Department of
Education

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Baler Primary School

Public School Review

August 2019

PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

Purpose

All Western Australian public schools are reviewed every three years 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 that a school is operating effectively and delivering high quality education to its students. The review acknowledges the achievements of the school and gives feedback to support the principal and staff with their improvement planning.

The principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence gathered by the principal and staff. Information validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the school review report. The report is provided to the principal, the chair of the school board/council and the Regional Executive Director.

Expectations of schools

For all Western Australian public schools, expectations are set out in either: the Delivery and Performance Agreement, which is an agreement between the Department (represented by the Director General), school (represented by the principal) and school board (represented by the school board chair); or, the Principals' Statement of Expectations and the Funding Agreement for Schools.

School performance rating

This performance rating is based on information gained from the self-assessment submission and the validation process. It is focussed on a review of the following areas of school performance: relationships and partnerships; learning environment; leadership; use of resources; teaching quality; and student achievement and progress.

The school's performance rating is:

✓	**Effective**
	The school demonstrates effective practice in creating the conditions required for student success.

	Needs Improvement
	The school has aspects of its practice below expectations and needs supported action to improve student success.

Context

Baler Primary School was established in 1975 and gained Independent Public School status in 2019. Located in South Hedland, 1640 kilometres north of Perth, the school is part of the Pilbara Education Region.

The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage rating of 895 (Decile 9). The diverse school community is represented by over 34 different nationalities and approximately 11 per cent of students have a language background other than English. Aboriginal students comprise 36 per cent of the total student population. The school motto, '*A sea of cultures*', captures and celebrates the inclusive and culturally respectful approaches to teaching and learning; and community interactions.

Enrolment trends continue to increase with a current student population of 600 from Kindergarten to Year 6. The Pilbara region has a large number of transient workers, which impacts on the student population at the school.

An Early Years Playgroup operates on the school site, as part of the Pilbara Education Partnership between the Department of Education, BHP[1] and Playgroups WA. This program facilitates child and family early learning and successful transition to school. The partnership also supports an Academic Enrichment Program for students in Year 4 to Year 6.

Baler Primary School works with other schools and sectors to increase attendance, literacy skill acquisition, and enhance continuity of education for students at risk through the Pilbara Education initiative with the Pilbara Development Commission, Royalties for Regions, and the Pilbara Partnership for Student Success (PPSS). These complement a partnership program with the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation that provides for an after school learning club to advance learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.

School self-assessment validation

The Principal submitted a comprehensive and rigorous school self-assessment.

The following aspects are confirmed:

- Collaboration and staff engagement in whole-school improvement was validated during the school visit.

- A detailed plan and scaffolded template supported staff to reflect on the progress of the school against each of the performance domains.

- Staff engaged positively with, and reported significant benefit from, the self-assessment process.

- The selection of a comprehensive range of credible evidence provided an open, honest and transparent account of the current school context and performance.

- There is alignment between observations and judgements about performance and the school's planning intentions.

- A number of staff, students, parent and community representatives actively engaged and contributed their reflections during the school visit validation phase.

- There is an evident ethos of high expectations and continuous improvement.

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Relationships and partnerships

The Principal leads a cohesive school that is founded on strong and sustainable relationships and partnerships. Students, staff and families demonstrate mutual trust and respect and are collectively recognised as valued learners and contributors to the school's united community.

Effectiveness	The review team validate the following: • Parents and staff express strong satisfaction with the school's positive ethos and sense of belonging and are encouraged to be actively involved in the development of the school's vision and beliefs. • The new School Board are informed, advocate for the school and are actively engaged in consultation regarding policy and school directions. • The Parents and Citizens' Association supplements student resources and enhance family connections through involvement in the canteen, uniform shop and school events. • Positive partnerships with local business and industry fund a range of resources and activities with direct links to student engagement. • Strong connections with network schools support collaborative learning, staff development and shared distribution of resources.
Improvements	The review team support the following action: • Develop a contextually responsive learning plan, aligned with the ACSF[2], that encompasses the perspectives, skills and language of the community.

Learning environment

The focus on, and genuine commitment to, establishing programs and practices that are responsive to need has had a positive impact on creating a safe and orderly environment. The introduction of the whole-school behaviour matrix and intervention support programs has increased engagement and attendance and moderated the behaviour of students at risk.

Effectiveness	The review team validate the following: • Positive behaviours are enhanced by a whole-school policy that includes values education, good standing incentives and strong pastoral care. • A three tier SAER[3] intervention system provides differentiated literacy support. Students are supported by personalised case management that is enhanced by the use of student profiles and a Kindergarten to Year 6 register. • Wellbeing and SEL[4] are promoted through You Can Do It, Growth Mindset, Smiling Minds, daily mindfulness and protective behaviour activities. • Pastoral care needs are provided for students in the engagement program. Zones of Regulation and DRUMBEAT programs support emotional regulation.
Improvements	The review team support the following actions: • Continue to develop resources, expectations and explicit lessons around the behaviour matrix to enhance the impact of the planned PBS[5] program. • Reduce unexplained absences/increase regular attendance by consolidating early identification, case management and intervention monitoring processes. • Develop a statement that articulates the school's pedagogical approach to intentional play-based learning.

Leadership

A clear strategic direction and high expectations for the school have been achieved since the arrival of a consistent leadership team. The Principal is recognised as a driver of change and is focused on establishing a culture of continuous improvement through the consolidation of whole-school programs and consistent practice.

Effectiveness	The review team validate the following:
	• The cohesive leadership team assist in the coaching and mentoring of staff and are highly visible and approachable instructional leaders.
	• Change is managed strategically with consideration for clearly articulated expectations, resourcing requirements and collective accountability.
	• Engagement in the Future Leader Framework trial has supported the process of identification and validation of emergent leaders.
	• Committee restructures have enhanced distributed leadership, staff ownership, the transference of information and whole-school approaches.
	• Staff nominate for Professional Learning Community (PLC) leadership roles, are supported to engage in improvement planning and lead teams to implement strategic actions.
	• New staff are inducted through access to a digital handbook and colleague mentoring that enhances staff cohesion and supports consistent practice.
	• Student councillors gather feedback from peers to inform school decisions. Student mentors provide peer support during break time activities.
Improvements	The review team support the following actions:
	• Consolidate processes that support PLC leaders to lead the analysis of data to inform school self-assessment and improvement planning.
	• Continue to identify and support emerging leaders and mentors through career development plans aligned with strengths and school priorities.

Use of resources

The school maximises financial management efficiency and is responsive to the changing needs of students. High staff turnover and a significant number of staff with less than five years of experience has required a focus on continuity of practice and program sustainability. This is supported by funding allocations for professional learning and time for collaborative learning and planning.

Effectiveness	The review team validate the following:
	• The Finance Committee approves the preliminary budget, which is endorsed and reviewed regularly by the School Board.
	• PLC leaders develop operational plans that include clearly articulated budget allocations aligned to school priorities and cost centres.
	• Purchases are made following research and evidence of impact.
	• Strategic planning ensures sustainable replacement and maintenance of assets and resources inclusive of technology, furniture and buildings.
	• A comprehensive workforce plan identifies current and future profile needs with attention given to recruitment and succession planning.
Improvements	The review team support the following action:
	• Develop a financial handbook to support staff to manage finances.

Teaching quality

The staff demonstrate shared accountability and high levels of professional and personal responsibility. A cohesive and professional learning culture underpins a rigorous and relentless approach to maintain curriculum cohesion and continuity.

Effectiveness	The review team validate the following:
	• There is a strong belief in the value of sharing expertise and ideas between staff, both incidentally and during formal collaborative meetings.
	• Common terminology in literacy and numeracy blocks have been adopted by staff to support students' engagement in their learning.
	• Talk for Writing has been introduced as a whole-school literacy approach. To sustain consistency, a staged plan of support is in place to embed further literacy learning, aligned with the Kindergarten to Year 6 scope and sequence.
	• The introduction of Brightpath supports consistent writing judgements.
	• Year level overviews mandate the sequence of expected learning content.
	• Teacher engagement in the NCCD[6] strengthens the identification of student need and informs teaching adjustments required for each student.
Improvements	The review team support the following actions:
	• Continue to embed iStar as a whole-school explicit teaching methodology.
	• Extend the capability of staff in the analysis of data, including Student Achievement Information System and First Cut, to inform teaching adjustments and target setting.
	• Further refine a performance management process for teachers and education assistants that incorporates a range of evidence to inform reflection and planning.
	• Continue to increase staff capacity to embed technology into the curriculum through the support of an ICT/DT[7] teacher leader.

Student achievement and progress

Parents and staff report positive student interactions and increased engagement. Leaders acknowledge that downward NAPLAN[8] trends and increasing student progress are priorities.

Effectiveness	The review team validate the following:
	• The OEAP[9] is undertaken and data is used to inform Group Education Plans.
	• Differentiated learning is facilitated through Response to Intervention (RTI) approaches that include small group Sound Waves Spelling for Tier 2 students and the MultiLit[10] reading tutor 1-1 program for Tier 3 students.
	• An enrichment program provides extension learning for identified students.
	• The afterschool Learning Club is well-attended and facilitates academic engagement and a pathway to the secondary school Follow the Dream program.
	• Comprehensive student profiles support transitions and continuity.
Improvements	The review team support the following actions:
	• Refine the whole-school literacy assessment schedule.
	• Develop a numeracy RTI plan for SAER, incorporating a process that measures the efficacy of the intervention and informs planning.

Reviewers

Merrilee Wright
Director, Public School Review

David Ingle
Principal, Falls Road Primary School
Peer Reviewer

Endorsement

Based on this report, I endorse your school performance rating of 'Effective'.

Your next school review is scheduled for 2022.

Stephen Baxter
Deputy Director General, Schools

References
1   Australian mining company
2   Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework
3   Students at educational risk
4   Social and Emotional Learning
5   Positive Behaviour Support
6   Nationally Consistent Collection of Data
7   Information and communication technology/digital technology
8   National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
9   On-entry Assessment Program
10 Literacy Intervention Program