



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Education Services**

Mindarie Senior College

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 the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Rick Gendle (Acting)
Board Chair:	Ms Tracey Roberts
School Location:	14 Elliston Parade Mindarie 6030
Number of Students:	861
Reviewers:	Mr Lindsay Usher (Lead) Ms Maureen Lorimer
Review Dates:	23 and 24 March 2016
Initial Review:	2013

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General of the Department 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?

Mindarie Senior College is located 39km north of Perth. It commenced in 2003 as a purpose built facility to meet the needs of a young adult enrolment completing Years 11 and 12 of their education. The design and range of the facilities cater for the learning needs of students focused on attaining qualifications to meet requirements for further post-secondary school study and/or employment. The college has maintained the quality of the facilities through a targeted maintenance and upgrade program.

Student enrolment has fluctuated in the period of the DPA, mainly due to the influence of the half cohort in 2013 and 2014. However, over time the enrolment has shown an upward trend with the current enrolment of 861 (down from 897 in 2015) considered to be in the optimal range for the college's facilities. The recent introduction of a local area intake zone has meant that students who have traditionally attended the school from Gingin District High School and Yanchep District High School will be enrolled at other schools. The local area intake zone draws students from nearby suburbs of Kinross, Burns Beach, Mindarie and a portion of Quinns Rock. Out of boundary applications are limited by the capacity of the college. A notable feature of the college's enrolment is the diversity of students' school backgrounds, coming from 27 different secondary schools including 36% of the Year 11 enrolment in 2016 emanating from non-government schools.

The college does not have a recorded Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating, however, contributory schools data would suggest that students are enrolling from areas that are in excess of the average ICSEA rating of 1000. The diverse socio-cultural student background is a mixture from urban and rural environments and from 27 nationalities. Students, while predominantly Australian born, are also significantly represented by those born in New Zealand, Britain and South Africa. The college has a small percentage of students with a disability (1.2%), language background other than English (5%) and Aboriginal background (1.5%). Student transiency at 10.8% in 2015 is consistent with students taking up employment options and attendance at 89.4% is above average. Regular attendance at 59.7% has been trending upwards but is below the average of 63.0%.

Workforce planning has focused on managing the changing enrolment, re-profiling administrative roles, improving non-teaching and teaching staff capacity and valuing staff to ensure continuity of the staffing profile and reduce turnover. The average age of the 97 staff is 45.

The college has established partnerships with local government, external agencies, Kinross College, universities, registered training organisations, the Coastal Cluster of Schools and alumni. Regular review of all partnerships are made as to the contribution made to supporting student learning.

The Mindarie Senior College Board, under the consistent leadership of the Board Chair, has operated successfully since inception in meeting its roles and responsibilities. The composition of the Board includes a number of community members with specific backgrounds and roles that provide support to the school and staff, student and parent members of the Board.

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 Mindarie Senior College leadership team has conducted extensive and rigorous reviews of the Business Plan over the time of the DPA. These reviews have resulted in refinement and changes to the focus areas, targets and planning structure that incorporated the Operational Plan and involved the input and collaboration of staff and the oversight of the College Board. The information collected during 2013–2015 in the Student Improvement Targets section of the Business Plan, demonstrates the progress made towards achieving targets with appropriate analysis that provides a rationale for performance and highlights areas of concern. Targets set and achieved are compared to the Department of Education schools' and State averages. The achievement, at mostly higher levels than these two measures, is indicative of the high standard being set in attainment and achievement in ATAR and VET completion.

Notable exceptions to the targets set for student academic performance are those for attendance and also for determining the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Attendance data has been the subject of analysis and refocusing on improvement strategies targeted at increasing regular attendance rates. Satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning targets has been addressed through regular surveys conducted over the time of the DPA. Survey tools used include school-developed parent surveys, National School Survey responses from parents and students, and the Effective School Improvement surveys to gauge school and classroom climate; student motivation and engagement; and, student perspectives on a safe and inclusive school environment.

In addition to the student improvement targets, the college leadership and staff have reviewed the four key focus areas in the Business Plan to determine the extent to which implementing strategies to achieve better outcomes for staff and students has met the requirements of the DPA. The principal provided an overview of how the college has met the prescribed roles and responsibilities.

Staff are heavily engaged in data gathering and analysis as evidenced by a detailed self-assessment schedule including grades analysis, teacher participation in professional learning, student destination and satisfaction

responses and reviews of partnerships, technology implementation, workforce planning, physical environment and performance management. These reviews provide feedback for future planning and reflection on performance and sustainability.

Reviewers were apprised of an intention, flagged by leadership, to establish collaborative arrangements with other schools such as John Curtin College of the Arts. The aim is to share experiences and gain access to additional expertise with regard to self-review processes and quality data for the purpose of improving student learning. The direction is affirmed as being an opportunity to develop quality data and analysis for making evidence-based decisions.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The Business Plan 2013–2016 sets the vision of 'Where Your Future Begins Now' which is characterised by a young adult ethos that supports students to take responsibility and make a positive contribution; embracing independence, passion and the pursuit of excellence. The plan has eight (academic and non-academic) improvement targets and four interconnected focus areas, which target academic achievement, teaching and learning, quality relationships and student connectedness to the college.

The staff had undertaken a comprehensive review of the targets and focus areas over the three-year cycle of the Business Plan. During the course of the cycle a target was added to monitor university offerings to students who made application, and adjusted the student attendance target to better reflect the directions of the college in supporting regular student attendance. The reviewers affirm the staff judgement on these improvement targets, having examined the relevant data sets, annual reports and held discussions with college leaders, learning area staff, support staff, students, parents and board members.

The four key focus areas of teaching and learning, leadership, relationships and resources were supported by a variety of evidence including student, parent and teacher surveys. The data confirmed the claims by the college that processes were in place to evaluate the core areas. Classroom climate surveys indicated high scores from students regarding teacher support, formative assessment, clarity of assessment criteria, and equity and task orientation. Less obvious was the impact of the focus areas on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes and their contribution to the achievement of the student improvement targets.

The staff identified key areas of academic improvement over the three-year cycle. Since 2012, the college has significantly improved the attainment rate for Year 12 students (ATAR of 55+ and/or Cert II or higher) from 60% to 93% in 2015. By comparison, the attainment rate for all public schools in 2015 was 88.1%. Similarly, the college's WACE achievement rate at 98% remains above the public school achievement rate of 96.2%.

The staff has also focused on student obtainment of all competencies to achieve a full qualification in certificate courses. In 2012, only 56% of the college's VET students were achieving a full qualification. This has risen in 2015 to 95.75% of students achieving an AQF VET Certificate I or higher (placed 47th on the First 50 VET Schools Achievement table), and 94.5% achieving an AQF Certificate II or higher.

The target focusing on improved regular attendance has been successful in achieving an upward shift in the regular attendance category from 56.1% in 2013 to 59.7% in 2015. Although lower than WA public schools (63%), the college is making steady inroads in this area.

In 2015, an additional target was added to the Business Plan focusing on the success rate of ATAR students being offered a university placement. Of the 149 students with an ATAR, 125 students applied for university entrance, plus an additional six students without an ATAR. Of the 131 students, 125 (95.4%) were offered a placement, with 93 students receiving their first preference. An increased focus within the Mentor program which includes the Elevate study skills program, together with a Manager of Student Studies, has consolidated the approach to targeted intervention to ensure students' success. The Academic Support program also provides individual tuition to students who require additional assistance in reaching their goals. In 2015, of the 24 regular Year 11 attendees, 15 students had improved English results from Semester 1 to Semester 2, whilst two students maintained their scores and seven were slightly lower.

The comprehensive VET program caters for the different talents, abilities and future pathways for students. The 2015 VET program had 72% of the Year 12 cohort undertaking a Certificate II or higher qualification. The college provided opportunities for students to engage in a broad spectrum of courses with 22 Certificate II courses being completed, 11 Certificate III courses and one Certificate IV. High completion rates in the VET areas of Business, Community Services, Information, Digital Media and Technology, Sport and Recreation and Visual Arts were noted. The reviewers noted the range and quality of VET courses available to students and with the professionalism of staff in achieving the target in VET.

In 2015, the staff implemented protocols and communication strategies to support the significant number of students who had not met the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements, either through NAPLAN testing in Year 9, or OLNA testing in Year 10. Overall, 69 students achieved the OLNA

benchmark for WACE across all three components (numeracy, reading and writing), in the March and September testing periods.

In discussion with the college executive team, it is apparent that greater emphasis will be placed on student academic success in the next reiteration of the Business Plan. The college is well placed with a range of survey data to demonstrate student engagement and connectedness to the college, plus strong student/teacher relationships. Drilling down into the Year 12 results to set meaningful and quantifiable targets will assist the learning area managers in aligning strategies with measurable goals.

The college's focus on improved regular attendance has shown overall improvement, particularly the data for 2015 in comparison to 2014. Year 12 regular attendance (56%) however, remains below the Year 11 cohort (63%) and also the WA Public Schools data for Year 12 students (62%) and may provide an impetus for the college to use as an indicator for future successful student achievement.

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 college focus on a young adult ethos as the core of its vision celebrates its central point of difference. It is evident that it is a philosophy that contributes to the direction, purpose and expectations for learning, student responsibility and behaviour. The adult learning environment is well articulated by all sections of the college community and is demonstrated in day-to-day operations that are not directed by sirens or bells. There is a calm and orderly learning environment that is appreciated by both students and parents.

This learning environment is physically, socially and emotionally safe for all students. The unique Mentor program ensures that every student is in the care of a teacher who has carriage for their welfare—both academically and socially/emotionally. Early intervention, provision of assistance and support, referral as required, plus encouragement and recognition of achievement ensure students feel valued and supported. The reviewers affirmed, through discussion with students and parents, the value placed on the mentoring program and the reciprocal respect that is generated between teachers and students.

Year group leaders oversee the Mentor program and assist in tracking individual students and determining the best pathway for learning. This is undertaken in collaboration with other members of the Student Services team, which includes the manager, psychologist, chaplain, nurse and learning support coordinator. An attendance officer has been added to the team in 2016 to provide additional support in monitoring and pursuing student absences. To engage students in college life and their learning, a number of activities are included in the yearly Mentor planner that support both academic achievement and mental health. The college conducts yearly classroom climate surveys and the information, presented as part of the self-assessment process, indicates that staff respond to the results and address areas of concern.

To celebrate and reward endeavour and achievement, the college has in place a prestigious 'Colours Awards' system that recognises achievement by students in both university and non-university pathway courses, plus endeavour awards for improvement within an individual course.

Community awards recognise involvement in service to the college and wider community. The 'Colours' concept is well established within the college community and the reviewers noted that in discussions, the students and parents confirmed that this focus was an important feature of the college. They also highlighted the range of co-curricular activities on offer that contribute to students' engagement in their learning and general well-being.

The Manager of Student Studies complements the Student Services team with individual student tracking which helps determine the best pathway for learning. It is apparent that staff take a proactive approach to identification, analysis, intervention and monitoring of students in need. GenVET courses have been established to support students in the General course pathway, whilst most ATAR students include a Certificate II course in their program of study. The strong VET program provides both training opportunities and a pathway to successful WACE achievement. The curriculum leaders who met with the reviewers were very supportive of the program and recognised the reciprocal benefits for all students in engaging them in their learning.

The Academic Support program is in place for students who may benefit from individual attention to enhance their academic performance. The target audience is generally students with learning difficulties who do not qualify for support through Schools Plus and English as a Second Language or for those students with socio-emotional issues that impact on their performance and attendance. Students whose aim is to improve their performance in ATAR English may also be invited to attend. Data presented to the reviewers demonstrated the effectiveness of the program in assisting students' to reach their goals.

High-needs students are also well catered for by the Learning Support Coordinator and four education assistants. These students work on Individual Education Plans and their success measured against set goals.

Due to the unique construct of catering for Year 11 and 12 students only, the college has a timetable that offers flexibility of delivery. This provides students who are engaged in off-site certificate courses and workplace learning to undertake these programs on Wednesday when the timetable is suspended. It also provides opportunities for a range of tutorials, OLN practice sessions and subject specific catch-up sessions for students who wish to make use of the time. It was evident to the reviewers that students valued the optional Wednesday program and it is well attended. Parents considered the flexible timetable to be good preparation for post-school decision-making.

The college and wider community are kept informed through such avenues as email and a regular newsletter. Parent/teacher reporting nights are conducted twice a year and the 'Colours' presentation evenings celebrate student success. Parents particularly appreciated the individual email communication from staff. They acknowledged and reaffirmed the effect of the provision of student opportunities in fulfilling the college's vision.

Approximately 15% of the parent cohort responded to the Parent National School Survey conducted in 2015. The ratings on all questions were high with overall ratings between 3.9 and 4.5 (1–5 scale). The college is aware that the engagement of parents in responding to surveys and general involvement in the college community could be improved and is exploring, together with the College Board, other means of engaging parents.

Due to its senior campus context, the college has deliberately developed strong relationships with the Coastal Cluster of Schools and with Kinross College. The latter provides approximately 50% of the students who attend the college. These educational partnerships and the maintenance of strategic alliances with the broader community assist the college in ensuring that the learning environment is relevant, engaging and meaningful. The external partnerships with a range of agencies support students to learn academic content through real-world examples and applications.

The college has developed a distinctive learning environment that engages students in their learning. The reviewers noted the sense of pride in belonging to the college community that was evident amongst the students.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

Mindarie Senior College has developed a strong culture of self-review practices at a leadership and staff level. Business and operational planning is targeted to address key areas identified through analysis of data and information. Planning intentions are well understood by staff through engagement in the analysis process and involvement in setting planning directions. Staff embrace the targets set for improvement and regularly reflect on how they influence classroom planning during performance management meetings with members of the leadership team.

The Board engages and participates closely in ensuring the ethos and directions of the college are a key feature of their decision-making. The Board has maintained its accountabilities and responsibilities through an agenda that reflects the key elements of its role as set out in the DPA. Community members of the Board bring high-level expertise to help guide decisions on key policy directions for the college. Oversight of student performance and finances, along with involvement in setting the directions of the next Business Plan, are evident in their operations. Ongoing self-assessment of their business model has been a feature of operations. It was noted that parent representation on the Board was not at the expected level. Despite the commonly supported view that parents were satisfied with the school and did not feel they needed to be engaged, a higher level of parent participation needs to be facilitated. Reviewers had discussions with Board members regarding raising its profile to increase knowledge and understanding of its role in representing the community.

College staff benefit from a leadership model that is stable and provides direction and support for teaching and learning. The Business Plan has a Key Focus Area on leadership which has strategies for developing an increasing number of Level 3 teachers (from seven to 17) and developing leaders within the school with seven teaching staff being appointed on merit to Level 3 positions. The college promotes opportunities for staff to be involved in advisory and examination panels external to their classroom work, and the young adult ethos has provided opportunities for students to gain leadership skills and engage in humanitarian activities.

Staff capacity to improve their effectiveness in delivering quality teaching and learning experiences has been enhanced by the focus in the business and operational plans on developing a professional learning community to engage students; improve practice through research; and, develop student skills to become independent learners. Staff were able to comment positively on the impact on their teaching of the Conferencing program providing feedback from colleagues on their practice and the Professional Learning Research Teams conducting research on effective learning strategies. Evidence-based decision making practices are clearly embedded in thinking at all levels. In addition to the strategies employed with staff to enhance teaching and learning, it is notable that the students and community have opportunities through surveys to comment and rate the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of staff/student relationships. Survey results generally are very high, indicating positive support for staff and the school in the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Survey results were consistent with the feedback provided to reviewers from parents and students.

Discussions with board members, finance staff and the leadership team confirmed that the college is well placed to provide human, physical and financial resources to sustain current programs and support future initiatives. College enrolment is stable and able to be managed effectively to provide consistency. Workforce, business and operational planning has focused strongly on developing the college's workforce and providing appropriate succession planning opportunities to maintain a stable and experienced staff. In discussions with staff, parents, board members and students it was evident that despite the Principal being on leave for 2016, established processes ensured appropriate and smooth succession and continuity of programs.

Planning that sets targets to improve student learning and create a positive learning environment have been consistently developed over the period of the current DPA. Business and operational plans are lean and targeted documents that state clear outcomes and expectations of standards, performance and strategies. They stand up well to scrutiny, are changed as circumstances alter and have the benefit of being eminently usable by staff in supporting their own work.

A review session on 'where to from here' provided reviewers with assurances regarding the next stages of improving student learning with particular reference to changing WACE and university entry requirements and catering particularly for students in the lowest trile of ATAR students. The leadership team focused on strategies to improve targets and respond to possible risks to

ongoing programs through changes in other schools that could impact on student enrolments and staffing profiles. This discussion also focused on identifying the college's strategic direction and identity within the wider community. Its young adult ethos and positive school climate are considerable successes within the school and the performance of student's in post-secondary school options, if demonstrated by the use of data to show the benefits of enrolment, has the potential to be a marketing tool attractive to students and parents.

Conclusion

Mindarie Senior College provides students with a highly supportive educational environment that provides them with an opportunity to achieve their personal goals and equip them for the next stage of their adult life. Students are able to enjoy an environment and teaching programs that values and respects their maturity and independence in a culture that fosters highly positive relationships between staff and students.

The young adult ethos is also evident in the wide-ranging choices students have in achieving a WACE. While choice is critical, the range of supports available to ensure no student 'falls through the cracks' is highly commendable and a part of college practice that is well embedded. The opportunity for practice and procedures to be monitored and enhanced is supported by strong feedback mechanisms to support improved teaching, report on the quality of the school's culture and enable the engagement of students and parents as partners in the education process.

The college is well served by an engaged board; staff who are constantly seeking to improve their practice; and, leadership that has the capacity to sustain the quality of education offered through incisive planning and foresight in ensuring the best interests of students are paramount.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the safe inclusive learning environment supported by a mentoring program, academic support strategies and monitoring that provide assurances and positive outcomes for students in catering for their academic and social needs
- the positive young adult ethos that fosters independence in learning and a culture that supports all students to achieve the best possible outcomes
- the curriculum structure, delivery and pathway choices offered that have the capacity to engage and motivate students to be productive, independent learners

- motivated staff, who are committed to improving teaching and learning and engage in developing their skills through opportunities to join professional learning communities and seek peer feedback on their teaching practices
- leadership at all levels, for the manner in which staff are engaged in the self-review process, analysis and implementation of strategies and planning in a collaborative manner that values their contributions and utilises their skills and expertise.
- leadership, for its focus on academic and non-academic student performance, teaching and learning, leadership development, relationships and resource deployment in improving student outcomes.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- refocus targets and strategies in the next Business and Operational Plan to raise the performance of ATAR students to meet changing expectations for university entry
- improve Year 12 regular attendance to be in line with WA Public Schools data
- develop a strategic direction and identity for the college that builds on the positive aspects already present to promote the quality of its ethos, culture and programs to the wider community
- ensure higher levels of parent participation in board membership
- develop a higher profile for the Board within the community to ensure an understanding of its roles and responsibilities as a decision-making body acting on the community's behalf.

Declaration

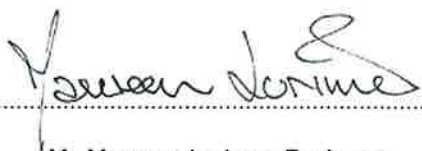
We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Mindarie Senior College as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The Principal and Board Chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



Mr Lindsay Usher, Lead Reviewer

4 May 2016

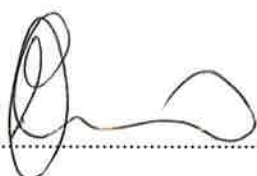
Date



Ms Maureen Lorimer, Reviewer

4 May 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

13/5/2016

Date