Disclaimer

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

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

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 with specific requests or telephone 08 9441 1900.
School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Bill Boylan
Board Chair: Mr Bill Boylan
School Location: 87 St Stephens Crescent Tapping WA 6065
School Classification: PS Class 5
Number of Students: 772
Reviewers: Mr Michael Duncan (Lead); Dr Steffan Silcox
Review Dates: 16 and 17 September, 2015

Purpose of the Review

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

The focus of the review is on:

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

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

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

- the MySchool® 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?

Tapping Primary School opened in 2007 and is located approximately 30 kilometres north of the Perth CBD in the suburb of Tapping. The school's location and catchment encompass the Tapping and Mariginiup areas and includes both privately built and Department of Housing homes.

In 2015, the school has an enrolment of 772 students in 29 classes from Kindergarten to Year 6. The enrolment trend has stabilised in numbers, down from an enrolment peak that was in excess of a 1000 students in 2010. The decline in numbers can be attributed to firstly, the Year 7 cohort's transfer to secondary school and secondly, to the establishment of Springhill Primary School, previously an annex of Tapping Primary School. At the time of review the school has seven Indigenous students (0.9%), 33 students with disability (4.3%) and 116 students identified as Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) (15%). While families come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, in the main, students are drawn from families at the middle of this economic spectrum. The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is currently 1026.

Rather than formalised partnerships, the school has been keen to establish networks with a number of government and non-government departments, inclusive of the City of Wanneroo, the Perth Zoo and Good Samaritan industries. These have benefited the staff in their efforts to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

The Principal currently chairs the Tapping Primary School Board. After discussions with the existing board members and the Principal it was recommended that the Principal relinquish the chairperson position to facilitate better separation of governance and management functions. Further, it was recommended that the Board explore the opportunity to engage more external community representation on it. As no member of the Board has had training in respect to its role and governance responsibilities, it is also recommended that professional development be arranged for Board members in respect to the functions and responsibilities of a school board.

Minutes of meetings show that the current Board is conversant with and engaged in the review of school performance and the direction articulated in
the original 2013–2015 iteration of the Business Plan. The school’s planned rejuvenation of its Board in 2015–2016 with the intention to broaden the range of expertise available will contribute to, and enhance, school governance. This will also require the Board investigating and implementing strategies that will raise its profile in the school community; an issue raised by parents, staff and existing board members as a concern.

In 2014, the overall student attendance rate was 93.5%, which is similar to that of like schools and comparable with the percentage for all Western Australian Public Schools. The attendance rate for Aboriginal students was 88.7%, which is slightly lower than that recorded by like schools. The student transiency rate is approximately 11%.

The school has a staff of 62 full-time equivalents comprising 49 teaching staff and 13 support staff. The average age of all staff is approximately 50 years, which would indicate that the school may have stability in its teaching workforce over the next decade.
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?

Evidence was provided during the course of the review that demonstrated the staff and Board were informed and are becoming engaged with the school’s self-review processes. The school has developed a Business Plan in line with its DPA with the Department of Education. The minutes of the Board meetings confirm that its members have been provided with an opportunity to review school performance, financial statements and participate in setting some aspects of the Business Plan directions for the school. The 2013–2015 Business Plan incorporates a set of school negotiated virtues and beliefs which are expanded upon in the school’s annual operational planning documentation. The current draft 2015 iteration of the school’s Business Plan is a continuation of the 2013 plan.

The Business Plan has 12 focus areas divided into those that specifically relate to students, teachers, parents and those designed to enhance school community interactions. Those areas which directly pertain to student learning include: improving student standards of achievement with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy; fostering student personal and social capabilities, and, promoting students respect for inclusivity and diversity.

The teacher specific development focus areas are listed as the development of teacher knowledge, professional practice and engagement. In respect to parents, the focus areas are centred on identifying and utilising parent expertise, educative and reporting programs and establishing partnerships that facilitate inclusivity and diversity. Finally, there are specific focus areas associated with the development of community interactions with the school: specifically the identification and utilisation of community expertise and educative and enrichment programs.

Progress against the targets in each area is reported to the school community through the annual reporting process, which is initially considered and ratified by the School Board. It was evident during the review process that performance against the DPA and the previous 2013–2015 Business Plan targets has been assessed and reported by the school’s administration. There was considerable discussion between the reviewers, staff and the school administration concerning the Business Plan and associated targets. A telling comment made by the staff was that ‘the school is better than its plan’. It is
recommended that the school administration revisit the current iteration of the school’s Business Plan to more closely align targets with school focus and priority areas.

Annual operational plans have been developed to support progress toward achieving stated global and individual focus areas as reported in the Business Plan. Each focus area is assessed and where necessary a plan for improvement established with existing teaching and learning programs amended as student performance data is aggregated and made available.

Data provided to the reviewers on student performance indicated that, while student performance in literacy and numeracy has substantially improved, there has been recognition among staff that in order to continue to improve overall results, a sustained focus on the performance of individual students has been required. The school administration maintained that the intention of such a focus was to improve student outcomes on an ongoing basis and achieve the desired student performance levels. To facilitate this, the school has adopted literacy and numeracy programs such as ‘Sound Waves’, along with First Steps strategies that are supported by some explicit teaching.

In order to embed the focus areas of the Business Plan into school practice, collaborative working groups of teachers and support staff have been established. The school has fostered these discussion groups and ongoing collaboration among staff to facilitate Western Australian curriculum implementation. Staff acknowledged the effectiveness of these collaborative sessions and the impact that they have had on promoting a quality teaching and learning culture in the school.

A variety of behaviour management strategies are employed in the school inclusive of the ‘Play is the Way’ program that contributes to the Behaviour Education and Self-Management (BESM) model that is aligned to a behaviour matrix employed by the school administration with expected behaviours modelled by staff. This model underpins the school’s ethos and was identified as achieving desired behavioural outcomes. The model is widely supported by teachers, students and parents.

Non-academic targets in respect of attitudes to learning, goal setting and confidence have, according to teacher anecdotal feedback, met the desired levels, and overall have shown continuous improvement. These targets are not easily measured in an objective manner and have been the subject of discussions in staff professional learning activities. Measurement of the
affective domain of learning (social/emotional development) is an ongoing discussion being undertaken by staff through professional learning and collaborative groups.

It is clear that the Business Plan is a document that will be subject to further analysis by school leadership, teachers and the Board and a review of the 2016–2018 plan in draft form is now being considered by staff, particularly in respect to ensuring targets are an accurate reflection of the school’s identified focus areas. It is recommended that the staff pursue the planning review in readiness for the collaborative discussions scheduled to take place towards the end of 2015 that will underpin the formulation of the 2016 school development plan.
School Performance—Student Learning

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

Since its inception in 2007, the school has had a strong focus on virtues teaching, in particular the approaches advocated through the BESM program. Commitment to this school direction from staff has been significant. The school has adopted a coaching and mentor position with other schools interested in adopting this program. This is reflected in time given to professional learning and in the way people have understood the importance of whole-school strategies and the need to implement these in their classrooms.

The reviewers were provided with very clear evidence of the degree to which the BESM model had positively impacted on the school’s learning and teaching ethos and culture. Staff and students in particular were quite effusive in their support of the program and its emphasis on virtues and values acquisition. School staff are commended for the culture of professional engagement evident throughout the school and in particular their respective teaching learning hubs.

The school operates an extension and enrichment program along with specialist programs in physical education, performing arts, information and communication technology (ICT) and science. These are augmented by specialist teachers in mathematics and literacy including trained ‘Getting it Right’ personnel.

The school’s 2014 Annual Report documentation indicates that not all of the targets established in the 2013–2015 iteration of the school’s plan have been met. However, the NAPLAN analysis for Year 3 and 5 indicates that the school is performing as expected across most areas of analysis in line with like schools, with the exception of writing in Year 5 where students are identified as working above expectations. The school operates with a scheduled management information system data collection timetable however, it is recommended that this be reviewed and strengthened through further negotiation with staff.

The staff relies significantly on teacher generated classroom and student performance data in the current management of information processes. There is a strong emphasis in the school on early childhood on-entry assessments.
The Department of Education’s on-entry assessment format is used for Pre-primary and Screen of Communication Skills (SOCS) testing is used in the Kindergarten.

An impressive learning, and students at educational risk (SAER) support process is employed by the school. The longitudinal data, particularly at key transition points K–P, P–1 and Yr 6 to secondary, was of high quality and allowed teachers to appropriately differentiate the curriculum due to the depth of knowledge staff have of each individual student.

Data provided on student achievement indicated that while student performance in literacy and numeracy has substantially improved there has been a recognition among staff that to continue to improve overall results, a sustained focus on the performance of individual students was required. The staff has therefore developed a very detailed individual education plan (IEP) process with student plans reviewed fortnightly by staff and with parents on a semester basis. The school administration maintained that such a focus improves student outcomes and achieves the desired performance levels on an ongoing basis. To facilitate this, the school has adopted literacy and numeracy programs that include explicit teaching strategies. The staff is commended on the quality of the SAER data and the resulting IEP’s and individual behaviour plans (IBP’s) that have evolved from an analysis of this student data.

Anecdotal evidence indicates learning and teaching expectations set for attitude, effort and learning behaviours are being achieved. This evidence includes feedback from local intake secondary schools into which the students transition. The data is also sourced from student reports, which include an assessment of student attitudes. However, these judgements are subjective and not easily validated. This area of student performance remains important to teachers and discussions have been held in the professional learning hubs. The staff intends to continue to focus on this domain as a target and to explore ways to improve attitudes to learning and to measure progress made.

The staff has effectively implemented Phase 1 of the Western Australian Curriculum and sees the further development of Phase 2 as a future challenge that will need to be addressed in the next iteration of the school’s Business Plan, 2016–2018. The school is also on track to meet the National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education (NQS) requirements with staff having undertaken professional learning in respect to the standard.
School Performance—Quality of the Learning Environment

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

The school was built in a cluster block classroom design. Due to the large student population in the early years of its existence, a significant number of transportable buildings were deployed. The school has well-maintained learning and teaching facilities, inclusive of some new classroom areas that were completed in 2011 under the BER program. However, the school still has six transportable classrooms on site and any further development of facilities would be hampered by the limiting size of the school site.

The school has a focus on ICT development, and electronic whiteboards complement both student and teacher access to technology in the classrooms. The school’s Business Plan has ICT as a priority and this has ensured ongoing funded upgrades to classroom infrastructure and facilities, with every class from K to Yr 6 having the use of an interactive whiteboard, a teaching tool that is used proficiently by staff. The school employs external consultants to mentor key identified staff in ICT as a teaching tool and they in turn mentor and provide professional development for their colleagues in the school.

With the support of the Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C) the school has developed its resources to enhance learning and teaching and to provide an attractive physical environment. The P&C has indicated that current fundraising endeavours are being targeted at the development of Kindergarten and Pre-Primary facilities and storage areas for performing arts.

The reviewers found the school provides a curriculum characterised by inclusive programs of learning that contribute and improve students’ cognitive, social and emotional learning and well-being. Meetings with students, Board members and parent representatives provided evidence of inclusive practices, planning to meet the learning needs of all students and strong community support for the school.

There is an expectation held by staff that every student can learn and will achieve at his or her potential and this is accepted by students and supported by parents. Classes are calm, caring and productive with teachers using evidence-based instructional strategies. Student attendance and engagement is at the State average across all student groups and where behaviour issues
emerge, they are quickly resolved, initially by the teacher and further if necessary, by a member of the school's administrative team.

Collaborative planning, curriculum delivery and monitoring of student performance are evident at every level within the school. This includes systematic, formative and summative assessment to establish learning needs and the implementation of a range of inclusive learning and pastoral care programs to cater for the needs of the student population.

The importance of accessing ongoing professional learning aimed at improving classroom practice is acknowledged and supported by all stakeholders and the school budget reflects this orientation with a sustained allocation to teacher professional learning. While the members of the school administration currently conduct performance management with staff, there is a developing willingness in the school to explore what are seen as more relevant processes to engage teachers in a conversation about their teaching. Staff are yet to engage in processes that will facilitate critique by colleagues and a willingness to accept others in their classrooms to observe their teaching. The school’s leadership is currently pursuing this dialogue.

The reviewers were able to verify through interviews with staff, parents and students, as well as first-hand observation, all parties interact in a positive manner. Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school and are welcomed as partners in their children’s learning. It was also evident that students are articulate, thoughtful and conscious of using appropriate behaviours and doing their best to succeed. This is being achieved within a framework of mutual trust and respect between all stakeholders with students actively presenting a positive attitude and engagement toward the school, teachers, and their learning.

In meeting with students, parents and Board members, the reviewers were able to affirm the high regard in which the school is held. Parents in particular expressed their appreciation of staff, their honesty and respect, their provision of an environment where students build confidence and social skills, and their commitment and genuine interest in the students. Parent survey data also indicates that they have respect and confidence in the school, the outcomes it is achieving and in its staff and leadership.

The Principal, Board and staff work together in a supportive way with a sense of belonging and respect. There is a clear commitment and belief that the school is serving the learning needs of its students and in doing so is meeting the aspirations of the community.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

The Principal and three Deputy Principals have provided a stable administration for the school for nearly eight years. The Principal has begun to strategically develop the workforce to accommodate future staff movements.

It was evident to the reviewers that the school administration and Board are developing an understanding of the role of the Board in the governance of the school. Together, they are establishing processes that will ensure that required policies, documentation and operating procedures are effective.

The staff is aware that curriculum and teaching practices need to be well supported to ensure they remain pedagogically responsive. To this end the staff has implemented an appropriate range of programs encompassing academic, cultural and emotional focuses to meet the needs of students and their families. The school’s inclusiveness and family orientation is a great strength and has a positive impact on student, parent and community engagement. New approaches and contemporary technologies are integrated into existing teaching practices to enhance student-learning opportunities. A corresponding consistent approach to pastoral care complements the learning program and supports the development of behaviourally and socially responsible students who have a developing sense of self-worth and ability to learn. All stakeholders welcome the commonality of expectations and understand that it serves as a platform for all parties to use in lifting standards.

Staff actively seek and respond to performance data from a wide range of sources. This includes information sourced from other staff, students, parents and the wider community, as well as student achievement data. It was evident through the review process that the school employs appropriate data collection practices. It is recommended the next iteration of the Business Plan outlines the full range of data collection sources that the school employs.

The school’s planning documents indicate that it is appropriately implementing the Western Australian Curriculum. This was confirmed by reviewers’ visits to classrooms.

The teaching staff are all experienced and most have a significant length of service at the school, with many of them foundation members. Of the teaching
staff, 17 are senior teachers and four are Level 3 Classroom Teachers. Additional support is provided where required across the school by a team of education assistants, all of whom have certificate level qualifications.

Over the period of the previous and current Business Plans, the school has been implementing the BESM. Teachers have attended professional learning and have provided staff from other schools with coaching in the model. Resources have been purchased to support the model’s implementation and Key Teachers identified to champion and support the process. In addition, teaching hubs have been established with shared Duties Other than Teaching Time (DOTT) structured to allow for group planning and the sharing of teaching strategies and resources. Consequently, the BESM model of teaching and professional practice is well established and embedded in the school.

There is also careful attention to integrating operational plan targets, departmental initiatives and the determination to progress the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Standards (AITSL) into the performance management process, thereby providing a focus for continuous improvement in an environment of collegial support.

The administration of the school leads staff processes for gathering evidence as part of the self-assessment process. This is framed around an analysis of student achievement and a review of activity in the areas of literacy and numeracy, teaching and learning and resources.

The school’s self-assessment model as it stands, and is continuing to develop, involves the school leaders, staff and the Board, and is reflected in the Annual Reports.

The school administration was able to demonstrate that resource management and workforce planning are appropriately and effectively targeted to align with the DPA and school focus areas. There is written evidence that the staff are attempting to ensure performance is sustained and continually improved.

Staff have appropriate access to resources and professional learning to sustain their roles within the school.

The school is well-placed to maintain its drive to improve student and school performance.
Conclusion

It was evident to the reviewers that Tapping Primary School staff have used the opportunities provided through IPS status to drive a culture of continual improvement orientation through a well-considered learning and teaching paradigm across the school. Discussions with members of the Board, the teaching and support staff, parents and students confirmed that the school has established a positive and collaborative, caring and supportive culture within its community.

The school has a very clear ethos in its organisation and operates to foster and enable all students to achieve their academic and social potential.

The professional knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff, and the expectations of the community to create quality learning and teaching programs to maximise the educational opportunities for each student, was evident throughout the review.

The school employs a school improvement cycle which links school-based data collection and analysis and other significant drivers to the key focus areas of the Business Plan and this is translated into the annual operational plans.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the culture of professional engagement among all members of the staff which is evident in the work of the professional learning groups which focus on both teaching and learning programs and on school culture
- the quality of the school's SAER data and the resulting IEPs and IBPs that have evolved from an analysis of this information
- the quality of the differentiated curriculum that teachers have developed as a response to their depth of knowledge of each individual child's learning needs
- the school's aspirant and succession planning and the commitment of the administrative team to a distributed leadership model.
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- the Principal relinquish the Chair of the Board position to facilitate better separation of governance and management functions
- the Board explore opportunities to engage more external community representation
- professional development is arranged for Board members in respect to the functions and responsibilities of a School Board
- the Board investigate and implement strategies that will raise its profile in the school community
- the school administration revisit the current iteration of the school’s Business Plan to more closely align targets with school focus and priority areas
- the staff pursue the planning review in readiness for the collaborative discussions scheduled to take place towards the end of 2015 that will underpin the formulation of the 2016 school development plan
- the management information system data collection timetable be reviewed and strengthened through further negotiation with staff.
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 Tapping Primary School as part of the Department of Education Services’ independent review process. The Principal/Board Chair has had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.

Mr Mike Duncan, Lead Reviewer
26 October 2015
Date

Dr Steffan Silcox, Reviewer
26 October 2015
Date

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services
2/11/15
Date