



Department of  
Education

**Shaping the future**

# Spearwood Alternative School

## Public School Review

# Public School Review

## Purpose

All Western Australian public schools are reviewed by the Department of Education's Public School Accountability directorate. A review gives assurance to the local community, the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General about the performance of public schools in delivering high quality education to students. The review acknowledges the achievements of the school and gives feedback to support the Principal and staff with their improvement planning.

Initially conducted on a three-year cycle, subsequent reviews are determined to occur on a one, three or five year timeframe.

The Principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence from the school. Information to be validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the Public School Review report and determines when the next review will occur. The report is provided to the Principal and the regional Director of Education.

## Expectations of schools

The Statement of Expectation (the Statement) makes clear and public the expectations and responsibilities of schools and the Department in student achievement and progress.

The Statement is between; the Department of Education, represented by the Director General; the school, represented by the Principal; and is noted by the school council/board, represented by the Chair.

The Statement sets out the expectations of Principals in relation to the delivery of the 2020-2024 strategic directions *Every student, every classroom, every day*, and *Building on Strength*.

The Statement will underpin each school's strategic planning and self-assessment and will form part of the school's Public School Review, as well as the Professional Performance Review of the Principal.

## Public School Review – The Standard

A Standard has been developed across the domains of the School Improvement and Accountability Framework to describe essential indicators of performance. The selection of the indicators is based on literature research and historical reviews of school performance in Western Australian public schools.

The purpose is to better ensure that judgements about student performance are standardised and objective. Indicators describe what is evident in schools functioning 'as expected' within each domain.

The Standard defines the expected level of school performance. Judgements are made in relation to the Standard. External validation is also based on evidence presented relating to the Standard.

For further information or resource in alternative formats for people with accessibility needs, please contact [PublicSchoolAccountability.PublicSchoolReview@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:PublicSchoolAccountability.PublicSchoolReview@education.wa.edu.au)

## Context

Spearwood Alternative School opened in 1984 'as an outcome of the Choice and Diversity in Education project'. The school is located approximately 25 kilometres south of the Perth central business district, in the South Metropolitan Education Region. In 2015, the school was granted Independent Public School status.

Currently, there are 103 students enrolled from Kindergarten to Year 6. The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 1113 (decile 1). Spearwood Alternative School does not have a local-intake area.

Facilities at the school include open outdoor areas for learning through play, which include edible gardens. The school has a focus on sustainability and emotional health and wellbeing.

The School Board is responsible for assisting in the development of a future vision for the school, which is representative of the wider school community. The Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) fundraises for resources to benefit students.

## School self-assessment validation

The Principal submitted a school self-assessment outlining the school's operations.

The following aspects of the school's self-assessment process are confirmed:

- The Public School Review process was viewed by the Principal as a valuable process in identifying areas for ongoing improvement as well as areas of strength.
- In preparation for the review process the Principal provided opportunities for staff to engage in reflection on school performance against each domain of the School Improvement and Accountability Framework using a 'Force Field Analysis' structure.
- During the review validation visit, the Principal and a range of school staff, students and community members contributed enthusiastically to discussion. They elaborated on evidence provided, adding value to the school's Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT) submission.
- The School Board had an opportunity for input into the school's submission for the Public School Review.

The following recommendations are made:

- In future ESAT submissions, include a broad range of evidence that best reflects judgements made about the performance of the school guided by the extent to which it has scope, currency, depth and range.
- Continue to engage staff in ongoing processes for whole-school collaboration in the analysis of data to inform school self-assessment and improvement processes.

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### Relationships and partnerships

The school's commitment to building positive staff, student and family relationships is underpinned by an ethos of 'education through community and community through education' in combination with the embedded values: agency; connection; and possibility.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The P&C is active in its support of the school organising a range of initiatives and events that garner broad school and community support.
- Communication is promoted through a range of platforms including: parent information booklets; weekly whole-school meetings; fortnightly newsletters; Facebook; and the school website.
- Parents hold the school in high regard, valuing the strong sense of community, the individualised child-centred approach and opportunities for students to engage in creative thinking and problem solving. Parent satisfaction feedback is sought and acted on through the National School Opinion Survey.
- A range of external partnerships add value to student learning experiences including the recent involvement with the University of Western Australia's Einstein-First Project.
- An invested School Board is supportive of the school and the Principal. Members demonstrate a willingness to collaborate and draw on professional and personal knowledge and skills as part of their school governance responsibilities.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to build opportunities for staff to engage in structured collaboration with a focus on consistent practices and ongoing student improvement.
- Progress with planned intentions for Board members to complete the School Board Self-Assessment and to have opportunities to engage in school performance monitoring.

### Learning environment

The school has developed a nurturing student-centred learning environment. It prioritises student wellbeing through a range of whole-school supports and practices.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Engagement in the Creative Schools program is focused on nurturing the habits of imagination, inquisitiveness, discipline, persistence and collaboration.
- The chaplain works to enhance student wellbeing through the provision of ongoing student support aligned to needs.
- The school is committed to developing cultural responsiveness as evidenced in the integration of Noongar language and culture into classrooms.
- Engagement with the Be You initiative is assisting the school's focus on supporting student's mental health and social/emotional development. Rock and Water and restorative practice are viewed by the school as improving connections and interactions across the school community.
- Processes for supporting students at educational risk (SAER) are outlined in the school's SAER policy including: roles; responsibilities; planning; and monitoring processes.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to develop a whole-school approach to the health and wellbeing of staff, as planned through engagement with the Be You initiative and use of survey data to inform school decision making.
- Take steps to collect behaviour data to enable the monitoring of student behaviour improvement over time.

## Leadership

The Principal's relational style is valued by staff and community members. A range of committed teacher leaders are keen to assume leadership roles and work in collaboration with others to progress focus areas.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Staff have opportunities to participate in school self-assessment processes and are keen to identify tangible strategies and solutions to address identified areas for improvement.
- High levels of collegial trust and a willingness to share ideas are evident amongst staff providing a strong foundation for future shared decision making to drive school improvement.
- Staff engage in performance and development processes that they view as beneficial in developing their practice.
- Staff have a range of internal and external opportunities to develop their leadership skills including through local networks and conference presentations. Engagement with the Western Australian Future Leaders Framework is providing further opportunities for key staff to build leadership capacity.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Strengthen instructional leadership through building leadership roles to support consistent practices, explicit teaching and the implementation of whole-school approaches in literacy and numeracy, which is driven by data and evidence. Ensure there is sufficient time for leaders to carry out their roles.
- Strengthen observation, linked to agreed practices, and provide targeted professional learning to build staff capacity in agreed school-wide pedagogy programs.
- Progress planned intentions to source and engage in a long-term external leadership/school improvement professional learning program and leadership mentoring support.
- Continue to strengthen the leadership of data and evidence-based decision making. Strengthen target setting, tracking of student achievement and progress and the use of data to determine program efficacy, particularly as it pertains to numeracy and literacy achievement.

## Use of resources

The Principal and manager corporate services (MCS) work collaboratively with the Finance Committee which shares financial decision making and assists with financial oversight.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The Finance Committee engages in shared decision making and includes in its membership the Principal, MCS and teachers from different areas of the school. The School Board receives information relating to school finances and has opportunities for input and discussion on points of clarification.
- Fundraising by the P&C supplements school finances and is contributing to the development of school grounds and facilities, including the development of a purpose-built STEAM<sup>1</sup> classroom.
- Disability resourcing and student characteristics funding is allocated in alignment with students' needs. This enables specialist teachers and education assistants to use small group work and the implementation of teaching and learning adjustments to assist students.
- Targeted initiative funding is allocated for the delivery of mental health programs, chaplaincy and to enable universal access to early childhood education.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Align the school budget to school plans and include projected resource costings in annual operational plans for priority areas. Ensure resources are allocated appropriately to enable leaders to lead school improvement processes.
- Develop a workforce plan that identifies short, medium and long-term workforce priorities aligned to business plan priority areas.

## Teaching quality

A committed staff recognise that consistent whole-school practices for literacy and numeracy are important in maximising student learning. The school has established signature pedagogies and has a particular focus on building students' creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The implementation of High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) is evident across the school. Supported by professional learning, Making Thinking Visible and Creative Habits from the Creative Schools learning program are being implemented by the school.
- Teaching staff engage in moderation using Brightpath and focused discussion and reflection on student work samples.
- A focus on STEM<sup>2</sup> is developing under the leadership of a committed teacher and the creation of innovative learning experiences that provoke curiosity and opportunities to apply creative problem solving.
- Differentiation is identified as a HITS with staff indicating that further support for student extension is a future need.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to progress the implementation of HITS. Balance learning experiences to ensure sufficient levels of systematic explicit teaching and opportunities for reinforcement of information and concepts, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy.
- Progress planned intentions to review and implement a whole-school approach to mathematics and literacy. Ensure programs align with cohort needs, particularly from Kindergarten to Year 3, and are able to support students' acquisition of literacy skills adequately.
- Progress planned intentions to further embed Seven Steps to Writing Success and explore Talk for Writing for lower years.

## Student achievement and progress

The school is developing its use of data and evidence to inform school and class decision making. An assessment schedule has been established for whole-school and class data collection, albeit the school has identified this domain as an area for improvement.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The Principal and mathematics leader have analysed NAPLAN<sup>3</sup> 2021 student achievement data and have identified areas for improvement through a designated plan.
- The school has introduced PAT<sup>4</sup> Mathematics with evidence that the data has been collected and viewed.
- A case management approach has been implemented to set targets and monitor student progress. Staff have identified a further need to refine targets to drive ongoing improvement.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue as planned, the use of Brightpath English and implement Brightpath Mathematics assessments to track student progress and identify targeted teaching requirements.
- Progress intentions to engage in moderation process with local schools.
- Further explore the current use of PAT assessment as a tool to monitor student progress and identify student learning gaps.
- Address long-term student under performance in Year 3 NAPLAN across all assessment areas.
- Address student underperformance in Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, Writing and Grammar and Punctuation.

## Reviewers

Kim McCollum  
**Director, Public School Review**

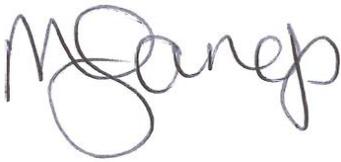
Beatrice Bouska  
**Principal, Subiaco Primary School**  
**Peer Reviewer**

## Endorsement

Based on this report, I endorse the commendations and recommendations made by the review team regarding your school's performance.

The timeframe for the next review process focusing on the Leadership, Teaching Quality and Student Achievement and Progress domains only, will be Term 4, 2022.

The next Public School Review, inclusive of all domains, will be scheduled for Term 4, 2024.



Melesha Sands  
**Deputy Director General, Schools**

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## References

- 1 Science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics
- 2 Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
- 3 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
- 4 Progressive Achievement Tests