



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Education Services**

Carson Street School

2016

Independent Review Findings



**Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools**

Disclaimer

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

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

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 John Exeter
Board Chair:	Mr Les Ozsdoley
School Location:	19 Carson St, East Victoria Park WA
Number of Students:	65 (Semester 1, 2016)
Reviewers:	Professor Chris Forlin (Lead) Mrs Margaret Brede
Review Dates:	30 and 31 March, 1 April, 2016
Initial Review	2012

Purpose of the Review

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

The focus of the review is on:

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

Review Methodology

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

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

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

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's 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?

Carson Street School is situated in the inner metropolitan suburb of East Victoria Park and became an Independent Public School in 2010. As the only Primary Education Support School in Western Australia it caters for students requiring extensive support with many having co-morbid medical conditions that require close management by the school nurses and staff. Although most students come from the south-eastern corridor, about 50% travel a significant distance and their socio-economic background varies widely. The school site incorporates clusters of bright, attractive classrooms, a hydrotherapy pool, a sensory classroom and playgrounds that are soon to be enhanced by the development of a naturescape playground.

The school also operates two satellite classes, offering conductive education programs at Burbridge School and a separate program for children with intellectual disability but not undertaking the conductive education program at Belmay Primary School. The class at Belmay Primary School provides education support tailored to student needs while facilitating integration within the mainstream school. The satellite class at Burbridge School is for children of families in the northern suburbs who are unable to travel to the Carson Street campus.

At the time of the review, there were 55 full-time students enrolled from Pre-primary to Year 6; 12 students in Kindergarten; and an additional 18 students participating in the 0–4 early intervention programs within the 'School for Parents' organisation. Full-time student numbers include those enrolled at the two satellite classes. The school has a number of migrant, refugee and Aboriginal families. School data, supplied by parents on enrolment, identifies only five students whose first language is not English but observations by the reviewers suggest this may not be accurate as teachers report that in just one class of four students, every student had a language background other than English. With communication being a school priority, this is an added challenge.

Student numbers are in a declining trend with an enrolment of 83 in 2014 dropping to 68 in 2015, due largely to the move of Year 7 students to high school.

Further reduction to 65 in 2016 continues this trend although the increase in numbers in the 0–4 early intervention program is translating to increased enrolments in Kindergarten.

Student attendance is a continuing issue as many students are considered medically fragile, with frequent hospital admissions and absences for medical appointments and procedures. The Principal estimates unauthorised absences, excluding medical related absences, to be approximately 2.4%.

The staffing profile shows a number of long-term staff, some of whom have been at the school for close to, or in excess of 20 years. Maternity leave accounts for most of the new staff appointments, with one new graduate and two recent graduates appointed during the period of the current DPA. With 51 education assistants and 19 teachers making up full-time equivalent positions of 41.6 education assistants and 14.2 teachers, the issue of managing part-time staff produces challenges for communication, professional learning and training.

The school has established a wide range of partnerships to support the learning opportunities available to their students including: *Therapy Focus*, the *Conductive Education Charity of Western Australia (CECWA)*, and varied professional and community groups.

Meetings with the Board Chair and members confirmed the broad membership, strong leadership, and that they are fully committed to their roles in supporting the school. The reviewers note the comprehensive document *How Well Do You Know Our School?* provided to board members which provided concise descriptions of major school programs and commonly asked questions.

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?

Carson Street School staff undertook a review against the 2013–2015 Business Plan. Overall targets included two related to attendance and five covering literacy, numeracy, mobility, self-regulation and sensory integration. These were supported by a number of broad strategies and milestones. With the exception of numeracy, each of these has been addressed both qualitatively and using data when possible to monitor attainment. In the area of numeracy, the target was to equal or exceed the anticipated rate of achievement using the *BSquared Group Analysis Program*. Access to this tool, however, was withdrawn in 2013 due to administrative access issues and the staff reports that alternative data collection methods have not enabled them to provide the same level of individual, class- and whole-school analysis as previously. The staff advised that they reinstated the use of *BSquared* in semester 2, 2015 and that this will be used to measure learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, physical development and socialisation for the coming triennium.

The staff completed a detailed review using the *National School Improvement Tool* to gauge achievement against improvement in the quality of classroom teaching and learning across the tool's nine domains. Evidence was provided for achievement and areas for improvement were identified. Annual reviews were undertaken with teaching staff using the *Six Dimensions of Successful Schools*. These were collated and interrogated at a whole-school level. The reviewers concur with the staff in identifying three key areas for improvement at a whole-school level: managing student behaviour, whole-school assessment and moderation, and utilising one program such as the selected *BSquared* program to manage data and monitor progress in student learning.

There is evidence that the staff has responded to some recommendations from their previous IPS School Review 2010–2012. They have also undertaken parent, staff and student surveys, although these were not reported in annual reports as recommended. Business planning capacity has not yet been developed as targets were mostly not measurable as they remained focused on inputs and strategies in the 2013–2015 Business Plan.

There was also little evidence that the Board was monitoring school performance against the DPA. For each of the affirmed items from the

previous IPS review, the staff undertook a self-analysis that outlined the changes made to resolve the highlighted areas. Goals to achieve some of these were included in the current Business Plan.

The staff undertakes detailed annual reviews and reports to the Department of Education on the 0–4 years *Conductive Education* parent and child program.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The staff acknowledged that many of the planned targets in the Business Plan were actually inputs or strategies and assessment against them was, therefore, not directly linked to student learning. Due to the nature of the school, comparisons to like or state schools is not possible.

All measures of progress are individual and mapped against students' individual education plans (IEPs). All students have a very detailed IEP with targets directly related to their special needs. These are collaboratively determined and constantly reviewed and evaluated using anecdotal notes, photographs and portfolios to demonstrate achievements.

In the area of literacy, the main focus of the school for the past three years has been improvement in communication. The target to improve the depth and breadth of *Aided Language Stimulation* (ALS) has been supported by a strong focus on staff development in this area. The ALS strategy is implemented across the whole school and supported by the use of *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* systems (AAC) which include *Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display* (PODD) books and *Aided Language Displays*. The target to increase the number of students using a personal AAC has been achieved; with a reduction from 41.7% of students in 2013 to 21.7% of students in 2015 without an AAC.

Communication has remained a school priority since its time as a Teacher Development School in 2012–2013, with the recent establishment of a communication committee. Communication devices are extensively used including both low- and high-technology systems with many adapted to meet individual students' physical needs. The school has the only State PODD accredited trainer who has provided in-school training for all teachers and more than half of the education assistants. The use of the PODD system was evident across the school for non-verbal and orally challenged students. Significant professional learning has been undertaken by teachers and education assistants in the use of AAC devices. As a result of these efforts, parents and teachers report increased student communication skills and reduced frustration levels.

In the area of numeracy, the staff has focused on number, using class-based checklists from the *Basic Skills Checklist* and IEP targets to monitor student progress. All teachers are in the process of entering data into the *BSquared* program which will monitor student learning across all years. This will allow for detailed interrogation of individual and group data at a whole-school level, while continuing to be supported by in-class curriculum based assessments. Implementation has, however, been protracted and it is critical that baseline data entry is completed so that progress can be mapped from the start of Term 2, 2016.

Staff report that the student attendance targets in the Business Plan were difficult to achieve due to the complex nature of the students' needs; with none being attained. It is important to review the planning of student attendance targets for the next Business Plan to ensure that they are valid for the student population at the school.

Carson Street School is currently the only designated school in the State to offer the *Conductive Education* program for children with motor disabilities from 0–12 years. The program engages highly qualified and trained teachers and was greatly praised by staff and parents. Additional staff at the school have been trained in *Aspects of Conductive Education (ACE)*. The *Conductive Education* program forms part of the primary school curriculum for relevant students, presented by the ACE teachers who are supported by a teacher conductor. Student mobility is assessed regularly for students enrolled in this program by using the *Gross Motor Function Measures*. All children have *Individual Conductive Education* goals. It was evident that data are analysed individually on an annual basis across five key mobility areas, and that program decisions are data informed and individualised; with significant positive outcomes reported on student learning. The program is well-resourced through funding from the CECWA and highly regarded by the parents involved who describe their children's progress and achievement as well beyond any initial prognoses.

Early intervention is a key feature of the school. Two unique programs for children from 0–4 years and their parents are offered. *My Time* is a program for children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition, funded by *School for Parents WA Inc. (SfP)*, a non-profit organisation which receives Federal funding through *Ngala*. *Parent and Child* is a *Conductive Education* program for students with physical and motor impairments below the age of four years and their parents, funded in part by the Department of Education.

The *Non-Government Centre Support for Non-School Organisations* funded the Early Years Centre, completed for the beginning of 2015, where *My Time* and *Parent and Child* sessions are held. Parents report that they are extremely positive about these programs and travel long distances to attend them.

Some classes are using the *Team Teach* approach for behaviour management and the *Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children* for communication. These pedagogies are used flexibly depending upon the needs of each student. There was limited evidence of any significant use of these approaches. The staff is encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach to improve consistency for managing students. Self-regulation is increasingly being managed through the application of the *Positive Behaviour Support* (PBS) program. The PBS is the focus for staff training in 2016 in collaboration with the School of Special Education Needs; with Carson Street School reporting that whole-school application is to be completed by the end of 2017. This is an encouraging step provided that it is fully committed to by all staff. Individual behaviour plans are produced collaboratively with the teacher, school psychologist, and other relevant staff when needed for individual children.

The school has specialist teachers in music, physical education and hydrotherapy. A Sensory Integration Program was implemented in collaboration with an occupational therapist and two school-based coordinators in 2013. Twenty six students participated in the program during 2013–2014. The Principal reports that due to resignations of the occupational therapist and one of the coordinators, the program is currently in 'maintenance'. As the staff indicated that the opportunity to participate in the daily program had resulted in a reduction of behaviour challenges, it is recommended that consideration of the reinstatement of the full program should become a priority for 2016.

To support student learning, a large number of highly effective education assistants are employed across all school years. These are mentored and performance managed by their class teachers. From discussions with the education assistants, it was clear that classrooms were team oriented and that they felt empowered to contribute to planning for the students. Some of the education assistants held specific skills and were trained to implement particular programs.

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 reviewers affirmed through discussions with staff, students, parents and community leaders, that Carson Street School provides a safe, inclusive, attractive environment that focuses clearly on the needs and learning of individual students. Although the values and mission statement are not clearly visible around the school, the discussions indicated that they are firmly embedded in the work of the school community. Furthermore, the staff are led by the School Chaplain in implementing the *Six Kinds of Best Values Framework*, specifically, *Be Kind to Yourself*, *Be Kind to Others*, *Be Kind to the Environment* and *Be the Achieving Kind*, as a platform for values education across the school.

The classrooms and corridors are decorated with carefully presented student art and classroom work, indicative of the respect for individuals in a child-centred environment. The school's holistic approach to learning focuses on each student's individual development; encompassing physical, social and emotional well-being as well as the cognitive aspects of learning.

The well-being of students and staff is a priority. The fragile health and complex medical conditions of the students are catered for by two full-time on-site nursing staff who work collaboratively with parents and teachers to optimise the health and learning outcomes for students. The nursing staff also support the school in promoting *Active Healthy Lifestyles* to maximise positive choices regarding nutrition, physical fitness and personal safety. When the *Active After-School* program ceased, the school accessed Federal funding for a *Sporting Schools Program* run by the physical education specialist. The hydrotherapy pool within the school grounds provides the students with regular weekly swimming opportunities that foster physical fitness and motor skill development whilst providing relaxation, stimulation and stretching exercises.

The school staff places great importance on risk assessment and risk management. As a result, they have trained a risk assessment team (RAT) to advise staff on safe work practices and teach children to identify and avoid unsafe situations.

The RAT had developed and implemented a planned, systematic approach to the use of appropriate occupational health and safety practices, particularly with the manual handling of students; which has reduced the number of workers' compensation claims. Discussions with staff indicate that protective behaviours are addressed in a somewhat *ad hoc* basis, as needs are perceived. The reviewers recommend that a more coordinated, consistent curriculum of protective behaviours be implemented across the school.

A school-wide approach is being adopted for implementation of the *Positive Behaviour Support* (PBS) decision-making framework aimed at improving the academic and behaviour outcomes for students. Staff training has commenced and further workshops throughout the year will ensure all staff receive introductory sessions to enable whole-school participation. A grant from *More Support for Students with Disabilities* (MSSD) enabled the school to develop a classroom behaviour and learning intervention program and a *Functional Behaviour Assessment* on-line tool that will be included in the Department of Education's on-line professional learning suite following successful trials at 10 other schools.

The reviewers note the innovative technology workshops, with a strong emphasis on safety, run by an enthusiastic education assistant. Collaborative planning between classroom teachers and the education assistant produced practical activities for which many students showed a keen interest. Parents reported that students showed great pride in their finished articles. A number of education assistants assumed leadership roles in the school, such as leading the RAT team and participating on the School Board. The leadership opportunities offered to education assistants is commended.

School leaders and staff believe their essential partnership with parents provides invaluable information about the children and is vital to maximising on-going student learning, growth and development. Communication is facilitated through face-to-face discussions, student diaries, newsletters, class noticeboards and electronic means such as the school website, email and *Facebook*. Of note, is the school's attractive annual calendar which included student photographs, important school dates with the latest Annual Report as an introduction. Parent education is offered through regular workshops and coffee mornings which also enable the development of supportive relationships and the reduction of isolation amongst parents.

The SfP, Community Support Officer and school nurse play significant roles in this area. The results of the parents' response to the *National Schools Opinion Survey* indicate a high level of parent satisfaction with the school and its programs.

A strong relationship exists with the Town of Victoria Park with their representation on the school board, the school's use of the George Burnett Leisure Centre and their joint funding with CECWA of the week-long holiday programs of play-based activities for students. These holiday programs are organised and run by school staff and have the added benefit of providing some respite to parents and families.

Therapy Focus is a partnership having a major impact on student learning. The school provides premises for the *Therapy Focus* team and this proximity allows invaluable opportunities for informal contact in addition to formal speech and occupational therapy relationships where the school has encountered difficulties in sourcing individual therapists.

Other professional partnerships pursued by staff include: the *Education Support South Network*, the *School for Special Needs: Behaviour and Engagement in their Positive Behaviour Support Program*, the *MSSD Behaviour Network*, the *School for Parents Incorporated*, the Belmay Primary School and Burbridge School. The staff clearly values the relationships with the *Conductive Education Charity of Western Australia* which provides essential support and funding for the continued success of the *Conductive Education* programs.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Carson Street School is student focused, offering a range of individualised programs to meet the students' high support needs. The staff effectively manage the extremely complex organisation with intensive involvement of a range of outside agencies. Identification of student learning outcomes is well developed at a class level. With the reinstatement of the use of the *BSquared* program in 2016, more cohesive and consistent whole-school monitoring and review should be possible. Development of measurable targets to monitor student learning outcomes across the school that are linked to operational plans and associated strategies should ensure a more cohesive approach for measuring improvement in performance in the next planning cycle.

The model of leadership is in transition towards a more distributed approach. Learning area coordinators have been introduced and strengthening of their leadership role will facilitate more strategic delivery of programs. The staff are well trained and experienced, especially in the area of Conductive Education. There is a very strong emphasis on the provision of ongoing appropriate professional learning that is holistic and needs driven.

The school is effectively resourced and currently has the capacity to maintain existing programs. A number of intended programs, nonetheless, have been put on hold due to lack of access or loss of staff over the past three years. It is critical to ensure that effective management programs are implemented to carefully monitor implementation of proposed programs when they rely heavily on a few staff trained in highly specialised areas. Performance management is well established and linked to national profiles for teachers and education assistants.

The School Board consists of staff and community members who bring a range of expertise, are highly committed and long standing, and provide strong school support. Governance practices are well established and the Board is regularly informed of school activities. No conclusions were provided by the Board or the staff of the extent to which the commitments of the DPA had been met.

Regular interrogation by the Board of the Business Plan, DPA and school data to oversee school performance will ensure a more strategic and critical approach to the Board's role. Succession planning will also be important to maintain a constant Board.

Conclusion

The school is well established in the community and highly respected by the community and parents. It offers the only State *Conductive Education* program for children from birth to Year 6, with many parents travelling long distances to attend the program. In addition, *Conductive Education* satellite classes are offered at Burbridge School. Student learning is individualised with programs designed to meet each child's needs. Staff are dedicated, passionate and enthusiastic and the school has a positive, caring and supportive culture; involving parents in all aspects of their child's learning. Student learning is carefully recorded and reviewed at class level.

There is strong evidence that the school has commenced the process of establishing a more consistent and cohesive whole-school approach to achieving greater rigor in monitoring teaching and learning across all curriculum areas.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the student focused approach to teaching and learning catering for individual needs through a range of targeted programs
- the provision of holistic support services in collaboration with external agencies from pre-compulsory ages to Year 6
- the shared positive, caring and supportive school community where all students, staff and parents are valued and respected
- the *Conductive Education* program that offers cohesive intervention for students with motor disabilities from birth to 12 years
- the significant commitment to ongoing staff professional learning
- the leadership opportunities offered to education assistants.

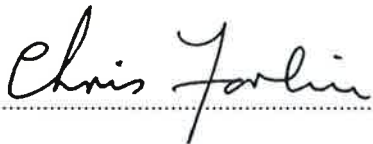
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- determine realistic and achievable targets that are student learning outcomes focused for all dimensions of the next Business Plan
- ensure systematic and consistent annual self-review processes at a whole-school level to inform the development of operational plans that link closely to Business Plan targets
- strengthen the distributive leadership model to embed a stronger strategic approach to curriculum development
- progress cohesive and consistent whole-school programs to support student self-regulation
- address how the commitments of the DPA are implemented and assessed
- implement a more coordinated, consistent curriculum of protective behaviours across the school
- the analysis of Parent, Staff and Student Surveys should be included in the Annual Report.

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 Carson Street 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.



Professor Chris Forlin, Lead Reviewer

4 May 2016

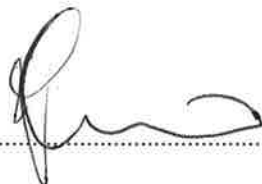
Date



Mrs Margaret Brede, Reviewer

4 May 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

2/6/2016

Date

