

# Review Findings

**Greenwood College 2014**

## **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, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority 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.

The Department of Education Services does not endorse any commercial organisation, product or service mentioned in this report.

The Department of Education Services can only guarantee the authenticity of original documents. This document is uncontrolled once printed.

*To help people with disabilities obtain access to information, this document can be provided in alternative format on request. Please contact [ips@des.wa.gov.au](mailto:ips@des.wa.gov.au) with specific requests or telephone 08 94411900.*

2014/33161 *Independent Review Findings*

## **School and Review Details**

**Principal:** Ms Joanne Harris

**Board Chair:** Mr Brett Tooker

**School Location:** 79 Coolibah Drive Greenwood WA 6024

**School Classification:** Class 6 SHS

**Number of Students:** 756

**Reviewers:** Mr Keith Newton (Lead) and Dr Steffan Silcox

**Review Dates:** 3, 10 and 11 November 2014

## **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 wellbeing
- 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 which was presented to the reviewers at the commencement of the review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review conclusions, reviewers were provided 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
- School Curriculum and Standards Authority Year 12 Student Achievement data.

The Department of Education Services lead reviewer met with the Principal and the Board Chair on day one to determine the school's conclusions from its self-review. Subsequently, reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of inquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for days two and three was then negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During these two days the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with 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?***

Greenwood College became an Independent Public School (IPS) in 2012. The school has an enrolment of 756 FTE students, inclusive of Intensive English Centre (IEC) students. The school has an Index of Community

Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1026. A large proportion of the college's enrolment (>50%) comprises out-of-boundary students and is drawn collectively from 52 public and private schools.

The school is located 18 kilometres north of Perth and 13 kilometres from the Joondalup town centre. It is fully air conditioned with a range of facilities including art, science, home economics, gymnasium and design and technology areas, a combined library/information and communication technology (ICT) centre and some partly enclosed undercover areas. It also has designated classrooms to accommodate the IEC and the specialist aviation program. Since becoming an IPS there has been some significant investment in the school's physical environment, the most recent of which is the current million dollar toilet upgrades.

The IEC, the ESL support program, and the aviation and specialist sport programs provide a focus that pervades many aspects of the school's learning and teaching and practices. The school is also registered to enrol fee-paying international students of which there were 40 from a wide range of countries enrolled at the time of the review.

The school's stated purpose is to develop the cognitive, social and physical skills of students so that they can develop an informed, balanced attitude to life and can participate as effective members of society. It has a defined set of values relating to social, personal and environmental responsibility which are encapsulated in its ethos of 'Learn, Grow, Change'.

The school has a majority of experienced staff with little turnover. There are three deputy principals, five heads of departments, four teachers-in-charge, a program coordinator and a manager of student services. The flexibility of IPS has allowed the Principal to gradually change the staff profile in terms of experience and background to meet the identified needs of the school.

The school has established informal partnerships with both the Edith Cowan and Curtin universities to facilitate student post-secondary transition opportunities and tutoring programs. The Board expressed an interest in further pursuing external partnerships to enhance educational opportunities for its students.

The school's website is in the process of being overhauled to make it more user-friendly and pertinent in meeting the expectations as a communication mechanism. When completed the website will be able to facilitate greater communication within the school parent and student community and will include the Annual Report for 2013 and other relevant school, student and community information.

### **The School's Self-Review Process**

#### ***How effective was the school's self-review in accounting for its performance during the period of the DPA and Business Plan?***

The Business Plan (2012-2014) outlines the targets and whole-school strategies aimed to achieve by the end of 2014. The Business Plan, as presented for the review, is a revised document based on the original plan developed in 2012 and is a response to the signed DPA that was developed in consultation with the staff and Board at the beginning of 2012.

The Plan identifies whole-school strategies and what is termed benchmark targets in three priority areas: 'Teaching and learning', with a focus on: student learning and classroom practice; 'Safe and Caring Learning Environment', that has a focus on academic and personal excellence and positive student behaviours; and 'Information Communication Technology', which aims to embed technology in the learning and teaching practices of the school. Associated with this are annual operational plans that contain revised targets and outline what staff are expected to do to ensure targets in the original Business Plan will be achieved as far as possible by the end of 2014.

Each of the three priority areas are underpinned by detailed annual school improvement planning with detailed scope and sequence documentation which identify strategies that are complemented by a schedule of management information systems (MIS) data to be collected. Based on the analysis of performance in the previous year, targets and strategies are modified for the coming year. It was evident from the documentation provided and the discussions with the reviewers that the leadership and staff of the school are using annual school improvement plans to guide pedagogy, which is seen by stakeholders as articulating the reality of some of the excellent practices identified in the school.

In line with the ethos of the school, there is a clear focus on student learning and school-wide pedagogy that incorporates cooperative and collaborative planning and teaching practices. The school employs a range of school-moderated, standardised and faculty-devised assessment tools to monitor student progress.

In presenting the self-review, the Principal provided a rationale for the selection of each priority area, the level of achievement desired against targets and the strategies that the school is employing to monitor and report on the resulting student performance outcomes.

The Principal regularly reports student progress to the Board as was evidenced in board minutes presented to the reviewers. A discussion with board members indicated not only was school performance information provided but also that the Principal had briefed members on how to interpret the data presented. The school community is informed of progress through the Annual Report that contains an assessment of the degree to which the school has achieved the milestone strategies presented in the Business Plan.

The Board and school leadership recognise that a review of the Business Plan paradigm, including the way school priorities in both the academic and affective domains will be addressed in the 2015-2017 iteration, will need to commence before the end of the 2014 school year.

The school self-assessment process includes the analysis of data on student academic performance, including results from National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) testing and Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) performance. In addition, the school conducts triennial staff, student and parent surveys to identify perceptions about school operations to assist in planning for improvement. Surveys on specific issues linked to the focus area of creating a 'Safe and Supportive Learning Environment' have been initiated in order to maintain levels of student engagement.

The reviewers were provided with evidence that the College has invested significant resources in addressing staff ICT knowledge and classroom practice. There is still work to be undertaken to complete planning for changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and to address NAPLAN and OLNA issues that have been identified in whole-school data presented in documentation to both the Board and to the reviewers.

In summary, school self-assessment processes are developing and becoming more mature as the full implications and potential of IPS are explored by the school and are being well led by the school executive team, contributing to ongoing refinement of educational provision at the school. The reviewers commend the level of involvement of stakeholder groups in the assessment of programs that demonstrate school accountability to the community.

### **School Performance-Student Learning**

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

The school has reviewed student achievement and other data to determine progress against defined benchmark targets. The review of all areas provides it with data to inform decision-making and planning. While the Business Plan 2012-2014 has been revised since the DPA was initiated, the three identified priority areas for improvement, each with specific milestones, have generally remained constant.

Specific performance milestones along with a number of targets are listed for each priority area in the Business Plan and some of these are identified as whole-school strategies and others as targets that can be measured in a quantifiable way. There is an emphasis on achieving better results and providing greater challenge, and improved outcomes for more able students through ability level differentiation. This is clearly reflected in the annual school improvement plan documentation, an emphasis on the teaching of explicit skills in numeracy and language, small group and collaborative processes, and enhanced collaborative teaching strategies.

While student progress is continually monitored by the school administration, individual students identified as being at severe educational risk in their academic progress are monitored by the student service team and individual education plans (IEPs) developed for them.

The specific, quantifiable NAPLAN targets for both literacy and mathematics are stated in broad terms and seek to have Year 9 students achieving results above like schools with an increase in student numbers in the top 20% of students in like schools by 2014.

The 2013 NAPLAN results for the school indicate that the areas of numeracy, spelling and grammar and punctuation were as expected when compared to like schools, but were not uniform in terms of like-school and State-wide comparisons. The results for reading and writing were below like schools and at around State means for these areas. Analysis by the school shows it did not reach all of its literacy and numeracy targets as specified in its Business Plan 2012-2014.

The school's discernment has resulted in an analysis which suggested its teaching focus was on addressing those students below the benchmark and this may have resulted in more able students not being sufficiently challenged. This assessment is verified by the 2014 data which shows the percentage of Year 9 students in the top two proficiency bands as still below like schools in reading and spelling and ATAR results below expectation when compared to like schools in close proximity to it.

The WACE student performance data in the sciences 2011 to 2013 has students performing at the expected level in all but physics, which for two out of the three years of the current DPA, has performed below the State mean. Likewise, student performance in the humanities shows that over the past triennium students were ranked at the State mean in history and economics, but below the

State mean in geography. The reviewers maintain that these results are at odds with the general efficacy of the school's approaches to academic programs.

The school's response to the 2013 data has been an increase in staff access to professional learning and encouragement of greater ability level differentiation. It has also focused each faculty in responding with small group and collaborative processes and enhanced teaching strategies that placed emphasis on achieving better results and greater challenge for more able students.

The school administration regularly examine data and student work in connection with performance standards, learning outcomes, rubrics, and work exemplars; staff use these data to focus efforts (i.e., NAPLAN Year 9 and OLNA Year 10). The staff also view external circumstances as an impetus to change programs and practices to better meet student needs and improve student achievement. Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to curricula and teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's key standards and curricula, thus providing actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding achievement.

The Principal has ensured that staff have access to an appropriate program of professional learning to ensure they have the necessary curriculum and pedagogic knowledge to inform learning programs and teaching strategies as presented in the Business Plan.

It is acknowledged the staff place an emphasis on gathering data to facilitate the identification of students at risk and as demonstrated by the detailed analysis of NAPLAN, OLNA and other data, and its focus on students demonstrating appropriate outcome attainment against both internal and external performance measures. Targets that focus on quantifiable achievement in the Western Australian Curriculum with particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy have provided a useful guide for staff as they address the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) imperatives for 2015 and onwards.

### **School Performance-Quality of the Learning Environment**

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

The reviewers were able to verify the school has a common vision and an ethos that guides its day-to-day practices, including professional learning which is related to contemporary pedagogy and the direction set by the College's leadership in association with its Board.

Evidence of inclusive practices and planning to meet the learning needs of all students was sighted and identified through documentation provided and verified through a range of classroom visits. Class work was seen to be purposeful with students engaged in challenging and meaningful learning activities. There were no obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems requiring intervention by teachers or those in leadership positions. The very successful IEC and ESL programs have been particularly relevant in meeting the needs of students as student performance from this area demonstrates. The reviewers were able to actively engage with IEC students and noted the diversity of nationalities (in excess of 45) and the excellent language outcomes that were being achieved. Staff commitment to the IEC programs is commendable.

The school actively and effectively promotes and values teacher development. This is demonstrated through the work of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) coordinator and committee whose

role has included planning collaboratively with teachers, mentoring lessons, supporting, guiding and advising staff on relevant resources and guiding their use of ICT as a pedagogic tool in respect to the implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum. Staff reported there is a shared approach to professional learning which is linked to the school's intention to improve learning outcomes.

Staff have undertaken professional development in the Western Australian Curriculum under the leadership of the various heads of learning areas. In addition, the majority of senior school students (Years 11 and 12) are given access to school-initiated tutoring programs. Links have been established with the Edith Cowan University and local community and business organisations to promote both academic and vocational work placement pathway programs.

The school's attention to pastoral care is commendable. There is evidence that the emphasis through the PLC initiative on school-wide pedagogy has made a very real and positive difference to the quality of school life for students and is contributing to the standard of student achievement being attained.

The greater emphasis on resiliency, accompanied by the restorative justice approach of staff, is integral to this aspect of the school's learning environment.

Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school, including the development of a number of strategies to encourage their involvement. It is anticipated by the school administration that effective partnerships with parents and the wider community established on trust and mutual respect will enhance its reputation. This approach was evident in the culture of interaction that was reported by the parents and observed in the course of the school visit.

The reviewers were able to verify students as thoughtful and conscious of 'doing their best to succeed' and with a positive attitude and greater engagement with their teachers and their learning. Students valued the efforts that teachers were making to provide a positive and challenging learning environment for them while also acknowledging their teachers always expect high standards in learning outcomes and behaviour.

The staff are commended on their willingness to commit to developing and implementing a culture of collaboration and a school-wide approach to successful learning. Individual student progress and talents are valued and achievements are celebrated. Staff are encouraged and empowered to initiate evidence-based change on a whole-school basis to ensure teaching and learning practices are effective.

In meeting with parents and board members, the reviewers were able to affirm their high regard for the school. Parents, in particular, expressed their appreciation of staff for their honesty and respect, provision of an environment where students build confidence and social skills and a commitment and a genuine interest in the students.

The Parents and Citizens' Association actively supports the school in providing additional resources through its fundraising activities.

Discussions with staff and students and observations, including classroom visits, confirm the students are learning in a supportive and positive learning environment. New structures and collaborative processes developed through the IPS flexibilities are enabling staff to implement strategies that ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

The academic and social environment is well supported by a developing distributed leadership model. The Principal and deputy principals have a strategic role in leading planning, analysis of data and monitoring the improvement agenda. Designated heads of department and teacher leaders play an important role in working with staff to implement whole-school strategies to address the aim to improve student learning outcomes. Collaborative meetings with staff are held regularly to discuss pedagogy, shared practice and student performance. It is evident that these collaborative practices have resulted in improved teaching and learning outcomes at the school.

There is determination in Greenwood College to: make every student a successful learner; have sound teaching in every classroom; ensure the school is a good school; provide practical support for all staff; build confidence in the school and deliver meaningful accountability. The model of distributed leadership and collaborative practice to improve student learning is commended as informed and successful practice.

### **School Performance-Sustainability**

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

Leadership is appropriately focused on rigorous data analysis and review coordinated across the school by the administration team. These factors enable the school to continue and intensify its improvement agenda.

The school has implemented structures and strategies that are expected to promote more effective student learning and improved outcomes particularly in literacy and numeracy and in WACE results. Its explicit teaching ethos, where and when appropriate, and effective practices are anticipated to result in whole-school improvement. There is evidence, through wide-ranging testing, such as that provided by NAPLAN and OLNA, supported by a well-planned teacher assessment and ongoing moderation schedule, that the school has established appropriate self-review practices which enhance the analysis of learning and teaching practices.

The school is increasingly focusing on teaching improvement, particularly in the literacy and numeracy priority areas, where whole-school approaches have been adopted for monitoring and reporting of target progress and achievement with evaluation of improvement strategies. Ongoing sharing of information and informed decision-making occurs within collaborative cross-curricula teams.

The Board continues to develop its understanding of its responsibility and accountability role in the governance of the school. In meeting with the reviewers, board members acknowledged the function and practices of the Board are a 'work in progress'. Board members bring diverse skills and backgrounds and a high level of commitment to the school. Although not all members have attended board training to date, this is an ongoing focus to ensure the Board has a clear understanding of its role in the strategic development and sustainability of the school's improvement agenda.

The role of the Board into the next triennium will become even more significant as it sets directions for the school through strategic planning and the development of the next iteration of the Business Plan.



There is evidence the school provides parents with the opportunity to work together to improve the educational outcomes for their children as evidenced by the quality and timeliness of teacher to parent communication. The school has achieved an attendance rate of 93%, which is well above the State average. The student services team carefully monitors student attendance at school and with the assistance of year coordinators takes affirmative action to ensure absences are minimised and parents informed when they are unexplained.

Parents indicated they were welcome in the school and that teachers valued their interactions. Additionally, parents indicated teachers provide valuable feedback on student progress, particularly if a child has a learning difficulty or a social-emotional issue that needs addressing.

Organisational structures and ongoing facilitation of collaborative processes are enabling staff to implement strategies that ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

It was noted that the Business Plan does not address the school's response to the Department of Education and School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) priority initiatives for transition and full implementation in 2015. This is to be addressed in the next iteration of the Business Plan (2015-2017).

Based on the analysis and reflection on targets, adjustment of structures and evidence supporting a developing culture of self-analysis, the school is well placed to sustain progress for student achievement. The staff recognise sustainability will be achieved through shared leadership, an emphasis on school-wide pedagogy and a stated ethos and culture being embedded in all aspects of teaching, learning and leadership.

## **Conclusion**

### ***A concluding statement on the extent to which the school has met its targets and the commitments in the DPA and Business Plan.***

Greenwood College provides a caring and welcoming setting for its students. Discussions with staff and students and observations, including classroom visits, confirm the students are learning in a supportive and positive learning environment. Negotiated approaches to learning and teaching, development of structures and collaborative processes are enabling staff to implement strategies that ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

There is determination in the school to: make every student a successful learner; have sound teaching in every classroom; ensure the school is an effective school; provide practical support for all staff; build confidence in the school, and deliver meaningful accountability. Board members identify the flexibility given to the school through IPS, particularly in its selection of staff, as being very successful in matching staff to the ethos and the culture of the school.

The school has implemented policies and practices that enable the staff and parents to work together to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for all its students. Meetings with parents, students and staff confirm high expectations are held for student learning and that the staff are responsive to issues that sometimes arise.

The school has demonstrated, through the review process, that planning decisions about the learning program are based to a large extent on the analysis of student data. Within this, the staff acknowledge some targets, as outlined in its Business Plan 2012-2014, have not been met. Nevertheless, the staff have shown a capacity to adjust the learning program and allocate additional resources to improve the learning outcomes for all students.

The school has established accountability processes, a well-supported school improvement and operational planning paradigm, effective data collection and moderation policies and a collaborative team structure, characterised by an expressed culture of both formal and informal distributed leadership and high expectations of student outcomes. As a consequence, the school retains the potential to undertake a significant drive to improve student performance.

#### *2014/33161 Independent Review Findings*

##### Commendations

*The following areas are commended:*

- the effectiveness of the model of distributed leadership and collaborative practice being implemented by the school to improve student learning both at a formal and informal level
- the attention to pastoral care, in particular, the increased emphasis on resiliency and the restorative justice approach
- the commitment of staff to developing and implementing a school-wide approach to successful learning and teaching practices
- the focus on literacy and numeracy and the development of appropriate WACE pathways as the key elements for improvement
  
- the open and transparent analysis of NAPLAN, OLN and ATAR data and the fostering of literacy and numeracy explicit teaching where and when appropriate
- the emphasis on gathering data to facilitate the identification of students at risk, as demonstrated by the analysis of teacher IEP information, the whole school data collection and assessment rubric and extensive use of NAPLAN, OLN, ATAR data and other MIS data to inform decision making
- the level of involvement of stakeholder groups in the assessment of programs that demonstrate school accountability to the community.

##### Areas for Improvement

*The following areas for improvement are identified:*

Maintain the focus on the following areas within the College's improvement and review agenda:

- ensure system and government agenda initiatives are evident in the 2015-2017 business planning process review the effectiveness of current Business Plan targets for improving and monitoring student performance in preparation for the development of the next iteration of the Business Plan for 2015-2017

- Board members pursue a greater understanding of the role of the Board in an Independent Public School
- the Board pursue a more formal involvement in long-term planning.

### **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 Greenwood College 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.

12 December 2014

Mr Richa Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services Date