



Government of Western Australia
Department of Education Services

Bunbury Senior High School

2016

Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

Disclaimer

This document reports the findings of the Department of Education Services' review and verification of the school's self-review. The school's self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

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

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Craige Pettit
Board Chair:	Mrs Heather Percy
School Location:	10-44 Haig Crescent, Bunbury WA 6230
Number of Students:	931
Reviewers:	Mr Keith Newton (Lead), Mr Gerry Chapman and Mrs Lyn Caudle
Review Dates:	26 and 27 July 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?

Bunbury Senior High School, established in 1918, opened at its present location in 1923 in the heart of the City of Bunbury. It is the fourth oldest government school in the State and enjoys strong support from a large and diverse group of former students, parents and staff.

The school has a *My School*® Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1014 with 15% of students in the top quartile and 24% in the bottom quartile.

The school has a teaching staff of 69 (67.4 FTE) inclusive of 12 administrators and a further 32 staff (26.1 FTE) in support roles. Leave liability is low with only three staff members having long service leave of more than 66 days outstanding. Absenteeism and resignations are within normal expectations.

The school has an enrolment of 931 Year 7 to 12 students with 8% having a language background other than English, 3.2% being Aboriginal, and 5.4% identified as having a disability. In 2015, the attendance rate for the school as a whole was 90% and for Aboriginal students 88%. The proportion of students attending for more than 90% of the time was 70% for all students and 48% for Aboriginal students. The student transiency rate is 14.8% (*My School*®).

Although the school is over 90 years old, the buildings are, in the main, well-maintained and suited to the purpose of delivery of contemporary education. There have been a number of upgrades over the years including the provision of a purpose-built library and additional classrooms for the relocation of Year 7 to secondary schools.

Effective partnerships have been established with a number of external agencies including the City of Bunbury, South Regional TAFE, the Bunbury Regional Trade Training Centre, the Bunbury Chamber of Commerce, the YMCA and other community groups.

The Board is comprised of school staff, community members, parents and senior-school students. It plays a significant part in the ongoing oversight of the school and actively engages in planning with the staff for the delivery of educational programs aimed at improving academic, social, emotional and physical development of all students.

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 school staff engages in a rigorous ongoing self-review process that supports annual, semester and day-to-day review and feedback on progress in relation to the priorities set out in the school's Business Plan (*A Framework for the Pursuit of Excellence in Education*). This relies on contemporary data-based evidence that is collected at the individual student, classroom and learning-area level and analysed by staff and the leadership team to inform improvement planning.

The outcomes of the review process have been captured at a strategic level in three key documents: a self-assessment against 12 statements about the nature of the Business Plan using a four-point rating scale; a self-assessment against 20 statements about aspects that contribute to valid self-assessment using a five-point scale; and a self-assessment of the quality of teaching, learning environment, relationships, leadership and resource alignment over the life of the Business Plan on a semester by semester basis. In each case, the staff are able to point to evidence to support conclusions.

Within the above, progress is tracked against commonly accepted benchmarks and standards information. This data, along with teacher judgements, is analysed internally and against like schools on a regular basis to ensure appropriate progress has been made for each student.

Staff are heavily engaged in the review process, including the development of strategies at the operational level to maintain a focus on optimal levels of achievement. Within this process, careful consideration is given to identifying key issues and required changes in practice, all of which are acted upon as early as possible. Staff are also given every opportunity for professional learning to ensure they have the relevant skills and knowledge necessary to implement the designated strategies.

The staff, in conjunction with the Board, have taken note of and implemented changes in accord with the areas identified for improvement in the 2013 Department of Education Services' review report.

The staff has also undertaken a self-assessment against the current DPA, although the Board is yet to undertake a similar process.

The self-review process also informs the content of the Annual Report, which is made public, and the ongoing reporting to the Board, which is active in holding the staff to account for the performance of the students and setting the direction and standards to be achieved.

The transparency of the school's self-review process ensures a high degree of accountability for the quality of inputs across the cognitive, social-emotional and physical spectrums of learning outcomes. The decision-making process incorporates a cycle of planning, monitoring and review.

School Performance—Student Learning

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

The 2014–2016 Business Plan: *A Framework for the Pursuit of Excellence in Education* has three priorities: Achieving Excellence, Teaching and Learning and Engagement, with performance indicators for attendance, literacy and numeracy and academic achievement. Whilst there are no specific targets to measure progress against these areas in the Business Plan, the operational improvement plans contain specific attainment targets as follows.

NAPLAN: in the period 2014-2016, student progress and achievement matches or betters that of Australian Schools in all aspects of NAPLAN.

The staff did not achieve their stated target in these areas over the life of the plan. The goal was met with scores in 2014 and 2015 close to the Australian schools' average in all areas except numeracy, which was above like schools in both years, and above all schools in 2015. Reading progress in Years 7–9 was comparable/above Australian schools, and grammar and punctuation comparable in 2015. However, writing progress was well below, and spelling was below. There was higher progress, lower achievement for all except numeracy which just fell in the higher progress, higher achievement quadrant.

From 2013–2015, Year 7–9 student progress, compared with Australian schools, showed lower progress, lower achievement in spelling and writing; lower progress, higher achievement in grammar and punctuation, and numeracy; higher progress, higher achievement in reading. A progress comparison with Australian schools in 2014 and 2015 showed a trend upwards to be comparable in grammar and punctuation, below in spelling, trending from above to below in writing, trending upwards to exceed in reading, a trend down but comparable in numeracy.

The staff identified the need to improve student achievement in lower school through additional literacy support and this has resulted in the appointment of a literacy specialist in 2016. There are plans to extend numeracy support in the near future. A focus on differentiation for individual student learning has seen a range of strategies including professional learning for teachers, some documented plans for students and some trialling of more practical approaches to science in Year 7. It is evident that the school is in the early developmental stages of this strategy and is yet to embed whole-school,

consistent pedagogical practice of differentiated learning for all teachers. The school's *Principles of Teaching and Learning* document is explicit in its expectation for evidence-based, student-centred planning as well as targeted and scaffolded instruction. Further progress is indicated in the continued work in learning areas and teacher performance improvement strategies such as Professional Learning Communities and the *Educator Impact* program being introduced. The Student Services team has been restructured to provide closer monitoring and interventions for student academic improvement.

There was no evident plan or analysis for the stated indicator of Year 10 literacy and numeracy.

ATAR Performance: by the end of 2016 the top 67% of ATAR students have a median ATAR equal to or greater than 80.

Following a recommendation from the previous review in 2013, staff members have modified the ATAR target to focus on the top two-thirds of ATAR student performance, which is in their view 'more reflective of the cohort'. The remaining third of students were identified as poor performers, many of whom had disengaged well before the external exams. This is reinforced by the Year 12 attendance with 25% classed as at moderate or severe risk compared with 16% for all Western Australian Schools. This group of students has provoked some action by the staff to improve counselling and course selection, allied with early intervention with students in Year 11 at risk, and a review of the pathways for these students into Year 12.

The staff is aiming to increase ATAR enrolments, with a decline in the number of students acquiring an ATAR from 56% in 2013 to 43% in 2015, and have identified that many of the target students come from families with little or no experience of higher academic success. To this end, a range of strategies have been implemented to support students and their families in this unfamiliar situation. This includes the *Edge*, *Follow the Dream*, and *Studyworks* programs. Anecdotally, from student and parent feedback, these are successful programs.

In 2015, 98% of the 38 ATAR students achieved WACE graduation with the median ATAR 71.55, an increase over 2014 with 64.1%, but still below WA public schools with 76%. Using the revised target, this figure becomes 73% in 2014 and 82% in 2015, which confirms the revised target was met. Four students were awarded a Certificate of Commendation and eight students achieved an ATAR above 90, a 25% increase over 2014. The WACE exam

results indicate some below-expected performances over the last two years and the staff is working to remedy this outcome for 2016. Staff members are currently on track to meet the 2016 target.

Selective Academic Program (SAP): By 2016, 75% of SAP students achieve at least 6 A grades across the year in lower-school MESH subjects.

The staff acknowledge that this target has not been achieved, with 51% of students achieving six A grades in 2014 and 58% in 2015. As part of a program review, a revised target of 65% is seen as more achievable and has been set for 2016. This review has begun to sharpen the program's focus with a thematic approach to students' learning in each lower-school year group; improved induction and training for teachers; modifications to the extension experiences and improved parent communication. The school has recently produced a *Special Programs* prospectus which will go out to all Year 5 students in the area, with the aim of increasing applications for enrolment.

Teacher Judgements: By the end of 2016, teachers are making judgements consistent with those made in other schools across all areas of the curriculum, as evidenced by SAIS data.

The 2014 and 2015 grade allocations for English, humanities and science indicate there is a trend above the expected performance range and the school's assessment that these may be somewhat inflated, after taking into consideration the SAP students, is affirmed. Mathematics teacher judgements fall within the expected range but alignment with NAPLAN scores indicates some disparity with a significant proportion of NAPLAN results above grade allocations. Work has commenced to improve moderation activities across learning areas, both within the school and outside.

Subject progress

It is evident that analysis of student achievement data has become a regular part of the school self-review cycle and now includes learning area semester analysis by classroom teachers and Heads of Learning Area (HOLA), followed by reporting and discussion with the school leaders to inform future planning. The NAPLAN data is now available on the Reporting to Parents module and it is evident a number of staff are accessing this information to assist with their planning and delivery of programs. It was not evident that this is a regular part of all teachers' planning to support students with differing levels of literacy and numeracy.

Year 10 exams:

Neither data nor analysis were presented for this indicator.

Vocational Education and Training: By the conclusion of the 2016 school year, the completion rate for students attempting Certificate II or above is at or above 90%, with an aspirational target of 100%.

A growth in VET programs and participation is evident over the period 2013–2015, with the participation rate rising from 45.1% in 2013, to 69.32% in 2015. In addition, the completion rate for Certificate II or higher in Year 12 has risen to 86.89% and three students attained a Certificate III in 2015. The staff are undertaking a review of the course offerings and have developed several school-based certificate courses, including Business, Visual Arts and Sport and Recreation. A *Pre-Apprenticeship in School (PAIS)* program is also running and disengaged students continue to have the opportunity to access VET courses through the *SHED* program. Students also have access to external VET courses through South Regional TAFE, the Bunbury Regional Trade Training Centre and other providers in the region.

The school has developed an extensive range of programs designed to engage and extend students. The Visual Arts Specialist Program (VASP) has seen students gain very good results in lower school and is now moving enrolment numbers into senior school with WACE course enrolments and results yet to be realised. The well-established and successful *Bunbury Elite Sports Training (BEST)* Program has demonstrated high levels of achievement with many students gaining selection in regional and State teams noting students have consistently achieved above-expected examination results in physical education studies over the last three years.

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?

Bunbury Senior High School has established itself as a school of choice in the local area and developed a reputation for delivering a contemporary curriculum in the context of a quality learning environment. The 2013 formulation of the school's *Framework for the Pursuit of Excellence in Education* (Business Plan) and the refocus on the vision of 'Going forward together to broad horizons' led to the adoption of the *Principles of Teaching and Learning* underpinned by the values of Respect, Responsibility, Relationships, Recognition, Relevance, and Risk Taking. A recent revisiting of the school vision involving the whole staff was undertaken at the beginning of Semester 2, 2016 in preparation for the next planning cycle. Attainment of the key priorities of Engagement, Achieving Success and Teaching and Learning is demonstrated through the achievement of key performance indicators in attendance, literacy and numeracy, and academic achievement. The pursuit of excellence and the embedding of the six values are part of the ongoing agenda as the school ensures a broad range of academic and non-academic programs to achieve improvements in student performance. The rebuilding of the house system and provision of leadership opportunities are strategies the staff uses to encourage improved effort and the pursuit of excellence.

Parents and students affirmed that the school provides a safe and inclusive environment, evidenced by a high level of staff commitment to supporting students and the provision of a revitalised student services team.

Students commented that there was a collective responsibility for maintaining a high standard of behaviour with acceptance of responsibility for their actions and outcomes. The student services team reiterated that the majority of students were well-behaved and that respect, responsibility and relationships were part of the fabric of the school. This was further demonstrated by the school's involvement with outside agencies like *Youth Focus*, *Head Space* and *True Colours*. The development of resiliency through the *Mindfulness* program and stress management programs and the use of the restorative process *Stop-Walk-Talk* are additional indicators that there are sound practices supporting a caring and inclusive environment.

A comprehensive raft of strategies and resources is deployed effectively to support student learning, engagement and well-being. The 2015 restructuring of the student services team to provide three academic coordinators aligned to three student support workers is ensuring a greater focus on both academic achievement and student well-being. These key personnel with responsibility for senior-school management, academic monitoring of Years 7 and 8 and Years 9 and 10, along with a literacy/numeracy specialist have improved the school's capacity to provide appropriate support for a broader spectrum of students needing assistance. They further enlist the support of additional student services team members such as the school psychologists and nurse as well as the involvement of outside agencies as required.

Strategies to address an increasing number of students experiencing anxiety are being implemented. The student services team is responsible for coordination and monitoring of individual and group education and behaviour management plans. They work cooperatively to facilitate the transition of students from primary school and through lower school to senior school.

Alternative programs for disengaged students, including the *SHED* program for Year 11 and 12, the Year 10 *Try-A-Trade* program and links for Year 9 and 10 students to sustainability projects meet the needs of identified students. The *Study Works* program for Year 11 and 12 ATAR students, Homework Club, Maths Club, the *EDGE* program and the *90+ Club* are additional examples of strategies used to assist students to improve performance.

Consideration of the breadth of programs on offer and the extent to which those programs are achieving the intended outcomes needs to be evaluated with a view to ensuring that they are the most effective and appropriate. Implementation of the *Academy* software package and the Student At Risk Matrix to track and monitor student attendance, intervention programs, welfare issues and academic achievement are assisting staff to effectively record, store and access student academic and welfare data.

The school target to improve student attendance, address Year 10 and 12 regular attendance and the number of unexplained absences has resulted in the training of staff with specific attendance monitoring roles. It is anticipated there will be a resultant improvement in attendance and reduction in unexplained absences.

The 'Framework for Pursuit of Excellence' priority of 'Quality Teaching and Learning' is demonstrated through the achievement of key performance indicators in literacy and numeracy and academic achievement.

Learning area planning, documentation and discussion with the curriculum leadership team verified that all learning areas are on schedule with the transition from the Australian Curriculum to the West Australian Curriculum and that progress is consistent with the required implementation time lines. Lower-school students are grouped by ability in mathematics, science and humanities with additional differentiated curriculum requirements determined at the classroom level. WACE implementation is consistent with School Curriculum and Standards Authority requirements. Academic excellence is supported by the provision of specialist programs that increase opportunities, provide enrichment and the pursuit of excellence. These programs attract high-quality students from across the wider Bunbury district and are producing significantly improved student outcomes in all year levels across the school.

Professional learning communities engage groups of teachers in researching, developing and implementing theme and priority related strategies to improve student learning and achievement data. Concurrent staff involvement in the *Educator Impact Program* enables them to observe other teachers and be observed with an aim to self-reflect on pedagogy and identify areas for the focus of their performance improvement plans. Staff professional learning is resourced and targeted to meet the requirements of the West Australian Curriculum implementation and school priorities.

These strategies are building teacher capacity and improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is also an increased focus on the level of teacher accountability for student and class results with class-by-class performance analysis, regular review of student progress and semester and yearly data analysis reports on student progress. This is complemented by teachers, HOLA and program coordinators collaboratively moderating, analysing and reflecting on student performance and the quality of their teaching programs. This information forms the basis of data used in the school self-review process and provides the mechanism for identifying systemic concerns which are considered by the curriculum leadership team to determine future improvement planning imperatives.

The school communicates with parents through the use of the *Connect* program which provides students and parents with course-related updates and the opportunity to access information relevant to each student's

performance. Parents are quickly and regularly informed of student achievement and welfare matters. Attendance information is conveyed to parents via the SMS attendance software and parents receive emails from staff on a range of school matters. Regular parent/teacher sessions provide feedback on student performance. The assistance of board members with logistics and organisation at these sessions has helped facilitate the appointment schedule process.

The staff use parent surveys and follow up on areas of identified need and parent concern; however, the small sample size is an issue the staff are cognisant of and looking to address. Additionally, the issue of communication was identified in the parent survey and in the staff comments section of the staff survey. Both parent and board member group discussions raised the issue of the effectiveness and timeliness of some aspects of communication and agreed on the need to explore ways to improve the two-way communication process.

Recent initiatives by the *SHED* program making connections with the City of Bunbury are aimed at providing broader opportunities for students as is the school's connection with the *Bunbury Chamber of Commerce*. Another example is the *Zonta Club of Bunbury* which is a community group providing female students with scholarships and incentives to become community leaders. A recent partnership with *South Regional TAFE* is endeavouring to establish a Bunbury Senior High School Alumni with more than 400 past students having shown initial interest. These partnerships add value and support the school's vision to 'go forward together to broader horizons'. The consensus of parents, staff and students was that Bunbury Senior High School is respected and valued by the broader school and Bunbury community.

School Performance—Sustainability

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

The school is realising the vision of 'Going forward together to broad horizons', on a daily basis. The core values are demonstrably present across the student, teacher and parent bodies with 'Resilience' fast becoming another part of the culture. The core values are reinforced continuously, forming a reference point for school and individual identity, individual responsibility and commitment to learning, and the establishment of trust and security to underpin all learning activities.

Specific and detailed planning that sets targets to improve student learning is in place and is reviewed and altered as necessary. The school has tight administrative procedures and thorough documented plans/policies coupled with performance information. There is a free flow of information and a climate of approachability for enquiries. Human, physical and financial resources are available and appropriately sourced in order to sustain current programs and support future initiatives.

The school leadership team, led by a highly competent and influential Principal, assume collective end-of-line responsibilities whilst providing leadership for defined focus areas of the Business Plan.

To ensure school-wide coherency, HOLA and program co-ordinators are encouraged to take a whole-school perspective. This is key to the school reaching a consensus based on evidence and ensuring consistency.

The Principal has taken steps to ensure the continuity of expertise of the workforce through a balanced recruitment framework focused on attracting graduate and experienced staff. The Principal also actively encourages and supports staff to take on leadership roles including the attainment of Level 3 Teacher status.

The staff as a whole has adopted an evidence-based self-assessment framework that results in revised plans for improvement, some of which inform the Business Plan and some of which remain at the operational level.

The school's self-assessment is a cyclical process involving staff, the leadership team and the Board. The process includes performance data analysis; a review of targets and associated strategy; a review of operational

strategies; and ongoing reviews of selected courses, all of which inform reporting to the Board and the preparation of the annual report.

The Board is fulfilling its governance role effectively. Cyclic self-reviews are an integral part of this, as is its harmonious relationship with the Parents and Citizens' Association.

The Board, whilst acknowledging it has been a learning journey, has developed a sound understanding and knowledge of the curriculum and data analysis processes. This is evident in the student performance information reports the Principal presents to the Board and the level of interrogation and feedback provided by board members.

Resource management and workforce planning are appropriately and effectively targeted to align with the DPA and school priorities. Staff members have appropriate access to resources to sustain their roles within the school.

Overall, the school has established governance processes, systematic plans/policies and collaborative teams with distributed leadership. These have been built within the strong culture of collaboration and high expectations. School leadership actively oversees the performance of all teams and fine tunes as required.

With powerful coherence in policy and practice, the school is well-placed to sustain all commitments in the DPA and to sustain a significant drive to improve student and school performance.

Conclusion

Bunbury Senior High School uses an iterative, data-aware self-review process to analyse performance and to meet obligations under the DPA. Formal self-review documents include conclusions about performance against targets, standards of student achievement, progress made and actions to be taken for improvement.

The school provides an effective learning environment for all students where decisions are evidence-based and grounded in contemporary research.

The school is held in high regard by staff, students, parents and the wider community. The professional knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff in creating quality learning and teaching programs to maximise the educational opportunities for each student was evident throughout the review. This, along with effective school leadership, has resulted in the school being held in high regard in the local community.

The school has a well-informed and capable Board that sets the strategic direction, oversees implementation and holds the school to account for its performance. This, when aligned with the team of competent staff, effective partnerships and targeted use of resources, ensures the school's vision, purpose and values are evident throughout operations.

The school is serving the learning needs of its students and in doing so is meeting the aspirations of the community.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the transparency of the school's self-review process that ensures a high degree of accountability for the quality of inputs across the cognitive, social-emotional and physical spectrums of learning outcomes
- the restructuring of the student services team to better meet the needs of student well-being and to support improved student academic achievement
- the provision of quality alternative programs to meet the needs of disengaged students
- the provision of a suite of specialist programs that provide enrichment and a pursuit of excellence, producing significantly improved outcomes for the students.

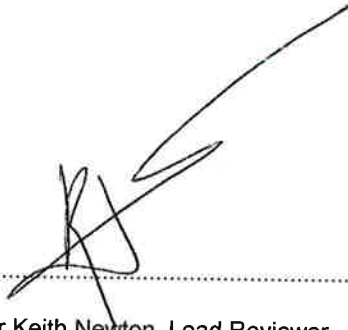
Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- incorporation of high-level strategic targets in the next Business Plan, in line with the DPA teaching and learning responsibilities
- an evaluation of the breadth of programs on offer and the extent to which those programs are achieving the intended outcomes to ensure they are effective and appropriate
- an evaluation of the effectiveness and timeliness of communication channels/processes with a particular focus on ways to improve the two-way communication process between school, parents and other stakeholders.

Declaration

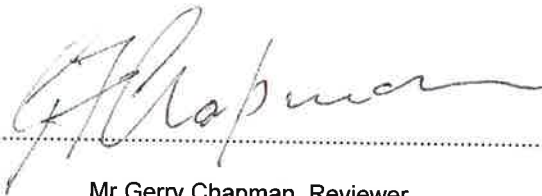
We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Bunbury Senior High School as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process.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



Mr Keith Newton, Lead Reviewer

19 August 2016

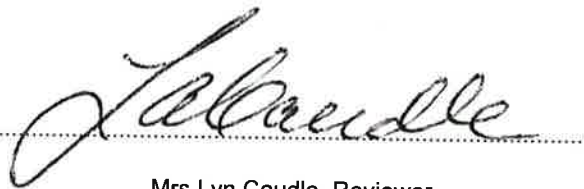
Date



Mr Gerry Chapman, Reviewer

19 August 2016

Date



Mrs Lyn Caudle, Reviewer

21 August 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

29.8.16

Date