

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

Principal:	Phillip White
Board Chair:	Paul Richards
School Location:	18 Potts Street, Melville WA 6156
School Classification:	SHS Class 6C
Number of Students:	1001
Reviewers:	Dr Chris Forlin and Graham Rixon (Lead)
Review Dates:	17, 26 and 27 March 2014

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. Additionally, the findings inform school improvement.

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 wellbeing
- 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 which was presented to the reviewers at the commencement of the review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review conclusions, reviewers were provided 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.

Department of Education Services reviewers met with the Principal, Deputy Principals and the Board Chair on day one to determine the school's conclusions from its self-review. Subsequently, reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of inquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for days two and three was then negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During these two days the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with 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?

The vision of Melville Senior High School is 'to be the school of choice for the local and wider community, provide a distinctive, comprehensive education with strong academic and vocational pathways, effective pastoral care programs where all students are given the opportunity to excel and are supported in the process of defining themselves as they prepare to find their place in the contemporary world.' This vision guides the school in the preparation and update of the Business Plan and in the planning and development of a comprehensive teaching and learning program.

The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is 1005.

The school was established in 1960 on a site between Perth and Fremantle. This location and availability of public transport enable the school to draw students from across the metropolitan area, throughout the State and from overseas. Of the 1001 students, 55% of students come from outside the school's zone. There are currently 32 Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students and 42 international fee-paying students (IFPS) enrolled at the school. The school is in a period of significant growth and expects, once the half-cohort of students in Year 12 leaves in 2014, and with the introduction of Year 7s in 2015, that the school enrolment will be 1250 to 1300 students from Years 7–12. The reviewers saw evidence of, and confirmed by staff, students and parents, a very harmonious and positive atmosphere between students and also between teachers and students.

The school employs 159 staff consisting of 102 teaching staff (59 full-time and 43 part-time) and 57 support staff (16 full-time and 41 part-time). The average age of teachers is 45 with a good spread across a range of career stages - graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and Level 3 teachers. The reviewers were able to verify that the staff members are committed and caring, resulting in high quality teaching and strong pastoral care relationships.

In order to achieve its vision the school offers a wide range of programs and courses which includes:

- Year 11 and 12 Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) courses and vocational (VET/TAFE/WPL/Industry Links) teaching and learning programs
- highly regarded specialist programs specifically:
 - State selected and funded Gifted and Talented Education Program in the humanities, mathematics and sciences
 - State accredited (school funded and merit selected) specialist programs in:
 - aviation studies
 - graphic design media
 - netball
 - School-based (and funded) merit select programs:
 - academic extension course
 - music focus program.
- State and federally funded school run Intensive English Centre (IEC)—85 students in 2014
- centrally authorised school run International Fee-Paying Student program (IFPS)—42 students in 2014
- school-based 'BUILD' program for students at educational risk (SAER)—students in smaller classes from Year 8 to 12
- school-based Melville Learning Centre (MLC)—formerly designated an Educational Support Unit (ESU). Accommodates 12–15 students who attract special-needs funding (Schools Plus) for recognised disabilities and associated learning disorders.

The school prides itself on its achievements in both the academic field as well as meeting the needs of the diverse range of abilities of students who participate in the special programs. The school has fostered a number of partnerships with external agencies and educational institutions to improve outcomes for students and support families. It has strong ties with local primary schools for the purposes of networking, giving the students the opportunity to experience high school and curriculum development. This partnership also facilitates the transition from primary school into high school. In the upper high school there are strong partnerships with universities and industry.

The school executive team comprises the Principal, two deputy principals and the business manager. There are many examples of distributive leadership

across the middle and senior school structures. An effective professional development program involving peer coaching is linked to the performance management process that also relates to the Business Plan.

A School Board of 9–11 members governs the school. This includes the Principal, business manager and one other executive team member (deputy principal), one Parents and Citizens' Association representative, 5–7 community representatives and two elected teachers from the staff of the school. The members are clear on their governance role and provide a wide-ranging skill set to appropriately interrogate school performance data, financials and set direction for the future.

The current School Board is going through a period of re-focusing as it changes its method of operation from that of a school council to one that reflects the enhanced role and responsibilities of an Independent Public School governing body. As an example of this re-focusing, the Board has appointed an Indigenous Community representative: this aligns with the school's goal to enhance the attendance and education of ATSI students.

Despite the age of the school, the facilities are regularly updated to suit the needs of students and staff. In recent years, the school has refurbished science laboratories and there has been ongoing renovation of general classrooms. With these upgrades and also the refurbishment of quadrangle areas the students and staff have an attractive learning environment. The school continues to invest in the use of technology in education and is currently embarking on a 'bring your own technology' to school. The teachers have embraced the use of tablet computers and there are many exciting initiatives being developed in this area.

Through their efforts to embed a culture of continual improvement and strong community involvement, the school has clearly developed a reputation as the school of choice for the local as well as the wider community. This augurs well for its continued progress and development as an Independent Public School.

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?

The reviewers were able to verify that Melville Senior High School has undertaken a rigorous self-review of its own performance against obligations and commitments outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement and the priority areas of the 2012–2014 Business Plan. Supporting documentation, analysis and evidence presented to the reviewers focused on strategies and inputs to improve student learning particularly in literacy, numeracy, WACE and vocational achievement and school sustainability.

A culture of reflection and self-review was evident within all areas of the school. There is robust interrogation of data in the key priority areas with a focus on continually improving student learning in academic and non-academic areas and creating an appropriate teaching and learning environment to improve student performance. Judgements are made reflective of comprehensive data analysis and used as a foundation for monitoring individual student progress, student cohort gain, curriculum delivery, the ongoing development of school-appropriate documents and targeted use of resources. A recent example of the latter has seen the development of a systematic approach in the improvement of paragraph writing initiated by the literacy committee. The reviewers also noted the comprehensive reporting of the school's performance against the Business Plan priorities, foci and targets. These feature prominently in the Annual Report.

Evidence-based self-review practices are in place particularly in the *academic achievement* and *school sustainability* priority areas where data is readily available. The data analysed by the school is comprehensive and across the whole curriculum. It has the ability to provide information on whole-of-school performance as well as detecting those students not performing to potential. There is a thorough analysis of the data against State and like-school averages. An example of this critical analysis has highlighted the school's need to improve the targets for ATSI students. While the NAPLAN targets were aspirational when compared with State and like-schools they were at or above the expected standard. The school is addressing this as an area for improvement and is hoping this target is met by the end of this three year Business Plan. This evidence reflects a genuine concern for critical self-

review informed by quality data. The comprehensive range of data is understood by curriculum leaders and teaching staff. The School Board is included in the cycle of self-review and offers critical analysis of the Principal's report of the school's performance. The school is to be commended on developing a culture of continuous improvement reinforced by an excellent self-review process with a focus on a comprehensive range of data related to student academic performance, wellbeing, attendance and involvement in co-curricular activities.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

Student performance data are generated and systematically analysed at a whole-school, curriculum area, and year and class level. Annual data are collected to monitor improvement in learning. There is rigorous collation and interrogation of evidence-based data to improve student learning across all year levels. All staff are using data to track assessment grade allocation and to monitor individual student achievement. Achievement compared to national, State and like-schools places Melville Senior High School above average in all target areas. The school has maintained the WACE graduation rate of 100% with 99.2% attainment in 2013 and for the same period was the 7th highest achieving metropolitan public school and the 11th highest achieving public school in WA based on the number of Stage 3 course enrolments in the school where a WACE score of 75% or above was achieved. It was awarded a top public school from 2006–2012, and received acknowledgement of outstanding Year 12 results for 2013. The school is commended on this achievement.

The academic achievement of senior students demonstrates very positive results in both ATAR and VET courses. WACE attainment is high due to stringent pre-requisites for accessing and subsequent enrolment in relevant pathways. In the senior school, non-ATAR students have access to a number of Vocational Educational and Training (VET) pathways. Strong university and community partnerships have been established that provide an extensive number of placement and work experience opportunities. Students in Year 12 are also able to participate in workplace learning through access to TAFE courses and school-based traineeships.

A distributed leadership practice is evident in all aspects of the school administration. A number of operative committees have been established to lead the review process to monitor student achievement in both academic and non-academic areas and to map progress against the school's business and development plans. Benchmark goals are set for all curriculum areas and it is evident that these are reviewed continuously. A reflective approach is manifest towards future planning with clear structures in place to ensure involvement of all staff in this process and an effective means of collating this information to target whole-school improvement. The Principal receives very

strong administrative support through effective collaboration with collegiate multi-skilled teams of teachers, demonstrating a whole-school approach to student learning and achievement.

Literacy is a whole-school focus with student achievement being reviewed through NAPLAN assessments. Explicit data indicate individual student gain in literacy being at or above target across all year groups. A noted weakness in writing in 2011 led to the development of a consistent approach to embed literacy and teaching strategies across all curriculum areas. Portfolios from each learning area demonstrate how literacy is addressed within the curriculum. Explicit teaching, streaming in literacy, small class sizes, tutoring programs, study sessions and individual coaching assist students in achieving targets. The school acknowledged that its targets for ATSI students may have been set too high and are being reviewed. A literacy committee confirms that interventions are directly linked to targeted achievements in the Business Plan and monitors professional learning for teachers. Results for numeracy are positive throughout the school. A committee is consolidating a glossary of mathematical terms for use across all year levels.

The school is managing curriculum change successfully. It is implementing the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority requirements according to the timeline and guidelines. It has increased the use of ICT by staff and students and is implementing online learning and assessment to support the curriculum.

The school is commended on the extensive range of quality specialist programs offered; attended by many students from outside the school zone. These programs provide innovative, state-of-the-art curricula and resources with close links to the community, led by highly dedicated teams. In particular, the school offers State selected programs for gifted and talented students, aviation studies, graphic design media, netball, Academic Extension Courses in mathematics, science and humanities and hosts an Intensive English Centre. These are all rated highly by school staff, students and parents. The school is seen as a school of choice with an increasing number of international fee-paying student enrolments. Through these programs the school offers numerous opportunities for students to engage in co-curricular activities involving performances, interschool activities, extension options, national and international exchange programs. These programs also facilitate student access to community programs and to participate in cultural activities.

School Performance—Quality of the Learning Environment

How well has the school performed in creating an environment that promotes learning and wellbeing for all students and the attainment of the school vision?

A very strong collegial ethos is apparent at all levels of the school. The parents perceive the school to be 'parent friendly'. Students appear enthusiastic about their school. They comment that teachers are approachable, encouraging and dedicated and that there is a strong and positive relationship between students and staff. They acknowledge the range of opportunities available to them and speak proudly of their school. The school is providing an excellent foundation for life-long learning particularly through its strong emphasis on preparing students for the workplace through enterprise activities.

There is evidence throughout of an excellent whole-school approach towards student learning and wellbeing. The school is well organised and highly structured with everyone being accountable for supporting the plan and improving student outcomes. The school staff, students, parents and community are all working towards the same vision of maintaining a safe, happy, and caring learning environment. The students are engaged in a range of innovative curricula and extra-curricula activities and demonstrate mutual respect for the multicultural school context. The school is highly commended on achieving this.

Technology is used throughout the school for learning and programming, collecting evidence, and recording student progress. A 1:1 computer program has been implemented for selected specialist program students in Year 8, all Year 9 and 10 students and ATAR students in Year 11 and 12. The school is currently transitioning to a 'bring your own device program'. This program commenced this year with Year 8 and 9 students and will be fully implemented by 2017. The school has developed the CONNECT program which provides online access for all staff and parents. CONNECT supports student learning by providing easy access to resources, materials and assessment tasks and provides a reporting mechanism for parents.

The school is commended on the development of its Year 7 transition program. The school has been working very closely with local primary schools over a number of years to implement an innovative transition program for

Year 7 students in 2015. The program involves a two-way exchange of teaching staff, Year 7 students spending one day per week on campus, and the employment of a full-time transition officer to commence mid-2014. In 2013, staff trialled a Year 7 curriculum in preparation for the new intake. This has been refined and is being further trialled in 2014. This groundwork, based on very strong partnerships with primary schools, a proactive and reflective approach to preparing suitable curricula, and the commitment of staff in Years 8–10 to engage in the change process is ensuring that the school will be well prepared for the double student intake in 2015.

Catering for student diversity is apparent through a range of intervention programs and strong pastoral support. Together, these form an effective strategy for supporting all students, for which the school is commended. Students at educational risk in Years 8–10 (and Year 7 from 2015) are supported in the BUILD program with individual programs developed to meet their specific needs. This provides small classes with a dedicated team of teachers that has improved student retention and achievement rates. The school offers the Melville Learning Centre that currently supports 26 students with a range of academic, social, or emotional support needs. Recent changes in the structure of the Centre evidenced that it now provides for inclusion, small-group work, and individualisation of programs. As it has established very close links with curriculum teaching staff, students are able to benefit from the full range of options available. A school chaplain provides additional pastoral care to students. The school has self-funded, to retain the number of education assistants to support students. All support staff are clearly included in whole-school planning and these programs appear highly effective in supporting the school's development plan.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Under the excellent leadership of the Principal and with significant support of the executive team and staff, Melville Senior High School has embraced a culture of continual school improvement. There is a well-defined practice of rigorous self-analysis of all areas of the school based on the school review cycle. This cycle is based on the 'School Improvement and Accountability Conceptual Model' and is centred on the school's Business Plan that is clearly linked to the whole-school priority areas. There is an ongoing self-review approach by all staff with the provision of a formal, biannual review process with Heads of Learning Areas that leads to a regular review of the Business Plan. The reviewers were assured that the self-review cycle is applied in practice and is an effective model for sustained review and school improvement. The Principal is to be commended on developing an innovative approach to educational ideas with a strong focus on distributive leadership and a culture of self-review throughout all areas of the school.

The reviewers identified many examples of collaborative and distributed leadership throughout the school. This was evident to reviewers through discussion with the school executive, heads of learning areas, teachers-in-charge of specialist programs and a cross-section of teachers and education assistants and while visiting classrooms. The comprehensive range of documentation received also supported this distributive leadership model. The Principal and the deputy principals, with the support of staff, have developed and are continuing to drive a climate of teamwork and innovation in the school. The reviewers commend the school on the collaborative and distributive leadership model, the motivated staff, the high level of effective communication and the drive to improve student learning. This has contributed to a high level of staff morale within the teaching and non-teaching staff and their support for each other.

The reviewers were able to verify the school's positive culture and inclusive environment that values and supports all students. Meetings with the School Board, a large group of current and former parents and students, provided verification and evidence of the positive culture developed in the school, the inclusion of all students, a focus on academic excellence supported by a

strong specialist program and a distinct focus on meeting the requirements of students with special needs.

The extent to which the school is successful in enrolling a significant number of international fee-paying students demonstrates the standing the school has within the local and overseas community. The revenue generated from this enrolment source contributes significantly to the school funding some of the classroom refurbishment. The ongoing sustainability of the IFPS program depends on maintaining sound enrolments. This is facilitated by the work of the Principal and the marketing manager and the high reputation this program has within the community.

The Principal, deputy principals, business manager and marketing manager work as a team to monitor workforce requirements and manage the process of recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff. The reviewers verified that workforce planning is a strong feature of the school. Sustainability issues identified in the Workforce Plan present a number of challenges during the life of the next Business Plan. A significant issue is the number of long-serving teaching staff nearing retirement age. The school is carefully monitoring this and other issues (such as loss of funding or reduction in student numbers) in order that the quality of the teaching and learning may be assured into the future.

The School Board is included in the cycle of self-review and upholds its responsibility to provide critical oversight and reflection on school performance. Sustainability for the Board is related to developing sound processes for succession planning and ensuring that its accountability and oversight roles relate to reviewing the school's performance and endorsing budgets. The reviewers verified that the School Board is receptive to learning and maturing in its important role within the school community. As a component of the Board's ongoing role in its development and profile, the Chair acknowledges the development of a communication strategy is required to ensure the school community is aware of the Board's function and accountability in supporting the school. The Board's involvement in the regular administration of parent, staff and student satisfaction surveys was seen as another way of raising the profile of the School Board. The positive communication between the Principal, the school executive and the Board holds promise for a continued effective relationship.

Communication between the school and parents is at a very high level through the effective use of social media, emails, regular newsletters, the

school's website and CONNECT, a relatively new WA Department of Education online services portal. The parents are encouraged to be active participants in their children's education and many do so through their involvement in the many Specialist Program Support Groups, CONNECT and the Parents and Citizens' Association.

Melville Senior High School has effectively developed a sustainable education process through strong leadership, an extremely effective school improvement self-review cycle and a teacher focus on improving their strategies to meet the needs of all students.

Conclusion

Melville Senior High School provides an excellent academic and non-academic program for a diverse student population. The academic program, including a strong emphasis on specialist subjects for academically gifted students, has resulted in a high standard of performance as demonstrated in ATAR and VET results, national testing and in comparisons with like and local schools. Students at risk and international students are supported in the mainstream or through the school's own Melville Learning Centre, Intensive English Centre and English as a second language program.

The school has comprehensive and detailed self-review strategies in place to analyse performance against its priorities and targets in its Business Plan and in meeting its obligations under its DPA. Improving student learning is a key feature of the whole-school 2012–2014 Business Plan supported by operational planning and learning area plans. Throughout the school there is evidence of strategies to improve the quality of teaching with the ultimate focus on improving student learning.

The reviewers identified key evidence that indicates the school takes the wellbeing of students very seriously. All students are encouraged to reach their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

The reviewers are confident that Melville Senior High School is in a good position to sustain and improve its performance.

Commendations

The reviewers commend the school for excellence in the following areas:

- developing a culture of continuous improvement reinforced by an excellent self-review process with a focus on a comprehensive range of data related to student academic performance, wellbeing, attendance and involvement in co-curricular activities
- developing an innovative approach to educational ideas with a strong focus on distributive leadership and a culture of self-review throughout all areas of the school

- the collaborative and distributive leadership model, the motivated staff, the high level of effective communication and the drive to improve student learning
- the rigorous use of evidence-based data to improve student learning across all year levels
- student achievement compared to national, State and like-schools that places the school above average in all target areas
- the wide range of specialist programs offering state-of-the-art innovative curricula, with close links to the community that provide excellent opportunities for all students to achieve
- the extensive provision of programs to support the diversity of students across all levels of the school and address a wide range of student needs
- the Year 7 transition program for its innovative and well-structured approach to preparing the school for the new intake of Year 7 students in 2015.