Neerigen Brook
Primary School

2012
Independent Review Findings

Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools
Contents

School and Review Details ................................................................. 1

1. About the Independent Review ..................................................... 1

2. Summary ....................................................................................... 3

3. School Context ............................................................................. 5

4a. School Performance - Student Learning ....................................... 8

4b. School Performance - Quality of Learning Environment .............. 11

4c. School Performance - Sustainability ............................................ 13

Declaration ..................................................................................... 16

Disclaimer

This document has been based on the findings of the independent reviewers' 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 Minister for Education, the Director General of Education, the Principal and the Board Chair.

The Department of Education Services can only guarantee the authenticity of original documents. This document is uncontrolled once printed.
School and Review Details

Principal: Ms Megan Barnett
Board Chair: Mr Paul Tye
School Location: Seventh Rd Armadale
School Classification: Primary School Class 5
Number of Students: 356 (as at Semester 1 census)
Independent Reviewers: Mrs Kerry Usher, Mr Kevin Pilkington
Review Dates: Self-review presentation: 3 September 2012
Review visits: 24 September and 25 September 2012

1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Neerigen Brook Primary School is to provide an assurance to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education and the school community 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 improved the standards of student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes student learning
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake regular self-assessment. The outcomes of these assessments form the basis for the school self-review which is presented to the reviewers for verification at the commencement of the independent review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review, reviewers are provided with information on the school's educational achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which include, but are not limited to:

- the MySchool™ website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.
Reviewers then visited the school for a half day presentation of the school's self-review by the Principal, the Board Chair and other key stakeholders chosen by the school. Subsequently the reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of enquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for a two day review visit was negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of further evidence to clarify or confirm the claims made in the school self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school self-review claims through observation and discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, parents, students and the school leadership team.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during their review visits, was used by the reviewers as the evidence base for their verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in its DPA and Business Plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.
2. Summary

Neerigen Brook Primary School is developing targeted educational programs for its students in support of its vision. It has developed a focus on student wellbeing to address the social and emotional needs of students and their parents. This has been strengthened by strategic partnerships to enable Full Service School support and Integrated Services for students and parents.

Neerigen Brook Primary School has developed a curriculum with a strong focus on improving learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Thorough analysis of achievement and progress by cohort, groups and individual students is evident. The school has been realistic in its assessment of how students are achieving and has initiated appropriate strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students.

The Principal, Board and staff at Neerigen Brook Primary School are creating an educational environment that supports the particular needs of students as a critical element for improving student learning (achievement, progress and engagement). In responding to this challenge the school has developed a range of positive strategies and support for staff, students and their families at the classroom, whole school and community level to foster learning.

The school has undertaken the task of developing a sustainable education process by ensuring teachers are able to focus on improving pedagogy and their understanding of effective teaching and learning. The Full Service School and Integrated Services are major strategies for parent engagement aimed at building capacity and knowledge through involvement in their child's education and developing a positive relationship with the school.

The following features of the school's improvement process are commended:

- The establishment of teaching teams and teacher leaders with the focus on improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy.
- The programs in place to support improvement in student learning in targeted areas.
- The team leaders for their leadership role in supporting, mentoring and coaching staff to improve teaching and learning.
- The engagement with education, business, community and parent partners, through the Principal with the support of the Board, who can assist in the development of the school.
Neerigen Brook Primary School

• The distributed leadership particularly through the Deputy Principal and team leaders.

The following areas for improvement identified by the school are affirmed:

• The school’s review processes, analysis of data and the refinement made to targets and strategies including -
  o the revised targets and strategies relating to attendance reflect challenging but achievable steps toward the goal of a school culture where attending school is a priority for parents and students
  o the strategies to support classroom instruction techniques to reduce the number of disruptive behaviours
  o the development of a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy along with strategies that focus on the needs of the student
  o the focus on improving attendance and behaviour as school priorities as it contributes to enhancing student curriculum access.

• The appointment of the team leader roles to build staff leadership capacity to analyse data, set targets and implement strategies in the priority areas of literacy and numeracy.

• As a part of the self-review cycle, the Board will review its own performance on a regular basis against the expectations contained in the DPA.

• The range of programs and strategies employed to engage parents and the community with the aim of building relationships between parents and the school.

The following recommendations are intended to add value to the improvement process:

• The evaluation of the Full Service School model be conducted as an ongoing process with the school response to findings included in future business plans.

• In strengthening the services, programs and strategies, the school adopts ongoing comprehensive needs surveys and other evaluations to match services with needs.
3. School Context

Neerigen Brook Primary School is located in the suburb of Armadale and caters for the diverse needs of children from the surrounding catchment area. The school was opened in 1970 and caters for 356 students from Kindergarten to Year 7. In addition it has developed a pre-kindergarten program (Kick Start) catering for three year olds. The school population has steadily increased with the school being reclassified from Primary School Class 4 to Class 5.

Neerigen Brook Primary School has developed a curriculum with a strong focus on improving learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Thorough analysis of achievement and progress by cohort, groups and individual students is evident. The school has been realistic in its assessment of how students are achieving and has initiated appropriate strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Neerigen Brook Primary School celebrates the diversity of backgrounds within its student population and community. It strives to meet the educational and social needs of all. Its vision All Different All Equal aims to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence in all students to achieve their individual potential and contribute to society. The teaching and learning achievements, attitudes and wellbeing of every young person are considered extremely important.

The leadership of the school has set about providing an infrastructure on site for the delivery of teaching and learning programs and the provision of support services for students, their parents and the community. Innovative use of space and limited resources has resulted in a home base for nearly every program operating on site. Recently constructed classrooms, an undercover area and canteen have enhanced the school’s facilities.

Data from census information indicates that the school catchment area has a significantly higher proportion of lower income at the individual, household and family levels and a significantly higher proportion of one parent families than in the Perth Statistical Division. Neerigen Brook has a culturally diverse student population with students from over 15 different cultural backgrounds including an Indigenous population comprising 18% of the total population. It is classified as Band 1 with a Socio Economic Index (SEI) of 88.32 and an Index of Community Socio Economic Advantage (ICSEA) of 869. The school has responded to the needs of the community by developing a Full Service School and Integrated Services model to support students and parents. The school focuses strongly on improving literacy and
numeracy, student behaviour and attendance with relatively high transiency an issue impacting on the learning of individual students.

A workforce plan has been developed for 2012 onwards. It plans for the anticipated effect of pre-primary becoming compulsory in 2013 and for the transitioning of Year 7 students to secondary school. Processes are evident to address potential gaps in the workforce skill sets.

The school receives significant additional funding under the National Partnership Low Socio Economic Status School Communities program. The funding enables the school to promote the Full Service School culture and philosophy, engage lead agencies and the local community, deliver support services and build the literacy and numeracy capacity of students.

The leadership team has been proactive in developing relationships with key organisations and individuals to foster the Full Service and Integrated Services models that support students, parents and the community to improve learning outcomes. The establishment of strategic partnerships with other education institutions, government agencies, businesses and politicians has been a focus of the leadership of the school.

Partnerships with universities provide services to assist staff in working with students, particularly those at educational risk. Government and non-government agencies provide key support for programs, services and to assist in building relationships between the school and parents. The agency support is comprehensive and covers health, community services, social development, adult education and mentoring. Business support provides additional funds and resources to support school and community activities.

When Neerigen Brook Primary School became an Independent Public School (IPS) in 2010 the School Council became the School Board. Targeting of community members with strategic skills strengthened the Board. The Board functions under the strong leadership of the Chair and Deputy Chair who are supported by a representative group of parents, partnership representatives, staff and community members. The Board is well informed and demonstrates a sound understanding of its role and responsibilities. It has proven crucial in supporting the Principal and the school in developing the learning environment.

Neerigen Brook Primary School is developing targeted educational programs for its students in support of its vision. It has developed a focus on student wellbeing to address the social and emotional needs of students. This has been strengthened by
strategic partnerships to enable Full Service School support and Integrated Services for students and parents.
4a. School Performance - Student Learning

Priorities identified in the school’s Business Plan guide teaching and learning in the school and the allocation of resources to support the achievement of identified targets. The Business Plan identifies associated targets and strategies for the four priority areas: to improve achievement of students in literacy and numeracy; to improve attendance; to improve behaviour management in school; to enhance student engagement, wellbeing and educational opportunities through increased parent and community engagement.

The school has worked hard to achieve the targets of the Business Plan in the areas of numeracy and literacy. Literacy and numeracy improvement is a focus in all classrooms from the Kick Start program for three year olds through to Year 7. Data provided based on the 2010 to 2012 NAPLAN results indicates the school is achieving its target of attaining results within 8% of the State average. Examination of the data and ongoing regular discussion and planning in the teaching teams have confirmed the original targets as challenging but achievable. The refining of targets in this area has been ongoing and based on NAPLAN data each year. Revised targets for the next Business Plan will reflect further improvement in this area. The reviewers affirm the school’s review processes, analysis of data and the refinement made to targets and strategies.

Neerigen Brook Primary School closely monitors its overall performance against National, State, like and local schools. Targets as outlined in the Business Plan relate to NAPLAN school performance data being compared to State averages. Student progress and achievement compared with like schools at the National level (NAPLAN, 2009-2011) showed high progress and high achievement in years 3-5 in Reading, Spelling, Numeracy, Grammar and Punctuation. However, Years 5-7 progress for the same period reveals progress and achievement in Numeracy, Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation significantly lower than like schools. In particular the Year 7 MySchool data from 2011 demonstrated attainment at substantially lower levels than like schools in Western Australia and across Australia. However, 2012 preliminary data has demonstrated a marked improvement in Year 7 performance that has lifted attainment close to or above the level of similar schools. Progressive gains of cohorts from 2010-2012 also indicate that student progress is at a similar rate or better than the State gain indicating strong value adding. The Principal and staff are commended for the implementation of strategies and programs that have added value to student performance in literacy and numeracy. The reviewers noted the intention in the Partnership School Plan to halve the gap between the Year 3, 5 and 7 school mean and the State mean by 2020.
Neerigen Brook Primary School

The school has established strong processes in monitoring the performance of its students and involves all staff in rigorous examination of the data. Curriculum leaders were able to demonstrate student performance data analysis comparing school performance to State and National standards. The school has a detailed student tracking process in operation which enables cohort, sub-group and individual performance to be monitored. Significant effort has been invested in building the skills of teachers to make judgements regarding student performance and in the interpretation of data. The structuring of teaching teams in early childhood education, junior, middle and senior primary and the appointment of team leaders have been key strategies in supporting staff to achieve a student-focused emphasis and collaborative approach to explicit teaching toward achieving the targets. The school is commended on the establishment of teaching teams and teacher leaders with the focus on improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

The introduction of programs to engage parents and children from the early years is a strength of the school. The Kick Start program, which has been mapped to the Early Years Learning Framework, is proving successful in both engaging parents and laying foundations for student learning. Early intervention through screening tests for Kindergarten (Screen of Communication Skills) and Pre-Primary students (On Entry Assessment) informs teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

Targeted programs to improve outcomes for sub-groups and individual students are evident. Strong curriculum leadership from team leaders supports teachers to plan and cater for individual differences and students at educational risk (SAER). The more capable students are provided with academic extension programs based on improving critical thinking skills. Students identified with learning difficulties are provided with concentrated support through the targeted use of education assistants who meet with students one on one four times a week for fifteen minutes at a time. The school is to be commended on the programs in place to support improvement in student learning in targeted areas.

Neerigen Brook Primary School offers a balanced, comprehensive curriculum catering for all students. Specialist programs in the Arts, Physical Education, LOTE (Japanese), Science (early years) and Music ensure students have access to appropriate learning opportunities. The school practice of monitoring, setting targets based on attainment levels and reviewing in non-priority learning areas of Science, Society and Environment, Music, LOTE, Information Technology and Physical Education is consistent with their evidence-based approach to improving student learning.
The reviewers confirmed, through discussion with curriculum leaders and teachers, classroom visits and viewing relevant documentation, that the school was able to clearly demonstrate it has established sound foundations for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. There are indicators of training and planning coordinated by the strong curriculum leadership of team leaders. The selection of the school as a Teacher Development School (Mathematics in the Early Years) will benefit teaching and learning in the Early Childhood program. The strong focus on literacy and numeracy across the whole school underpins the teaching and learning occurring in all classrooms.

Neerigen Brook Primary School has a clear emphasis on improving student learning through a holistic approach for each child. Recognition of the impact of social and emotional factors on how a student learns and engages with the curriculum is a focus of the school's approach. By providing a supportive and inclusive environment in which to learn, each student can work toward achieving their potential. There is alignment between the school's stated priorities and focus areas and the budget allocations to providing associated resources.

The school has invested significant resourcing to the priority area of student attendance as a means of improving student participation in learning. Under the leadership of the Deputy Principal, the school has developed comprehensive monitoring and follow up procedures on attendance. Strategies to improve attendance include a reward system and the appointment of a school attendance officer which have provided some success in accessing previously difficult to contact families and a prompt follow up on student absenteeism for targeted students. Data demonstrates an overall attendance increase from 87.7% in 2009 to 89.4% in 2011. However, attendance targets as identified in the Business Plan have largely not been met. The targets focus on the attendance of students in the various risk categories, attendance by cohorts and unauthorised absences. The targets have been the subject of constant review and have been adjusted and refined over time. The initial targets of 2010 were found to be difficult to measure and as a result SMART targets have been developed in 2012. The reviewers affirm that the revised targets and strategies relating to attendance reflect challenging but achievable steps toward the goal of a school culture where attending school is a priority for parents and students.

Improvement in behaviour management is a priority for the school with monitoring and strategies focusing on improving participation in the learning process. Business Plan targets for reducing the average number of negative consequences per student and the average rate of positive rewards per student were not met. However, the school has recorded a decrease in negative consequences and an increase in
positive consequences through its intervention strategies. The strategies to support classroom instruction techniques to reduce the number of disruptive behaviours are affirmed.

Neerigen Brook Primary School has developed a curriculum with a strong focus on improving learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Thorough analysis of achievement and progress by cohort, groups and individual students is evident. The school has been realistic in its assessment of how students are achieving and has initiated appropriate strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students.

4b. School Performance - Quality of Learning Environment

Neerigen Brook Primary School aims for all students to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve their individual potential and contribute to society. The vision has been developed with the motto All Different All Equal as the guiding ethos statement for students, staff, parents and the community. The mission of the school is to improve behaviour and attendance and to develop the key literacy and numeracy skills of students as clearly articulated in the school Business Plan. Staff, students and parents were able to confirm the shared understandings associated with the school’s ethos and culture evident through discussion, classroom visits and in the self-review process. The school has set high expectations in improving student learning as exemplified in the achievement targets set and with a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy. Analysis of longitudinal data in NAPLAN supports the achievement of these expectations relevant to the context of the school.

Neerigen Brook has developed a Full Service School model as a priority since 2007 through partnerships with lead agencies to integrate community resources to support parents and students. The Full Service model and Integrated Services form the key strategies in the school priority of enhancing student engagement through increased parent and community engagement. The school has developed a synopsis document which provides an overview of the groups involved, the services offered and the programs implemented. Lead agencies, community organisations and universities work on site, collaborate and engage with the school on a range of activities that support intervention and build capacity for students and parents. This also serves to build staff/parent relationships and strategies to develop an inclusive school culture focused on the whole child and their needs by bringing expertise and resources together on one site.

The school priority of literacy and numeracy attainment recognises the academic needs of students for future success. The strategies employed to achieve success in
academic areas include a strong focus on early childhood, including the
development of the Kick Start program of readiness for three year olds as
preparation for Kindergarten and as a means of engaging parents in the Literacy
Link program. Early childhood education focuses on phonological awareness, letter
identification and oral language development. In the junior years the focus is on
writing and comprehension while in middle and senior years reading comprehension,
oral expression and spelling are reinforced as priorities. To meet the needs of
students the school has developed a comprehensive SAER tracking approach
involving regular staff monitoring of progress through the use of Individual Education
Plans and Group Education Plans. The development of a whole school approach to
literacy and numeracy along with strategies that focus on the needs of the student is
affirmed. The reviewers were able to verify the approach through evidence collected
from documents, conversations with key staff and classroom observation.

Other priority areas include a wide range of positive strategies to encourage
improved attendance and behaviour. Action plans and individual behaviour plans are
key strategies with the Attendance Scheme linked to the Passport Program rewards
system for parents in encouraging attendance. In addition the school has
implemented a comprehensive tracking system to support a whole school approach
to encourage good standing. The focus on improving attendance and behaviour as
school priorities is affirmed as it contributes to enhancing student curriculum access.

Positive structures have been developed to enable staff to have a shared
understanding of curriculum expectations, student achievement and curriculum
modification to meet student needs. The appointment of the team leader roles to
build staff leadership capacity to analyse data, set targets and implement strategies
in the priority area of literacy and numeracy is affirmed. Staff see the role of team
leaders as being critically important in enabling them to access support and to
demonstrate their accountability for teaching and learning outcomes. Team leaders
demonstrate their leadership through mentoring and coaching staff in the analysis of
literacy and numeracy data, tracking of student performance and the continuous
evaluation and oversight of student learning against targets such as benchmark
achievement. They have regular meetings with their team and also work with
individuals in a mentoring role, particularly for graduate teachers. Performance
management processes are valued by staff as they have a strong self-reflection
component that focuses on personal development. Team leaders also have a major
role in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, supporting staff with
planning, understanding of scope and sequence in the curriculum and in providing
in-school professional learning. Neerigen Brook is also a Teacher Development
School with a focus on Mathematics Early Childhood. Team leaders are commended
for their leadership role in supporting, mentoring and coaching staff to improve teaching and learning. Discussions with staff confirmed these roles as a major influence in supporting their work.

The school, through targeted funding, has developed and implemented plans for improving ICT infrastructure. It acknowledged that staff professional learning and engagement with planning and implementing technology is critical for successful implementation regardless of the platform adopted, whether it is electronic whiteboards, laptops or iPads.

The Principal with the support of the Board is commended for engaging education, business, community and parent partners who can assist in the development of the school. The Board has membership from parents and the community including representation from universities. School activities are enhanced by a school volunteer system that rewards parents for participation in educational activities through the Passport Program supported by the Community Development Foundation and the Fogarty Foundation. Key programs developed in partnership with the school provide a range of supports including: breakfast for students; parent access to a pantry and emergency relief system; access to social workers and counselling; the Justice Link with Corrective Services; adult education; health services; community services; support for the Indigenous community. Universities provide professional and practical contributions in supporting the school through introducing a variety of practicum activities for health, education and social work students. The input from the university students is valued by teachers as evidenced by reviewers in discussion with them and through observation on classroom visits where occupational therapy students were assisting children.

The Principal, Board and staff at Neerigen Brook Primary School are creating an educational environment that supports the particular needs of students as a critical element for improving student learning (achievement, progress and engagement). In responding to this challenge the school has developed a range of positive strategies and support for staff, students and their families at the classroom, whole school and community level to foster learning.

4c. School Performance - Sustainability

Neerigen Brook Primary School has developed strategies to manage adverse impact on students reaching their potential which may be caused by the disadvantage experienced by many of its families and their children. Leadership is an essential element in developing consistency and excellence in practice. The Principal is
commended for developing the strong focus on distributed leadership particularly through the Deputy Principal and team leaders. At the whole school level, the Principal has focused strongly on acquiring the necessary support for parents to enable them to participate in the education process and in developing an integrated service to support students in accessing education. The Board has played a significant role in providing support and leadership to the school through its activities and engagement in the strategic aspects of the programs employed to improve student learning.

The distributed leadership employed at the school, while working well in achieving the school’s goals and in supporting its ethos, needs to be able to respond to issues related to sustainability and consistency of practice. Discussions confirmed that succession planning for both the Board and leadership of the school is being undertaken to ensure that existing practice and programs are able to be sustained into the future.

The school currently engages in evidence-based self-review practices particularly in the priority areas where data is readily available and in other learning areas using both normative data and teacher judgements. When the Australian Curriculum is embedded staff will be able to moderate their assessments of student performance in learning areas using the achievement standards. The tracking of student performance in the academic and non-academic domains to identify areas for improvement is a feature that will sustain future development.

The reviewers acknowledge the benefits of sustaining the Full Service School approach for parents and families and the Integrated Services providing support for students. The school has developed support services and strategies that focus on engaging parents and providing students with the necessary assistance and guidance to enable learning to take place. The reviewers noted the many positive anecdotal comments made in the staff survey about Full Service and university partnerships and the set of documented aims for the model that provides a basis for evaluation. Parent surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction, knowledge and awareness of the programs and support services provided by the school. The Business Plan indicates that the school is working closely with The University of Western Australia to evaluate the Full Service School model which commenced in 2007. The reviewers recommend that the evaluation of the Full Service School model is conducted as an ongoing process with the school response to findings included in future Business Plans.

The school has demonstrated sound planning processes with targets to support achievement. The Principal advised that future planning would include the
development of SMART targets in a refined business process. The reviewers would support steps to reduce and refine the number of targets used to demonstrate student learning, participation, progress and engagement.

The Board provides critical oversight and reflection on school performance and self-review. Sustainability for the Board is related to developing sound processes for succession planning and ensuring its accountability and oversight roles. These relate to reviewing the school’s performance, endorsing budgets and determining the satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students to ensure they are functioning effectively. Board processes are embedded and it is clear that members have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Discussions with the Board affirmed that as a part of the self-review cycle, it will review its own performance on a regular basis against the expectations contained in the DPA.

Engagement of the community has been a priority of the school in the 2010-2014 Business Plan. The range of services, programs and strategies employed to engage parents and the community with the aim of building relationships between parents and the school is affirmed. These actions aim to strengthen the efforts of the Principal and staff in improving student learning through the strategies and programs implemented. These include programs like Kick Start that engages parents in early years education with their child and can potentially demonstrate success in early language acquisition and school readiness. To strengthen the services, programs and strategies the reviewers recommend that the school adopts ongoing comprehensive needs surveys and other evaluations to match services with needs.

The school has undertaken the task of developing a sustainable education process by ensuring teachers are able to focus on improving pedagogy and their understanding of effective teaching and learning. Strategies for parent engagement are aimed at building capacity and knowledge through involvement in their child’s education and developing a positive relationship with the school.
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 our assessment of the evidence provided by Neerigen Brook Primary 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.

(Signature of Kerry Usher, Lead Reviewer)  22/11/12

(Signature of Kevin Pilkington, Reviewer)  28/11/12

(Signature of Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services)  29/11/12