



Department of  
Education

**Shaping the future**

# Merriwa Primary School

## Public School Review

# Public School Review

## Purpose

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

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

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

## Expectations of schools

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

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

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

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

## Public School Review – The Standard

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

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

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

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

## Context

Merriwa Primary School is located approximately 40 kilometres north of the Perth central business district and in the North Metropolitan Education Region.

Established in 1995, Merriwa Primary School became an Independent Public School in 2017. There are currently 374 students enrolled, ranging from Kindergarten to Year 6. The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 920 (decile 9).

Merriwa Primary School shares a site with Merriwa Education Support Centre (ESC) and both schools work closely together to cultivate a culture of social interaction in an inclusive setting.

Community support for the school is demonstrated through the energetic and committed work of the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) and School Board.

## School self-assessment validation

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

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

- Self-assessment and analysis of data are strengths of the school, informing ongoing planning and implementation of school and system initiatives.
- The Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT) submission was guided in its construction by the Standard. A broad range of interrelated and credible evidence was selected for analysis, with alignment between performance, judgements about priorities and planning for improvement.
- Discussion with the Principal and School Board Chair provided an insight into the unique and complex nature of the school, adding considerable value and further enriching the validation process.
- A significant representation of enthusiastic staff, students and community members engaged in discussions with the review team, contributing authentic reflections in support of the school.
- The school's leadership reported the Public School Review was a positive experience that has extended their understanding of the school's performance and enabled them to celebrate their significant progress and achievements over the past decade.

The following recommendation is made:

- Consider distilling evidence to that which demonstrates impact on student achievement and progress and the level of performance against the Standard.

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### Relationships and partnerships

Merriwa Primary School is a diverse yet highly inclusive school community. Staff are dedicated and work collaboratively to learn from each other and the wider community to give students the best opportunity to achieve success. A school-wide relational ethos drives elevated levels of support for students and the wider community.

#### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Community stakeholders and staff are highly invested and engaged in creating a successful school. The community values the difference the school makes for their children.
- The use of the ACSF<sup>1</sup> and NAIDOC<sup>2</sup> celebrations create a culturally responsive school that actively celebrates its partnerships with Aboriginal families and community members. This is enhanced through engagement with Edith Cowan University's Kurongkurl Katitjin Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research.
- Communication processes keep families well-informed about what is happening in the school, classroom and with their child. It is largely through digital platforms, with alternative methods available for families without online access.
- The Board, shared with Merriwa ESC, has a sound understanding of its governance role and responsibilities. Members engage proactively in strategic discussions, to help guide school decision making and policy.
- Staff relationships are respectful, confident and collectively they demonstrate a deep knowledge and common understanding of their students and the school's strategic direction. Staff hold themselves accountable, ensuring a culture of quality collaboration, feedback, empowerment, and commitment.

#### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to provide opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the different cultures that combine to make up the Merriwa Primary School community.
- Maintain opportunities for EAL/D<sup>3</sup> families to access school information including the use of interpreters.
- Re-establish opportunities to involve parent volunteers to support student learning.

### Learning environment

The school is unapologetically aspirational in their goals for all children. The student created, and community endorsed, school expectations: I am Respectful; I Achieve; I am Friendly; and I am Positive; drive a commitment to providing an inclusive, safe and caring environment.

#### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Following a well understood Positive Behaviour Support approach, programs are in place to ensure consistency of expectations, leading to improved behaviour data.
- Staff are committed to strengthening student attendance and engagement. Attendance goals are set, and processes are in place to follow up non-attendance with support to re-engage families and students.
- Senior Aboriginal students form part of the student leadership team. This provides Aboriginal students with 'voice' to the staff and School Board on a range of school matters including cultural events.
- Data is collected and analysed from the ACER<sup>4</sup> social and emotional student survey. This informs whole-school health and wellbeing planning and is a basis for reviewing of resilience programs.
- Staff consider colleagues as part of a school family. They support each other's wellbeing through regularly 'checking in' on each other at work and beyond.
- A strong, productive and collaborative relationship exists with staff from Merriwa ESC.

#### Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Continue to ensure all staff fully understand and maintain structures and processes to identify, support, assess, track and report on students at educational risk.

## Leadership

The strong, stable leadership team has established a highly collaborative and value adding approach to leading school improvement, centred on the best interests of students.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Change is implemented in a strategic, timely and inclusive manner. Following the Concerns Based Adoption Model, a focus on student success, where staff have an authentic 'voice' in key decision making is prioritised.
- There is a targeted and sustainable focus on school improvement. A consistent message and shared belief that every student has the potential to learn successfully is reinforced through the business planning cycle, operational plans and annual review processes.
- Professional learning programs and research readings underpin the implementation and adoption of evidence informed, whole-school processes and pedagogy.
- Leadership attributes are identified in staff and opportunities to take on leadership roles and engage in professional learning to develop leadership capacity are available. Staff are encouraged to participate and share their experience in research projects, including Lighthouse Maths and FORM Creative and Critical Thinking program.
- Staff are engaged in the development and review of the business plan and learning area operational plans, always based on student data. There is a clear alignment between the business plan, operational plans, resourcing, and classroom practice.

### Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Provide opportunities for staff to demonstrate accountability in whole-school programs through performance management processes, in depth data analysis and shared classroom practice.

## Use of resources

A trusting and productive relationship between the Principal and manager corporate services (MCS) ensure planning, management and monitoring processes for the use of resources are aligned to school operations. The intent is to always ensure resources are deployed in a targeted way to optimise student learning.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Processes and practices are established for effectively and efficiently managing financial and human resources. The Finance Committee assists with financial oversight and the School Board is kept well-informed of the school's financial management processes.
- The MCS provides strong consultation and guidance for the School Board, Finance Committee and staff in building financial literacy and an understanding the complexity of budget management.
- Time is provided for cost centre managers and the Finance Committee to meet and plan the budget for the following year ensuring an alignment between the business plan, operational plans, system priorities and resource allocation.
- Resource allocation is evidence-based, supports school planning and is responsive to the complex needs of the school community. Targeted initiatives and student characteristics funding is deployed strategically to support a range of enrichment and support strategies for identified students.
- An effective partnership between the school and P&C ensures school priorities receive additional funding.

### Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Continue to monitor the workforce plan by considering possible retirements and developing strategies to address potential workforce gaps.

## Teaching quality

Research and evidence are the foundations upon which quality teaching thrives at Merriwa Primary School. High levels of teacher efficacy underpinned by a shared belief that every child can achieve success defines teaching and learning.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The implementation of several direct instruction and explicit teaching programs, along with timetabled cross-setting, allow students to access the curriculum at their academic level. Students are placed in groups based on multi-layered assessments, are carefully monitored, and have opportunities to move groups.
- Staff support, to deliver sequenced curriculum content, is prioritised through the establishment of literacy and numeracy coordinators who are given time to work with teaching staff across all years.
- Curriculum teams develop, monitor and review learning area plans. Time is dedicated to interrogation of data with support provided by the associate principal to ensure staff understand the data and its use to inform class planning.
- Assessments and reporting on student achievement and progress inform both students and parents. This includes a collaborative approach to individual education planning and provision of translators to support families when English is not their first language.
- Established, collaborative planning structures support consistency of curriculum delivery, instruction, assessment practices, moderation and differentiation of learning for students.
- Staff, including education assistants and specialist teachers, receive professional learning to deliver whole-school literacy programs which maximise student learning.

### Recommendation

The review team support the following:

- Use the Quality Teaching Strategy as a foundation for consolidating the agreed and documented pedagogical instructional model used across the school.

## Student achievement and progress

At the forefront of all decision making, there is a united and determined resolve by staff to ensure every child, regardless of personal circumstances, will make continued and sustained progress.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Since 2019, NAPLAN<sup>5</sup> and school-based data indicate a strong and sustained positive trend in student achievement across all areas of literacy and numeracy.
- Aboriginal achievement is consistently above the national minimum standard and in line with, or above, other contextually similar schools.
- Operational plans are developed in all learning areas to articulate strategies, provide data based achievement targets and support teaching and learning.
- An assessment and moderation schedule supports the focus on maintaining grade alignment and achievement in line with the set targets.
- Reading, and mathematics Progressive Achievement Tests along with AEDC<sup>6</sup>, KAT<sup>7</sup> and On-entry Assessment data is reviewed and analysed at the classroom level to identify areas of achievement and planning for improvement.

### Recommendations

The review team support the following:

- Continue to augment existing moderation processes, including Brightpath, along with the School Curriculum and Standards Authority Judging Standards to ensure comparability of student achievement across all years.
- In the next business plan cycle include student achievement targets that are specific, measurable and are monitored through time-based improvement milestones.

## Reviewers

Craig Skinner  
**Director, Public School Review**

Paula Hooper  
**Principal, Forrestdale Primary School**  
**Peer Reviewer**

## Endorsement

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

Your next school review is scheduled for Term 3, 2027.



For  
Melesha Sands  
**Deputy Director General, Schools**

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## References

- 1 Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework
- 2 National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
- 3 English as an Additional Language or Dialect
- 4 Australian Council for Educational Research
- 5 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
- 6 Australian Early Development Census
- 7 Kindergarten Assessment Tool