the Annual Report.

The Family Virtues Program underpins the school's value system and is firmly established across all areas of the school. Incorporated in this philosophy is the belief in the importance of every individual’s right to respect and being able to learn to their potential. The use and understanding of the various virtues is integral to the positive reinforcers and the behaviour management policy – these are fully supported by the school community.

A range of specialist programs support student learning in art, science, physical education and music. In addition to these curriculum areas the school has invested significant resources to the implementation of a Chinese language program. Years 1 to 7 have two hours of Chinese each week and in 2013 the school introduced an immersion program for 7.5 hours each week to the Pre-Primary classes. It is planned to phase this implementation throughout the school to Year 6. As this program has great support within the school community the reviewers would affirm the school’s integration of the immersion program throughout the school which is complemented by rigorous self-review and research by the teachers. The school has established a safe and supportive learning environment in which a curriculum reflecting all eight learning areas of the Western Australian Curriculum Framework are addressed. Evidence of the phased implementation of the Australian Curriculum was presented to the reviewers. Detailed scope and sequencing
led by team leaders in phases of schooling demonstrated advanced engagement with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum across all years. Through discussion with curriculum leaders and teachers, classroom visitation and viewing relevant documentation, the school staff was able to clearly demonstrate it has established sound foundations for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. There are indicators of training and planning which are linked to the school’s performance management program for all staff. Teaching staff attend weekly meetings held after school every Wednesday. At these meetings they discuss curriculum matters, conduct professional development and team leaders meet with teachers in the different phases to review performance. This is coordinated by strong curriculum leadership and data analysis provided by the Principal and the executive team. The reviewers affirm the strategies being employed to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

Whilst in general the school is very strong academically, the school is cognisant of ensuring ‘every student is a successful student’. There are individual education plans (IEPs) for students at educational risk and their performance is closely monitored. The Department of Education ‘On-Entry Assessment’ was carried out in all pre-primary to Year 2 classes in 2013 in order to establish baseline data. The Principal plans to implement the end-of-year assessments in order to check progress and to look at areas where the school has added value. There are plans to commence a cycle using this On-entry assessment tool at the start and end of Pre-Primary and at the end of Year 1 and 2 in future years. The school staff is hopeful that this strategy will provide useful data for tracking students who continue their educational journey through the school. The reviewers affirm the school staff’s use of the On-entry assessment program to enhance the tracking of students.

Effective use of the education assistants, continual professional learning opportunities for staff and a clear focus on whole-of-school approaches to literacy and numeracy have resulted in improved teaching and learning. Whilst there is an advanced mathematics group and some students attend Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC), the school staff is of the view that they can do better with students at the top end of the spectrum. The school staff is to be commended on the strategies developed to improve outcomes for individuals, groups and cohorts of students. The reviewers affirm the school’s direction in reviewing and considering the educational programs for the more-able students.
The school has clearly identified a focus on literacy for 2013 due to some lower than expected data across the school. Whole-of-school approaches led by key staff have introduced new strategies to challenge all students. Timetabling of an uninterrupted literacy block underlines the importance given to this area.

The school is comprehensive in its analysis of data and comparison of performance in relation to national and state standards. Evidence gathered and its thorough analysis by the Principal, executive team, teachers and the Board is to be commended.

4b. School Performance - Quality of the Learning Environment

The reviewers were able to verify a shared vision and ethos with teaching and support staff, students, parents and the community through intensive staff interactions and discussions with Board members and parents. At the whole-school level this is translated into detailed self-assessment of all areas by addressing key achievement/improvements and future planning / recommendations. The result is an educational environment where the key priority is to empower students to reach their potential. This is reinforced in communications to parents through regular fortnightly newsletters, school blog, parent forums and the Annual Report.

It is evident staff have embraced the status of being an IPS and this is reflected in the high standards of planning, curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies and programs in the school. The school is to be commended for developing and embedding a vision for learning based on high expectations, an effective virtues and pastoral care structure, responding to individual differences, integrating technology in learning and developing strong partnerships between the staff, students, parents and the community. Staff, in order to maintain the high academic standards and expectations in the school, work extremely hard – planning, reviewing, introducing the Australian Curriculum, meetings, professional development and after-school commitments to name just a few.

Students, in addition to the academic program, have a range of non-academic opportunities before, during and after school hours. In order to accommodate more balanced learning times the timetable has been restructured so students and staff have a 30 minute recess and 30 minute lunchbreak. The reviewers affirm the Principal and executive team's action to monitor and review the
timetable and workload of staff and students and to ensure staff and student wellbeing is maintained. The reviewers also affirm the school executive's consideration of more support for teachers through the appointment of support staff.

The Principal and the executive team, with the support of staff, have developed and are continuing to drive a climate of innovation in the school. The school staff has pursued a number of partnerships and innovative programs that have resulted in a range of benefits for student learning and the school community. The school has a number of school-funded and self-funded activities and programs worthy of note:

- technology in teaching and learning programs – involves interactive whiteboards in classrooms with data projectors; the One-to-One laptop program for Years 5 to 7; and the iPad technology trial in the early years in 2013.
- advanced mathematics groups, including students from Years 4 to 7 have been established to cater for high achievers and to support those who would be likely to qualify for the Rossmoyne Senior High School Advanced Mathematics Special Program
- instrumental music – groups of students have weekly School of Instrumental Music (SIM) lessons in violin, cello, flute, guitar and double bass. A total of 70 students from Years 3 to 7 are involved this year. A number of students attend special music programs at Rossmoyne Senior High School.
- Chinese language program. In addition to the two hour allocation for classes and the immersion program, the school has advanced Chinese. This special program is provided for advanced learners for one hour each week to enable ongoing challenge
- Saturday netball club – the teacher-in-charge of sport coordinates the teams involved in representing the school in netball. This club also involves ex-students who continue to play in Year 7, Year 8 and adult teams. In addition, the older students and ex-students often umpire the games. This initiative is very well supported in the school community with a viable number of teams each year.
- partnership – the school has consistently been a contributor to the local schools' networks over many years. The Principal and Chinese teacher were joint coordinators of the Rossmoyne Chinese Language Hub, a two-year project funded by National Asian Language Studies in School Program (NALSSP) and the Department of Education to foster increased
numbers of students involved in Asian Language learning through to high school. This project involved seven local primary schools and Rossmoyne Senior High School. There were many successful strategies and events over 2010 and 2011. The school now funds aspects of this program and is a member of the new school network involving a similar structure of schools.

- Before-and-after school activities including Chinese dance, Wushu, chess, badminton, photography and table tennis.

The school is to be commended on its innovative approach to developing a wide range of activities, strategies and resources that benefit student learning needs.

The Principal, associate principal and the executive leadership team, along with many examples of distributed leadership across the school, have developed and are continuing to drive a climate of improvement in the school. The school has pursued a number of strategies and programs that have resulted in a range of benefits for student learning and the school community:

- The appointment of a learning support coordinator to facilitate staff planning, sharing and setting targets.
- The appointment of EAL and literacy support.
- In addition to NAPLAN and WAMSE data the school has begun to use On-Entry assessment.
- Professional development strategies to improve staff skills and knowledge, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy and the Australian Curriculum.
- Technology in K to Year 7 teaching and learning programs—the school has developed some exciting teaching in this area and is trialling an iPad program in the early years.
- Early intervention - involves employing outside help to conduct speech and language testing. This helps identify students most in need so that activities are conducted in small groups in order to address minor difficulties.

The reviewers were able to affirm the school’s positive culture and inclusive environment that values and supports all students. Meetings with the School Board, a number of parents and students provided verification and evidence of the positive culture developed in the school, the inclusion of all students and a focus on academic learning supported by a strong non-academic
program. It also demonstrated the effective partnership between parents and the school and the use of volunteer parents in providing enhanced opportunities for teaching and learning.

Teachers verified the school’s processes and strategies that supported their work and are instrumental in their pastoral care program. Key elements of the care demonstrated for students were evident in the comprehensive focus on individual performance, the EAL/SAER program, PEAC type courses and a thinking skills focus. These support programs are delivered in a number of teaching scenarios designed to meet individual needs including assistance to staff in making adjustments to the learning programs for all students. The pastoral care focus is enhanced by the involvement of the chaplain in supporting students in managing their social skills and developing emotional resilience along with the use of the School Psychologist (0.2) to assist in student socio-emotional issues and in supporting learning needs. The personalised approach to each student and a positive student/teacher relationship is a key element of the learning environment with all classes engaged in a virtues program to reinforce appropriate values and behaviours. The reviewers were able to verify and affirm the success of the strategies used by the school in developing a positive, calm and purposeful environment that was consistently demonstrated across the school.

The school is to be commended on developing a quality learning environment with a range of strategies and actions that are socially inclusive and engage students in learning while providing an atmosphere that fosters care and wellbeing to a high level.

4c. School Performance - Sustainability

Oberthur Primary School staff provided a wide range of documentation to support its self-review. Evidence included:

- the school’s Strategic Plan 2011-2014 priorities of literacy, numeracy and thinking skills were implemented with a whole-school approach focusing on major teaching emphasis in literacy and numeracy; and a whole-school approach focused on the development and implementation of a higher order thinking skills
- the implementation of a distributed leadership model with curriculum leaders and phase of school leaders to ensure sustainability
the screening of all kindergarten students by a speech pathologist in their first term of schooling, allowing for the specific levels of language acquisition to be addressed, informing class planning and referral to outside agencies where necessary

- flexibility in staffing used to cover specific projects linked to the IPS initiative, such as EAL support, screening of kindergarten students for speech and provision of technical support for computers, iPads and interactive white boards

- supporting documentation outlining the use of the one-line budget to provide for the staffing expertise required, a detailed workforce management plan, support for the full implementation of the whole-school initiatives linked to the Australian Curriculum and the arrangements in place to support the Chinese immersion program

- curriculum planning is conducted in focus groups. Interrogation of school performance is conducted in teams, led by team leaders. Leadership at a range of levels is an essential element in developing consistency and excellence in practice. The Principal is to be commended for developing the strong focus on distributed leadership particularly through the appointment of the associate principal and team leaders

- the school practice of self-reflection based on data related to student performance, attendance and behaviour is affirmed

- extension is provided for those students in need of further challenge and IEPs for those students requiring extra intervention as well as those students at educational risk on more formal IEPs

- the suite of documents related to the Operational Plans and protocols including: self-assessment in the areas of teaching, leadership, learning environment, relationships and resources.

Structural changes to the early-years buildings and grounds will form the basis for the extension required as the early-years numbers continue to grow in 2014.

The structural extensions, the programs being offered across the whole school and the opportunities provided for the students such as the biennial visit to China and reciprocal visit to the school by Chinese students, were all mentioned by those interviewed as highly appreciated and contributing to the school's status as the 'school of choice' in the area. Local, interstate and international enquiries attest to the Oberthur Primary School's capacity to draw students, indicating a positive response to the programs offered and the consistent standard of achievement of their students.
The sustainability of the school’s performance is through the quality of the teaching and learning collaborative activities across all teaching and learning areas. A distributed leadership model engages all staff in the development of strategies, interrogation of data and peer coaching; all leading to the building of capacity across the whole teaching and learning team of teachers, education assistants and parents. Teachers and education assistants are highly committed to their work of improving the learning outcomes for every student. Quality programs provide students with diverse options. Staff members embrace professional learning opportunities and the school uses their internal expertise to mentor and support their colleagues.

The school staff is commended for the clear structures in place to ensure optimum learning experiences for the students. On-entry testing and early-years speech screening along with informed teacher judgements and internal and external testing, inform the teaching and learning programs across the school.

Sustainability for the Board is related to developing sound processes for succession planning and ensuring that its accountability and oversight roles related to reviewing the school’s performance, endorsing budgets and determining the satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students are functioning effectively. Discussions with the Board affirmed that as a part of the self-review cycle, it would review its own performance against the expectations contained in the DPA.

The Principal and the current Board Chair confirmed that the first Business Plan did not have a strong student educational focus with appropriate targets. They also confirmed that the school executive team and staff in general had minimal input into the first Business Plan. Targets set in the strategic and operational plans developed with staff input are more effective than those of the Business Plan. The school’s self-review identified a need to strengthen its target setting. In addition, the Principal expressed the intention that elements of the Strategic Plan be included in the next Business Plan which would involve the staff review and consultation process in its development. The reviewers affirm the intention that staff be consulted in developing the targets of the next Business Plan and that the new targets be clear, challenging, measurable and achievable with a more defined focus on the students’ education and performance.

The actions of the Board to seek further training in order to better service the needs of the school community is affirmed, along with their indication that they
are considering revising the Constitution. The implementation of a Code of Conduct for Board members is to be commended.

The independent review process verifies that Oberthur Primary School can sustain and improve its performance, supported by the educational structures in place and with the support and assistance of the School Board and School Parents and Citizens' Association.
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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 our assessment of the evidence provided by Oberthur 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.

[Signatures]

Graham Rixon, Lead Reviewer
13 August 2013
Date

Megan Phillips, Reviewer
13 August 2013
Date

Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services
15/8/13
Date