Roleystone Community College

2017

Review Findings

Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Mr Mark Brookes
Board Chair:	Mr Paul Mutton
School Address:	90 Raeburn Road, Roleystone WA 6111
Number of Students:	713
ICSEA[1]	1047
Reviewers:	Mr Peter Wilson (Lead)
	Mr Bill Gibson
Review Dates:	2 and 3 August 2017

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review is to provide assurance to the principal and school community, the board and the Director General of the Department of Education of the extent to which the school staff and board have met the commitments of the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA). The review verifies the degree to which there are effective processes in place bringing about improved student learning.

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[1] The Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale of socio-educational advantage that is computed for each school. It allows for comparisons to be made between schools that are matched according to their socio-educational advantage, allowing fair comparisons of NAPLAN results between schools with students who have a similar ICSEA. The median ICSEA value is 1000.
http://www.acara.edu.au/_resources/Fact_Sheet_-_About_ICSEA.pdf

Review Methodology

Underpinning the review methodology is the understanding that the principal is required to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the DPA are met; school performance and student improvement targets and priorities, as detailed in the school's business plan, are assessed, reviewed annually and an annual report made publicly available. The review seeks to determine the extent to which these commitments have been met.

The principal provided the school self-review conclusions to the reviewers one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The reviewers supplemented the information provided by the principal 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

- School Performance Monitoring

- Schools Online reports.

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school self-review documentation to verify achievement of the DPA and business plan commitments, and developed lines of inquiry where further in-school verification was required.

An agenda for the site visit was negotiated with the principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made in the school self-review statements. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students where required. Where the school belongs to an Independent Public School (IPS) cluster of schools the review considers whether the purpose of the cluster has been met and the benefits to the school.

The evidence provided by the principal, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visit, was used as the basis for judgements made in verifying how well the school staff and board have met the commitments of the DPA and business plan.

Business Plan

How effective was the business plan in responding to the school's context and improving student learning (progress, achievement and engagement)?

Roleystone Community College is a K–10 school which opened in 2012 after the amalgamation of Roleystone Primary School and Roleystone District High School. It gained IPS status in 2015. The college is situated in the Perth hills 35 km from the city centre. The college has an ICSEA of 1047 placing it in the third decile of schools in Australia. The student enrolment of 713 has 187 students in the secondary school, 10 Aboriginal students and approximately 4% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The college is set in attractive bushland and is isolated from the Perth metropolitan area, yet it is within 20 minutes' drive from other public and private secondary schools which offer Year 7 to Year 12 programs. While the college has clear advantages, the fact that students need to leave at the end of Year 10 presents it with the challenge of retaining students into secondary school at the start of Year 7.

The college has a vision of "every student matters" and that "each child will progress". An endorsed specialist secondary program, focusing on film and television production, allows students to cross boundaries to attend. There are two other school-based secondary focus programs; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and netball.

The original 2015–17 Business Plan adopted when the college became an IPS in 2015 was significantly rewritten in 2016 and endorsed by the board early this year. The current principal of the college has been instrumental in developing this clearer and simpler business plan. He has gained a strong commitment among staff and the community and has used the business plan to create a more focused learning culture. The current business plan has a simpler design and clearer priorities; however, it is not aligned to the three year IPS review cycle. The principal, board chair and the reviewers accepted the need to base the review of the college on the DPA and using the 2017–19 Business Plan, as this has been the basis for college operations and planning and board decisions.

Findings

- The business plan is available to community and is effective and understood through the college. It clearly articulates medium and long-term pathways and is focused on improvements in student performance.

- The business plan's two priority areas of "teaching and learning" and "a culture that promotes learning" clearly point to the vision to improve the learning of all students at the college and to attract students to its close and caring community.

- Within the teaching and learning priority the business plan outlines the methodology through which the college will achieve its ambition to introduce the "Roleystone model of instruction". The priority areas of establishing a culture to promote learning involves improving attendance, developing positive behaviour, improving the college environment and engaging the community.

- Four academic target areas are aimed at student progress and achievement; and one non-academic target addresses student attendance. Two other targets address retention of students from Year 6 to Year 7 and increasing the proportion of local residents attending the college.

- The college has included a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) progress target and a progress target within the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) regime. The PAT results are not yet available as the testing schedule was only adopted within the last 12 months. However, the use of PAT will give timelier and broader progress information about student achievement.

- While the business plan contains clear areas of measurement, there is a need to define the targets more specifically in ways which will allow reporting as part of the college's regular self-review and annual reporting procedures.

- Due to the recent adoption of the current plan, operational plans are available, but still under development. Milestones intended to show progress towards target achievement are present in the operational plans.

- The principal, college leaders and teachers along with the board articulate a shared commitment to improvement, but more limited attention has been given to specifying detail.

Areas of strength

- The 2017–19 Business Plan provides a clear sense of direction for the college within its two priorities of teaching and learning, and a culture that promotes learning.

- The level of commitment among staff and the community to the current business plan.

Areas for improvement

- Align the timespan of the next business plan with the duration of the DPA by covering the years 2018–20.

- Clarify student achievement progress targets within the business plan to include comparison against a wider student population such as like-schools or State or national averages.

- Clearly link the business plan and operational plans.

Teaching and Learning

How has the quality of teaching improved and sustained student learning (progress, achievement and engagement)?

Findings

- There have been recent significant changes to the learning environment for literacy and numeracy, particularly in the primary school, using literacy and numeracy blocks, in improvements in the effectiveness of staff collaborative planning time and in the extra support using education assistants. This has improved the classroom teaching experience for all students and provided support of various cohorts of students, both those who need assistance and those who benefit from extension. Discussions with teachers and education assistants and consideration of individual student progress points to significant improvement in student literacy and numeracy through these changes.

- Although the program changes appear to have resulted in improved performance, it will take some years before a full dataset is available. The PAT results are not yet consolidated across all years and learning areas and only 2016 NAPLAN progress and achievement data was available at time of writing.

- There is a consistent model of instruction across the college that is developing, though this is not yet embedded across all years. This reinforces a focus on higher performance expectations for all students.

- Currently available historical data shows little improvement in literacy and numeracy performance from the time the college became an IPS until the 2016 NAPLAN results in areas covered by the business plan targets.

- Results from 2016 across the five NAPLAN domains tested indicate that the Year 3 results are similar to like-schools in numeracy, writing and grammar and punctuation and a little above in reading but below in spelling.

- Year 5 results show comparable performance in writing and spelling and more than half a standard deviation above like-schools in reading and numeracy.

- Results for Year 7 show that students are performing well below like-schools in spelling, below in numeracy and similar to them in reading and spelling.

- Year 9 students are also well below like-schools in spelling, and similar in numeracy, writing and grammar and punctuation and above in reading.

- The business plan targets levels of regular attendance at better than 75%. Data for 2016 shows that this was achieved for primary students, but not secondary. The college's average attendance for primary aged students was very similar to like-schools at 93.7%; however, secondary average attendance was two per cent below like-schools at 90.4%. College data for Semester 1 of 2017 shows regular attendance is improving and above the overall target, but the rates for secondary students are still just below the level set in the business plan target.

- Interviews with staff, parents and students indicate that a range of students with different learning needs are well catered for across the college.

- Discussions with college leaders, teachers, support staff, students and parents indicate that the use of extra education assistant support along with the introduction of early identification of students with learning difficulties and the recent increase in time of other specialist support staff, such as occupational therapy, are having a beneficial effect on student learning.

- Interviews with college administration, teachers and education assistants reveal a culture of collaboration. There is also a developing understanding of data literacy and staff are well supported in professional learning.

- There is evidence of teaching improvement through the classroom observation program. While the Classroom Management Strategy is used by some, it is not common among the staff.

- A seamless pathway exists from primary school orientation to the secondary education due to the K–10 structure of the college. However, this structure also creates a need to ensure that students can progress from Year 10 into other educational pathways on leaving the college. Student tracking data and interviews with students and parents show that students are well prepared for future vocational education and training or university entrance pathways. Discussions with parents indicated that in the past, some students were not well prepared for Year 11 and Year 12 academic pathways through poor grade moderation and course content. Grade data suggests that current moderation is satisfactory and comments from students, parents and college staff indicate high levels of teacher skills in the more specialised secondary subjects.

- The monitoring of student learning appears strong and parents and students are well informed about the progress and learning programs of their children. The use of the Department of Education 'Connect' in the secondary years is well embedded by both teachers and parents. It is still developing in the primary years.

- All employees participate in an annual performance management process. Teacher performance management processes are linked to the collaborative nature of the line management structure. There is a solid classroom teaching improvement base to the process and teacher observation is linked to current research, student performance results and the college's educational direction.

- The sense of energy, commitment and shared belief among the staff directed to improvement in student outcomes provides a strong basis to ensure the sustainability of the current improvement. This commitment is well supported by the recent organisational changes. Although significant progress has been made, the changes across the whole of the college have not yet been fully embedded.

Areas of strength

- The energy and commitment of staff to teaching and learning improvement and the college direction outlined in the business plan.

- The collaborative nature of teaching improvement.

- Recently adopted teaching and learning practices identify students with particular learning needs and support learning improvements especially within the primary school.

Areas for improvement

- Further embed and develop the literacy and numeracy programs across the whole college so that the academic targets outlined in the current plan are achieved.

- Develop regular milestones to allow the college to better assess progress towards achieving targets.

Student Performance Monitoring

How well established are the school's self-assessment practices in accounting for school improvement?

Findings

- The Roleystone Community College Assessment Schedule for K–6 (Literacy and Numeracy) and its Assessment Policy underpin the self-review process. The schedule outlines literacy and numeracy data to be collected and when it is collected to inform teaching and learning in the primary years. To maximise the benefits of the district high school structure it is recommended the schedule be expanded to include data collected in Years 7–10 and other learning areas.

- In addition to an examination of NAPLAN, On-entry assessment, Online Literacy and Numeracy (OLNA), Student Achievement Information System and surveys the comprehensive analysis includes evidence from ACER PAT assessments in mathematics and reading comprehension, PM Benchmark Reading Assessment Resources, Words Their Way, Stepping Stones and moderated teacher judgements among others to inform judgements. The decision to introduce Pre-primary to Year 10 ACER PAT in 2016 indicated an awareness that no single set of data can be used in isolation to provide a complete picture regarding student performance. Data collected in the early phase will further enhance early intervention to ensure students requiring teaching and learning adjustments are supported.

- The assessment schedule outlines processes to be used throughout the year and ensures primary teachers use a variety of monitoring tools continuously and as part of their usual teaching practices.

- Data is comprehensively analysed at the leadership, whole-staff, phases of learning and year levels. While the process of analysis is not yet embedded, staff are increasingly using a wide variety of data to inform classroom teaching. Conversations with the principal and board chair indicated that preparation for the next business plan is being guided by self-review findings. A commitment to focus on literacy, numeracy and progress beyond the primary years is supported by a thorough examination of valid data.

- Annual reports which are made available in hard copy and electronically provide evidence of an ongoing approach to self-assessment. While the 2016 Annual Report comprehensively outlines performance, it does not specifically report progress against targets described in the 2017–19 Business Plan. The report informed the community of the progress against the original (2015–17) business

plan targets, development of the revised 2017–19 Business Plan and preparation for the next business plan.

- The principal and leadership team acknowledged some errors and misalignment between the data and commentary in the 2016 Annual Report. It is recommended future reports include consideration of priorities and targets described in the business plan with aligned supporting commentary.

Area of strength

- The decision to introduce Pre-primary to Year 10 ACER PAT in 2016 indicated an awareness that no single set of data can be used in isolation to provide a complete picture regarding student performance.

Areas for improvement

- Expand the assessment schedule to include data now collected in Years 7–10 and other learning areas, and maximise the benefits of the district high school structure.

- Consider including in future annual reports priorities and targets described in the business plan, with aligned supporting commentary.

Program Delivery

How well has the school performed in providing education programs that promote learning and wellbeing for all students?

Findings

- There is an established program of education delivery based on the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline for students in Years K–10. In Term 2 of 2017 the leadership team conducted an audit of all teaching programs to ensure alignment and to provide feedback to classroom teachers. Operational plans now under development will provide further clarity for teachers with scope and sequence statements ensuring alignment with the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline.

- In addition to the Department of Education approved Roleystone Academy of Digital Media (Years 8–10) the college offers an Advanced Netball program and STEM for selected secondary students.

- Specialist programs are also offered in music (Years 1–8) and health and physical education (Years 1–6) with Indonesian language (Years 3–8) and digital technologies (Years 1–4) and manual arts/home economics (Year 5 and Year 6) also a timetabling focus. Staff expertise provides secondary students with access to a broad curriculum and a range of electives.

- Conversations with specialist staff and leadership team representatives highlighted the need for future workforce planning to prioritise program sustainability in order to minimise the impact of staff relocations and leave.

- In response to recent parent and staff surveys the college has introduced the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) framework as a component of the "Roleystone CC – School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Structure" statement. While the program is not yet embedded, anecdotal evidence including individual case management observations and a decline in suspension rates is encouraging.

- Safety and welfare of students is prominent within the college. Staff and parent surveys together with feedback from students confirm the college is safe and welcoming. Programs such as Rock and Water and the recently introduced PBS framework, together with the employment of a school chaplain, support student wellbeing. Discussions with representatives of the student services team show that the college goes to considerable lengths to support the children. The principal and administration intend to regularly review established programs to ensure they continue to effectively support students.

- During the review the principal outlined a commitment to support staff engagement with the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework. Staff have access to online support to enhance cultural awareness with the college committed to further engagement with the framework in line with expectations outlined in Focus 2017. It is recommended college staff reflect and assess engagement with the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework as an initial step to drive action to guide further understanding by staff and students.

- College documentation including the contextually relevant "Roleystone Community College Bushfire; Prepare, Act, Survive" statement developed in consultation with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and published on the college website, exemplifies a commitment to the safety of students.

- The National Quality Standard Validation Report completed in April 2017 indicates the college is progressing well in meeting the standard. In response to the report, staff in the early years are committed to include a focus on two quality areas in the K–2 Operational Plan being Quality Area 1 educational programs and practice and Quality Area 6 partnerships with families and communities.

- Observations during the review confirmed students were learning in a safe and secure environment and staff morale had been improved in recent times. The college is in a sound position to continue to enhance the learning opportunities for students with effective curriculum and pastoral care delivery strategies in place.

Area of strength

- The introduction of the PBS framework as a component of the "Roleystone CC – School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Structure" statement.

Area for improvement

- Reflect and assess engagement with the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework as an initial step to drive action to guide further understanding by staff and students.

Resourcing and Support

How well has the school established systems to monitor and review the allocation of resources to meet strategic and operational priorities?

Findings

- The principal, in consultation with the 13 finance committee members has introduced a transparent, evidence-driven process to support progress and improvement. Allocations of financial and human resources are linked to identified needs, planning and priorities. The effectiveness of the process was evidenced at the commencement of 2016 when, in response to an internal review of the budget, the principal, in consultation with the manager corporate services, the finance committee and Department of Education advisors resolved to ensure the college did not fall into deficit by realigning the budget, refocusing aspects of the workforce plan and recommitting to a focus on improved student learning. The principal reports that required efficiencies were gained with the college now better able to improve student learning as exemplified by increased allocations to key learning areas including literacy and the introduction of the highly regarded early intervention team which includes the school psychologist and an occupational therapist to identify and support the learning of 'at-risk' students in the early years. The college also intends to employ a speech therapist in the near future.

- Meetings with finance committee and board representatives confirmed resourcing decisions are considered by the principal, manager corporate services and finance committee and reported to the board. Allocations are linked to the business plan and targeted to support identified programs, projects and intervention strategies.

- Both the principal and student services committee representatives verified additional targeted funding, including disability allocation support, is directed to the achievement of improved outcomes for identified students.

- Workforce planning is guided by the Department of Education's five year profile. It is recommended the next iteration of the workforce plan include consideration of the sustainability of key programs together with the potential impact of enrolment instability.

- The finance committee indicated confidence that, with stable enrolment and ongoing support from traditional funding sources including the Parents and Citizens' Association and voluntary contributions, key initiatives and specialist programs will be sustained. Conversations with parent and board representatives

highlighted the need for the college to continue to focus on student retention by heightening community awareness of the benefits of the K–10 district high school structure and improving student outcomes beyond the primary years.

Areas of strength

- The commitment to establish the highly regarded early intervention team which includes the school psychologist and an occupational therapist to identify and support the learning of 'at-risk' students in the early years.

- The high level of collaboration between the principal and the board to ensure effective governance.

Area for improvement

- Ensure the next iteration of the workforce plan includes consideration of the sustainability of key programs together with the potential impact of enrolment instability.

School Board

How effective has the board been in carrying out its functions, roles and responsibilities?

Findings

- The board complies with legislation in its composition and role.

- The board is well informed about the educational position of the college and participates in the endorsement of annual reports and in making decisions about the college's direction articulated within the business plan.

- Discussions with the board chair and members indicate that there was little involvement in the development of the initial business plan and annual report. Initially the board appeared to have been focused on accepting the business plan and directions developed by the college administration rather than an involvement in the development of future directions. Board minutes and discussions with members and the principal show that since 2016 there has been stronger participation by the board in the endorsement of the latest business plan and in the writing of the annual report.

- The board is supportive, involved and positive about its role in the governance of the college. Preparations for the election of new board members are under way.

- The board receives financial reports at its meetings every three months. However, there was some indication that the staffing profile adopted in 2015 was not financially sustainable and this was not well communicated to the board.

- The board spent considerable time focused on investigations into changing the structure of the college to including Year 11 and Year 12 programs.

- The board does not regularly review its performance and although its members are highly skilled, there is a need to improve the training and support for new board members and for the board to undertake regular evaluations of its own performance.

- Parents have strong commitment to the college and to the current direction. There is a sense of community between the board, parents, students and staff. Parents feel well informed about their children's education and level of achievement and about community events at the college. However, interviews with parents show that the role of the board is not as well understood or publicised among the college community.

Areas of strength

- The members of the board have a strong sense of community associated with the college and this is carried through in the operation of the board.

- The board is actively involved in setting the direction of the college based on the new business plan.

Areas for improvement

- Undertake regular reviews of the board's performance.

- Ensure new board members are given training and support to understand their role in the governance of the college.

Conclusion

Roleystone Community College has effective processes in place to improve student learning that are very responsive the K–10 context of the college. Parents are strongly involved in the college and the current board is heavily involved in the setting of its direction.

Data up until 2016 show that the college had generally not achieved the student academic performance targets to achieve results better than like-schools' performance in NAPLAN. Student progress data also indicates that in general student progress had not been equivalent to like-schools. Classroom results and interviews suggests that academic performance has improved in 2017, though more recent NAPLAN data is needed to confirm this. Attendance data is improving and remains a focus.

The college is well placed to fulfil the vision articulated in the business plan. There has been a recent strengthening of professional learning for teachers focused on collaborative planning, feedback, consistent pedagogy across classrooms and a common set of principles for college improvement.

The early identification of students with particular learning needs and the improved support for students experiencing difficulty, though the use of education assistants and the early intervention team are playing an important part in changes to support student learning.

Declaration

We confirm the information in this document is, to the best of our knowledge and based on the verification of the evidence provided by Roleystone Community College, true and correct.

The principal and board chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.

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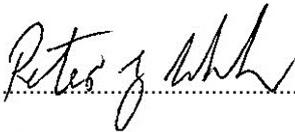
Mr Peter Wilson, Lead Reviewer

1 September 2017

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Date

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Mr Bill Gibson, Reviewer

4 September 2017

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Date

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Mr Ken Perris, Director,
Independent Public School Review

6 September 2017

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Date