Rossmoyne Senior High 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, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

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

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School and Review Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal:</th>
<th>Ms Angie Thomas</th>
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<tr>
<td>Board Chair:</td>
<td>Ms Kirsty Barnetson</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Location:</td>
<td>1 Keith Road, Rossmoyne WA 6148</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Students:</td>
<td>2108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviewers:</td>
<td>Ms Margaret Banks (Lead) and</td>
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<td>Mr Graham Rixon</td>
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<td>Review Dates:</td>
<td>16 March (Board), 21 and 22 March 2016</td>
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<td>Initial Review:</td>
<td>2013</td>
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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 My School® website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports
- School Curriculum and Standards Authority Year 12 Student Achievement data.

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?

Rossmoyne Senior High School, established in 1967, became an Independent Public School in 2010. It has a long-standing reputation as an outstanding school, achieving exemplary results. The school attracts local and international families who seek housing in the area in order to be eligible to enrol students at the school. The infrastructure of the original school remains in contrast to more recent additions of Year 7 classrooms, an English-languages block and specialist facilities for science and the performing arts.

With increasing enrolment trends over the past six years and the inclusion of Year 7 students from 2015, there are now 2108 students enrolled. Specialist courses of classical music, mathematics, volleyball and the Department of Education’s gifted and talented specialist languages program offering Chinese, Japanese, French and German, brings a limited number of out-of-boundary enrolments to the school and provides a range of opportunities for talented students.

The school has an ICSEA of 1138 (1), high attendance (94.8%) and low transiency rates (5.6%). The benefits of a large school enrolment are reflected in a sizeable budget, providing flexibility in allocation of resources to priorities and areas of greatest need.

The highly engaged and motivated student population includes a wide diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, eight (0.4%) Aboriginal students and 32 (1.5%) students with a disability. A growing number of students with special learning needs was reported as a recent trend, resulting in changes to the school’s student demographic and resource allocation to support these students.

The school has a staff of 214 (175.4 FTE) of which 142 (119.9 FTE) are teachers. A balance of ages, gender and levels of experience are features of the staff. The senior leadership team consists of the Principal, three associate principals and one deputy principal. A traditional structure comprises: heads of learning areas (HOLAs); a head of student services; six year coordinators; a careers counsellor and Murdoch University partnership; a coordinator of learning support and a coordinator of well-being; an Aboriginal coordinator.
and a post-compulsory coordinator. This structure ensures alignment with student learning and school priorities.

The staff and Board acknowledge that for the past decade the school has significantly benefited from the continuous, exemplary educational leadership of the previous Principal, who left the position at the end of 2015.

Robust partnerships with the parent community were evidenced through the vibrant Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), parent support groups for the specialist courses and the social networks. The parent voice and advocacy for the school is strong. Effective partnerships also exist with other education, business and service organisations.

The Board provides a high level of governance to the school. Transparent processes have resulted in a diversity of skills and backgrounds of board members. The school has a well-established arrangement for student representation on the school's key decision making group that goes back to school council days. The Board is fully engaged with the Business Plan, annual reports, review processes and analysis of the school's performance data.
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?

Rossmoyne Senior High School's 2013–2016 Business Plan sets the direction and broad strategies to support the school in achieving its goal to prepare future-ready citizens. The Business Plan priorities are: success for all students; an inclusive, inspiring and positive school culture; excellent teaching and leadership, and a responsive and agile organisation. The related targets and milestones are clearly aligned to the Department of Education's Strategic Plan and have guided the school's annual operational and learning area plans, literacy, risk management, workforce, ICT, financial, and building and grounds plans. Following a review of appropriate documentation and discussion with key stakeholders in the school, the reviewers were able to verify that significant progress has been made toward achieving the goals articulated in the Business Plan. The systematic collection and analysis of a rich array of qualitative and quantitative data has supported informed and purposeful planning.

The targets and milestones are quantified in the Business Plan and these are monitored, reviewed and demonstrated using a whole-school team approach to comprehensive formal quarterly reports and a ‘traffic light’ system. The traffic lights indicate how the school is progressing in relation to achievement of its Business Plan targets and inform the whole school’s plans for improvement.

The school’s ‘Annual School Performance Monitoring and Review Calendar’ ensures a timely, proactive and consistent review, comprehensive and relevant data collection and analysis in monitoring student learning to inform planning for student improvement. The reviewers were able to verify a comprehensive range of data is analysed by all teaching staff and discussed in the key teams—learning areas, literacy, sustainability, health and well-being, student services, students at educational risk, ICT and other collaborative committees.

The Board is enthusiastically included in the self-review calendar and has developed a critical role in the detailed analysis of quarterly reports of school performance. The Principal and Board Chair advised reviewers that during 2016 the school, in consultation with the Board, would conduct a rigorous assessment of the current Business Plan in preparing the 2017–2019
Business Plan. Their objective is to have a plan that 'meets emerging and changing needs of students as learners and global citizens'.

The reviewers verified there is a whole-school approach to collecting, reviewing and analysing data from multiple sources. This was reflected in the school's quarterly reports, a comprehensive annual report and a proactive planning process that aims to improve the educational experience for all students. It was evident from the documentation, and confirmed by discussions with staff, that a culture of continuous improvement is strongly embedded within the school. At the classroom teacher level there is evidence-based planning for student improvement. An example of the success of this review process from the current Business Plan cycle was the response to the changing demographics of the student cohort. In order to meet the needs of a significant number of students with special needs, the school enhanced the provision of targeted support for students at educational risk.

The reviewers note how the staff, and in particular the Board, have positively responded and acted on the recommendations of the Department of Education Services' 2013 IPS Review. Student learning and well-being continues to be a key emphasis in the priority area of success for all students. In addition, the profile of the Board has been significantly enhanced in the school community.
School Performance—Student Learning

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

Achievement of the Business Plan targets demonstrates student progress against the four priorities. The Board and staff are heavily engaged in monitoring and analysing data to inform practice and in seeking the best outcomes for all students. High standards are set by benchmarking not just to like schools in Western Australia but also against the performance of the highest-performing schools nationally and, in some learning areas, internationally. A culture of innovation further promotes advancements in the school’s performance. Measurement of improvements is generally based on three-year moving averages supporting the aim of sustained improvements for all students.

The reviewers, having examined performance data, met with the administration team, HOLAs and teachers in order to gain a clear understanding of the operational procedures and strategies adopted to meet the achievement targets. It was evident staff actively gather data and respond not only to findings from data analysis related to the targets but also to contemporary research, use of ICT to enhance procedures as well as access to resources including textbooks. Within and across departments, staff are supported and guided to be the best teachers they can be. These combinations are significant strengths of the school and contributed to its capacity to meet the targets.

The targets focus on positive trends for results in Year 9 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE), Secondary Attainment rate and the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

Two targets were set for NAPLAN: Year 9 results will be in the top third of statistically similar schools in Australia, and the percentage of students in Band 8 or above in NAPLAN will show a positive trend based on a three-year moving average (based on average rate of increase). The results in numeracy show improvements from 79.3% in 2013 to 86.3% in 2015, an upward trend well above figures of 73% and 77.3% respectively for statistically similar schools at national level (as defined by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority).
For literacy, the school's 2013 results of 68.5% improved to 74.7% compared with 69.7% for statistically similar schools in 2015. When results of Year 9 NAPLAN are benchmarked against Western Australian like schools, Rossmoyne Senior High School results consistently track above expected levels of performance. Reviewers verify the school is performing well above expected levels in all areas of literacy and numeracy. Rossmoyne Senior High School Year 7–9 students are showing higher progress and achievement than like schools in almost all domains for the 2013–2015 period.

The percentage of students achieving WACE was measured as a moving average figure for that year and the previous two years, and demonstrated the target of an upward trend from a base of 97% was met. Similarly, the target for improvement in the Secondary Attainment rate (ATAR of 55 and above or Certificate II) was met at 96% over three years.

Targets were set to ensure the percentage of students in the top one-third of ATAR would be significantly greater than like schools, while the percentage in the bottom third would be lower. The school has lifted the percentage of students achieving in the top one third of ATAR from 53% in 2013 to 55% in 2015. When compared to like schools achieving 39% in 2013 and 40% in 2015 respectively, Rossmoyne Senior High School has performed exceptionally well. The percentage of students in the bottom third has also increased from 14% in 2013 to 22% in 2015; however, this result is still lower than like schools at 25% in 2013 and 24% in 2015. The number of students acquiring an ATAR has grown from 293 (82%) to 315 (87%) in 2015 along with 85 (23%) completing Certificate II or higher in Year 12. The reviewers verify the high standards of achievement.

In addition, the high levels of performance of individual students gaining a General Exhibition, Course Exhibitions, Vocational Education and Training (VET) Exhibition, Work Place Learning Exhibition, WACE Certificates of Distinction, Certificates of Commendation and VET Certificate of Distinction demonstrates the school promotes and supports exemplary achievements across diverse course offerings. Noteworthy is the achievement of an ATAR of 99+ by 25 students in 2015.

Reviewers interviewed students in a VET class and noted the diversity of opportunities within the class for pursuing a wide range of certificate courses and industry placements. Students were highly motivated to achieve high standards entitling them to a position on the 'VET Wall of Fame' indicating as
a VET or Careers ATAR student they have won a School Curriculum and Standards Authority or national training award.

The four non-academic targets link the priorities of success for all students and an inclusive, inspiring and positive school culture. The targets focus on: successful transition of students to post-school destinations; parent, staff and student perceptions of the school, and the quality of teaching and learning. The Business Plan is explicit in the measurement tools to be used to monitor achievement of these targets. Destination and intention surveys and data reports have been used to track post-school outcomes for school leavers. National surveys of students, parents and staff and a range of other data including school attendance, suspensions and behaviour data is scrutinised, responded to and reported on.

Students are closely tracked and from Year 9 provided with extensive WACE course counselling to assist with preparation and choices for senior years. This is supported by the diagnostic use of data, timetabling and planning staffing arrangements to enable each student to be successful. A focus class and a coordinator of learning support provide for students with special learning needs. The eight Aboriginal students are supported by the Aboriginal Coordinator and participate in the Follow the Dream program.

The staff relayed student, parent and community concern for current and growing enrolments. Similarly, parents and students indicated to reviewers concerns related to communication and coordination in a big school. Staff identified benefits for balancing student workloads and achievements with school-improved coordination and communication related to curriculum and assessment demands.

Performance of students in the specialist languages program is monitored and reviewed and includes rigorous analysis of student achievements, retention data and surveys of students and parents. Results of 2015 WACE showed Rossmoyne Senior High School as the highest achieving school for Japanese and Chinese languages, with students achieving high ATAR scores across their courses. Other measures demonstrate high levels of achievement for students in Years 8 to 12 in specific language competitions, contests and scholarship programs.

The school has an outstanding record of performance for students in the mathematics specialist program. In 2015, as in previous years, the school
performed well above like schools in MAS Mathematics Specialist Stage 3CD and has set the future target to remain the top school.

Given evidence provided, reviewers affirm the school’s judgements of its performance and achievements set in the 2013–2016 Business Plan. The former Principal stated ‘when the plan was set it was bold and ambitious’. Over the past three years the progress in NAPLAN, ATAR and VET has continued to lift the performance across the school to maintain the position of Rossmoyne Senior High School as one of the top performing schools in Western Australia.
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 priorities of 'success for all students' and 'an inclusive, inspiring and positive school culture' are key features of the non-academic opportunities in the school. The non-academic targets, complemented by the academic, are key to enabling the school to prepare future-ready students. The reviewers were able to verify a shared vision and ethos with staff, students and parents through classroom visits, extensive staff interactions and discussions with board members, students and parents.

Priority 3 of the Business Plan has milestones aimed at promoting 'excellent teaching and leadership'. These include: implementation of performance review and development based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers; in-class observation of teachers by line managers and mentoring of new staff; 360 degree feedback for school leaders; a well-being coordinator to support staff; innovation grants as seeding money for educational initiatives, and a shared understanding of what constitutes excellent teaching and leadership. The reviewers verified there are clear strategies in place to support and implement these milestones with the ultimate aim to improve the classroom learning environment.

Worthy of note are the actions undertaken by the staff to further build the quality of teaching and learning to the highest levels. In addition to structured support from highly experienced HOLAs, teachers are engaged with professional development and direct feedback from their students through the Classroom Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) project. Conducted in partnership with Curtin University, CCQ encourages teachers to respond to perceptions data of their students on their subject and classrooms. This direct feedback, together with the concomitant adjustments to teaching and tracking improvements, is indicative of the innovative school culture aimed at improvement and success for all students.

The school has initiated a program where local Year 6 students and parents undergo an orientation before entering the school. There is strong networking between Rossmoyne Senior High School and local primary schools. Since the introduction of Year 7 students into the school, the staff have regularly reviewed the orientation program, curriculum and pastoral care.
This has resulted in a proactive change to support this cohort of students. A longitudinal study involving academic and emotional well-being is planned and began with a *Flourishing Students* survey.

The senior leadership team and HOLAs work collaboratively with staff to ensure they regularly interrogate data to identify students not performing to the best of their ability and to assist them to achieve their potential. There are numerous examples of distributed leadership throughout the school and individual leaders are clear as to their particular role and expectations. This was evident to reviewers through documentation, discussion with the senior leadership team, HOLAs, education assistants and by visiting teachers in their classrooms. The leadership team, with the support of staff, has developed and is continuing to drive a climate of teamwork and innovation in the school. The staff are continually pursuing strategies and programs that will ultimately result in benefits for staff growth and student learning.

Teachers verified the school’s processes and strategies that supported their work in proactively addressing the changing needs of students. Meeting the academic, health and well-being needs of students is evident in the comprehensive focus on individual performance, the students at educational risk program (including a significant number of individual education plans) and before and after school tutorials run on a voluntary basis by staff. Whilst there is already some good work with students with special needs, the reviewers encourage a continued focus on providing for these students. The pastoral care focus is enhanced by the involvement of chaplains, a learning support coordinator and a school psychologist to assist students in managing their social skills and developing emotional resilience. The personalised approach to each student and a positive student/teacher relationship is a key feature of the learning environment.

The recent appointment of a head of student services indicates the high priority the school places on the well-being and needs of a growing school population. Along with the overall *Positive Schools* program approach in the school, the head of student services is reviewing the role and function of the student services area. It is hoped that once the review is completed, a restructuring of management and staff in the student services area will be enhanced by refocusing the strategies for pastoral care, course counselling, transition, orientation, student attendance and participation, all of which are currently given high priority.
The P&C is actively engaged in the life of the school and supports it in providing extra resources and funds for specific programs, provides a forum for discussion and promotes the school in the community. Parent groups support the specialist areas of volleyball and music.

The reviewers met with parents and with the community members of the School Board who affirmed their involvement with the school and staff as being positive. They also expressed a view that the school had a strong community feel, an effective website, were knowledgeable about school activities and practice, and felt included and updated through school communications. They indicated they felt comfortable in discussing and emailing issues with staff and the leadership team and believe the school enjoys an excellent reputation in the community. Parent/teacher meetings, reports and regular communication provide parents with current information regarding student progress.

Feedback from parents, students and staff is sought using the National School Opinion Survey. The results are reported in the school's Annual Report. Discussion was held with the leadership team regarding the development of a survey tool that seeks further information specific to the school.

Partnerships with local businesses, contractors and volunteers have been established to support work experience. In order to enhance the school's image in the community and to improve the educational programs, the school has developed partnerships with a number of key organisations. Examples include: Murdoch University and Tom Price Senior High School (mathematics—video tutoring); Curtin University (Climate Classroom Questionnaire—research); language partnerships, and the Rossmoyne Rotary Club and Interact (Rossie's Got Talent and interview experience). These partnerships have had a significant impact in giving students the opportunity to broaden their knowledge, build new skills and to develop positive attitudes to learning.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

The Board, staff, parents and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of Rossmoyne Senior High School. ‘Rossmoyne’ has a recognisable brand of excellence, quality and traditions. It is well aware of the challenges and demands on all, especially staff and students, to remain a ‘top’ school. However, the school has a track record of adapting well to changing demands, of innovating, modifying programs and creating opportunities in order to ensure success for all students.

The processes for annual cycles of self-review are embedded. Rigorous analysis of data including NAPLAN and WACE results by departments and whole school ensures the performance of each student, subgroup and cohort is monitored. Evidence informs strategies and classroom practices. Structures and processes include devolved leadership through the Academic Board, measurement and tracking tools with easy-referenced, colour-coded dashboards and effective planning for improvement. The leadership team remains strong and confident, notwithstanding the change of Principal. In addition to learning area teams, literacy and numeracy, ICT, health and well-being and sustainability committees oversee whole-school issues.

The Board is skilled, diverse and robust with a strategic focus and clear procedures to ensure strong governance. Processes for induction, updating of the Constitution and staged terms of membership renewal were noted in the minutes. The Board evaluates its performance and communicates effectively with the wider school community.

The Board appreciates it has a key role as custodian of the school vision, mission and values. In particular at this time following change of School Principal, the Board is keen to ensure the new Principal is supported to maintain the school legacy and to take the school forward.

Individual departments are highly effective in implementing curriculum, managing change, supporting new staff and achieving exemplary results. The expertise, enthusiasm and commitment of corporate and support staff further enhances the contribution of staff to the school.
The ageing workforce is being addressed with new graduates and young teachers inducted into the school and mentored. An excellent workforce plan is guiding staffing decisions; however, it remains a challenge for the school in the future to replace highly skilled and experienced staff who have clearly contributed to the achievement of such outstanding results over an extended period.

An alumni has been encouraged to continue connection with the school and to return some of the benefits members have received, resulting for example, in peer tutoring and coaching.

Sophisticated and thorough processes have been applied to business planning, target and priority setting, with strategic operations focused on student improvement.
Conclusion

As an independent public school, Rossmoyne Senior High School continues to maintain its status as a leading educational establishment that aims to prepare future-ready citizens. Evidence-based and informed planning, inclusive practices and implementation of a broad range of programs are used to respond to the school context and provide opportunities and encouragement for all students to achieve their potential.

The commitment to the DPA and targets and milestones set in the academic and non-academic domains of the Business Plan 2013–2016 have been met. Where there are matters to be addressed, the Board, leadership team and staff respond proactively to adapt plans and strategies to improve the education for all students. The reviewers affirm that the school has a clear focus on the future and the emerging needs of a global citizen and acknowledges the school’s excellence in academic, sporting and cultural achievement.

The reviewers identified key evidence that indicates the school takes the well-being of students very seriously and recently, with the changing cohort, acknowledges that some students require additional support.

The dedicated leadership team, supported by committed and professional teaching and support staff and a very actively involved School Board, will guide the school during the course of the 2017–2019 Business Plan towards continual improvement in the teaching, learning and care of all students.
Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the leadership team, staff and School Board for thorough whole-school planning and self-reflection processes that ultimately lead to adjustments to targets and proactive planning
- student performance standards across the curriculum benchmarked against national and international standards
- supporting students to participate, excel and achieve individual and group recognition, awards and scholarships in a wide range of academic, cultural, sporting and community activities and events
- Year 9 NAPLAN results demonstrating consistently high standards of achievement
- ATAR results including the high number of individual School Curriculum and Standards Authority awards demonstrating the quality of teaching, support and encouragement for students achieving their best
- the range of opportunities afforded to students in the VET program and the high standards of achievement
- the strong culture of community in the school with the objective and associated challenge of maintaining a high level of performance
- processes for successful transition of students from primary to secondary school
- the quality learning environment with a range of courses, specialist programs and strategies that engage students in learning while providing an atmosphere that fosters care and well-being to a high level
- the proactive approach and responsiveness to the needs of students at educational risk
- the support of students through a dedicated and committed student services team and the continued focus on reviewing this area to ensure it meets the needs of all students
- a quality learning environment with beneficial parent engagement, well-planned learning area plans, specialist subjects, co-curricular clubs and activities that engage students in their learning
- the high-level school governance and strategic support provided by the School Board.
Areas for Improvement

*The following areas for improvement are identified:*

- continue to focus on developing strategies and support for students at educational risk
- further refine a survey tool that relates specifically to matters relevant to the Rossmoyne community and report on the feedback to the community
- increase across-department interaction to improve coordination and scheduling of curriculum and assessment requirements.
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 Rossmoyne Senior High 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.

Ms Margaret Banks, Lead Reviewer
28 April 2016
Date

Mr Graham Rixon, Reviewer
28 April 2016
Date

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services
13/5/2016
Date