



Department of Education Services

Ashdale Secondary College

2012

Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of
Independent Public Schools

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Disclaimer

This document has been based on the findings of the independent reviewers' 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 Minister for Education, the Director General of Education, the Principal and the Board Chair.

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School and Review Details

Principal:	Ms Carol Strauss
Board Chair:	Mr Andrew Oldland
School Location:	75 Westport Parade Darch WA 6065
School Classification:	SHS Class 6A
Number of Students:	749 (2012 Semester 1)
Independent Reviewers:	Mrs Kerry Usher, Mr Kevin Pilkington
Review Dates:	Self-review presentation: 27 August 2012 Review visits: 13 and 14 September 2012

1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Ashdale Secondary College is to provide an assurance to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education and the school community 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 improved the standards of student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes student learning
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake regular self-assessment. The outcomes of these assessments form the basis for the school self-review which is presented to the reviewers for verification at the commencement of the independent review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review, reviewers are provided with information on the school's educational achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which include, but are not limited to:

- the *MySchool*TM website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports.

Reviewers then visited the school for a half day presentation of the school's self-review by the Principal, the Board Chair and other key stakeholders chosen by the school. Subsequently the reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of enquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for a two day review visit was negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of further evidence to clarify or confirm the claims made in the school self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school self-review claims through observation and discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, parents, students and the school leadership team.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during their review visits, was used by the reviewers as the evidence base for their verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in its DPA and Business Plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.

2. Summary

Ashdale Secondary College opened in 2009 and has experienced rapid growth in enrolments. It recruits a high quality workforce and provides state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure to meet the educational needs of the students and community. It has established an impressive range of teaching and learning programs in striving to achieve its vision 'to create an educational environment that fosters the development of 21st Century skills in students so that they can be innovative thinkers that find creative solutions to global issues'.

The College has responded to its community in developing a relevant and engaging curriculum that improves student learning. It caters for individual student learning needs, diverse interests and provides high level support for teaching and learning, resulting in sound levels of student progress over the short history of the school. Communication with parents is frequent and an important part of the strategy to improve learning with the provision of performance information relating to their child current and relevant, particularly in terms of student achievement and progress. The comprehensive, ongoing review process undertaken by the College has resulted in improved target setting and support strategies for the next Business Plan currently being developed.

The College has developed an excellent learning environment with a range of programs and strategies that are challenging, future oriented, inclusive, engage students and promote learning in an atmosphere that fosters care and well-being to a high degree.

In an environment of further rapid growth and expansion in enrolments, staff and facilities, the College has developed comprehensive planning, strategies and actions for the future that will enable it to sustain and improve its performance.

Ashdale Secondary College is a key participant in the development of the Ashdale Cluster. The College is proactive in providing strategic leadership and direction for cluster initiatives and practices that support the development of strategies to improve student learning. It supports teacher and curriculum development, improved personnel management and assures the community of the quality of educational provision for students K-12.

The following features of the College's improvement process are commended:

- The depth and quality of the College's review process and consequent adjustment of support strategies to enable students to improve their learning.

- The provision of specialist programs and teacher professional learning to improve the learning outcomes for students.
- The quality of the evidence-based approach used by the College in providing a reliable platform to assess student performance.
- The shared ethos and culture that is evident in high expectations set for the delivery and outcomes of the teaching and learning program, the expectations of students and staff, as well as in documentation and communication with its community.
- Achievement of the goal of developing an inclusive environment that values and supports all students.
- The wide range of strategies and resources the College employs to meet student learning needs.
- The outstanding student-centred learning environment focusing on student engagement and well-being in a culture where students feel valued.
- The very strong distributed leadership model with a focus on instructional leadership.
- The direction the College has taken to improve the effectiveness of teaching practice at both the subject and individual level.

The following areas for improvement identified by the College are affirmed:

- The College's efforts to identify students' learning needs and develop individual plans for improvement.
- The College's strategies and programs implemented to challenge, engage and improve learning for all students.
- The quality and diversity of self-review across the curriculum in both academic and non-academic areas is affirmed as being a solid foundation for future analysis, identification of focus areas and improvement in student outcomes.
- The direction and scope of the *2012-2014 Priorities, Foci and Targets* is affirmed as being consistent with the development and growth of the College, in fostering changes to pedagogy and being responsive to identified areas for improvement in student learning.
- The positive role and purpose of the Cluster is affirmed as being of benefit to students, staff and parents at Ashdale Secondary College.

The following recommendations are made to add value to the improvement process:

- While still in a development phase it is recommended that the Board reviews its own performance and directions for the future, in line with the self-review processes carried out by cluster schools.
- It is recommended that sustainability of the leadership vision for the Cluster is enhanced by developing planning and strategies for succession of school leaders.
- As the student population increases in the near future it is recommended that the Cluster Board operations will need to be responsive to increased enrolments; potential new cluster membership; establishing new partnerships; strategies for developing common governance understandings between members, and succession planning to ensure consistency of operations.

3. School Context

Ashdale Secondary College commenced in 2009 with its first intake of Year 8 students drawn mainly from the local primary schools of Ashdale, Madeley and Landsdale. The College is located in the northern suburb of Darch which is undergoing rapid growth in private dwellings. The 2009 Year 8 students will be the first Year 12 cohort in 2013. Ashdale Secondary College became an Independent Public School in 2010 along with Ashdale, Madeley and Landsdale Primary Schools which together form the Ashdale Cluster. The cluster structure offers opportunities for co-operation, collaboration and the development of a seamless K-12 educational pathway intended to benefit students, teachers, parents and the community. The Cluster aims to develop an integrated holistic K-12 learning community.

The College vision is to create an educational environment that fosters the development of 21st century skills in students so that they can be innovative thinkers who find creative solutions to global issues. The College has strategically developed procedures, curriculum, partnerships, promotions and communications to foster this vision with teachers, students and the community. The strong vision and ethos of the school is encapsulated in the motto 'Achieving a Positive Future' and was evident in meeting with members of the staff, student and parent community.

Ashdale Secondary College has excellent state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure that have been developed in stages since 2009 to accommodate the growing student enrolment. Stage three of the building process is currently being planned to provide more learning areas to cater for the expansion and the introduction of Year 7 students into the secondary school setting in 2015. The College currently has 749 students with an expected enrolment of 1680 in Years 7-12 by 2015.

The College's enrolment is diverse including approximately 35% of students having English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) background who are drawn from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Socio-economic indicators of the school community are mixed, with the College having a Socio Economic Index (SEI) of 107 and Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 988, as are the educational backgrounds of parents, with some having completed university or TAFE qualifications and others not having completed any formal qualifications. Many of the parents have trade backgrounds and are either self-employed or engaged in the mining industry as 'fly-in-fly-out' employees.

The College has developed a Workforce Management Plan (2010-2013) to build a workforce for the future. The plan caters for the selection of staff with the expertise

required to meet the needs of the students and curriculum delivery particularly as the enrolment increases and extends to Year 12. The College has recruited predominately young teachers and level 3 and 4 leaders and has a future focus on recruiting senior teachers experienced in Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) courses and Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) examinations.

Specialist programs in place at Ashdale Secondary College for which funding is received from the Department of Education include:

- The Autism Extension Program
- Primary Science Visitation Program
- Primary Science Extension Program
- Specialist Technology Science Program.

In addition the College has introduced two sporting academies (Netball and Soccer) to cater for community interests and meet the needs of students. They are staffed with specialist teachers and enrolment is through merit selection for Year 8.

Developing partnerships with families, local community and industry has been a focus for Ashdale Secondary College. Effective partnerships are in place with cluster schools, the local community through the Board, Parents & Citizens and politicians. Partnerships with educational organisations such as Edith Cowan University (ECU) are deemed important for the College and cluster operations. Partnerships with businesses provide opportunities to foster the skills and knowledge of organisations like Apple, Scitech and the Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation for the benefit of the College. In addition the College has fostered partnerships with the WA Art Gallery, WA Symphony Orchestra and the Perth Museum to support the Arts learning area at the College. Partnership development is a key strategy of the College and it is working to increase further business/commercial interests to support a future focus on student opportunities in the workplace.

Following selection as an IPS the Ashdale Cluster Board was established as the Board for the Secondary College and the primary school cluster members. The intent was to develop collaboration and a seamless K-12 approach by having a representative governance model. Primary schools also maintained a local governance structure in addition to membership of the Cluster Board. The Board functions with membership from each of the cluster primary schools (Board/Management Council Chair and Principal), the Ashdale Secondary College Principal and partnership representation from ECU, Scitech, and the Chief Scientist of WA.

Ashdale Secondary College opened in 2009 and has experienced rapid growth in enrolments. It recruits a high quality workforce and provides state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure to meet the educational needs of the students and community. It has established an impressive range of teaching and learning programs in striving to achieve its vision 'to create an educational environment that fosters the development of 21st century skills in students so that they can be innovative thinkers that find creative solutions to global issues'.

4a. School Performance - Student Learning

Annual cycles of review have resulted in the fine tuning of original targets set for student performance in the 2010-2012 Business Plan. Data and information presented to the reviewers clearly demonstrates that the College has conducted rigorous self-review and analysis of the data relating to the original targets. As a result of that review the targets have been strengthened and made more challenging. Accompanying the targets are strategies for improvement and quantifiable indicators which will give reliable measures of success. Recognition by the teachers and the Board that this is a new and developing school has resulted in a flexible approach to review and the refinement of targets.

Student performance improvement targets as detailed in the 2010-2012 Business Plan are focused on the performance of Year 9 students in literacy and numeracy; Year 8 and 9 grade level achievement in science; progress by EAL/D students; achievement of core skills by students in ICT; improved parent satisfaction rates with the College; and, maintaining high level attendance rates.

The College leadership has conducted a rigorous review of its targets and has developed draft 2012-2014 Priorities, Foci and 2014 Targets. Evidence provided to the reviewers by way of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) analysis, Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) analysis, teacher records, student/teacher/parent surveys, attendance and retention data indicate the targets have been met. As the College is developing, it considers its targets to be flexible and for close analysis of them to be an ongoing process.

There is a clear focus on value adding in literacy across the College. A literacy coordinator has been appointed to oversee the literacy progression across all subject areas that have a literacy focus. All teachers take responsibility for performance targets and strategies for improvement. Numeracy targets were not met in 2010 but the implementation of strategies led to a strong improvement in 2011 results with the target being exceeded. These included the appointment of a Head of Learning Area (HOLA), staff moderation and professional learning, NAPLAN promotion and planning, use of First Steps and planning for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

The College provided evidence from its comprehensive review process that it has met targets in its other student performance improvement areas in Science, EAL/D, ICT, parent and community engagement and attendance and retention.

Science grade summaries indicated achievement of targets in comparison to like schools. Science results have exceeded targets set to be achieved for 2012. The special focus within the cluster primary schools and the College has resulted in outstanding engagement with science. Every student in the current Year 11 cohort has chosen to study at least one science-based course as a part of their WACE. The planning developed by the science HOLA for the introduction of the Australian Curriculum is innovative and collaborative and will result in improved teaching and learning.

The College's self-review information also provided evidence through data collection and analysis of other focus areas. EAL/D targets to increase the proportion of students Year 7-9 achieving within the 'good' progress category were reached. ICT data indicated that Year 8-10 students achieved the target set for core skills and understanding. Attendance data demonstrated that the College has maintained consistency in attendance rates above 90% during the period 2010-2012, exceeding the state average. Parent surveys, conducted twice per year, expressed a high level of satisfaction with the College. The College is to be commended on the depth and quality of its review process and consequent adjustment of support strategies to enable students to improve their learning.

The College presented evidence of the tracking and monitoring of student achievement for cohorts, classes and individual students. Individual students are tracked from the time of commencement in any of the cluster schools thus providing valuable longitudinal data on student performance. The College has a focus on the needs of all students and recognises that they require varied teaching and learning strategies for engagement. Staff take an individual approach with parents informed of student progress through regular updates on their child's performance communicated by e-mail, SMS and phone calls. Tutorial classes are conducted after school to support students who require extra assistance. Close monitoring of individual students allows for early identification and intervention when needed for Students at Educational Risk (SAER), EAL/D and Gifted and Talented students. Potentially higher performing students are engaged in Individual Enhancement Plans. The cluster approach to improving outcomes for EAL/D students is collaborative and focused on improving students' oral and written English language competence. Student progress is mapped against progress maps and utilises the skill of specialist teachers and Ethnic Education Assistants working in the Cluster. The reviewers affirm the College's efforts to identify students' learning needs and develop individual plans for improvement.

The reviewers visited classrooms enabling them to observe teaching and learning including the specialist programs operating within the College. The Autism Unit, where students are well catered for by a dedicated and skilled teacher in a purpose built environment, is excellent. The reviewers were able to observe student engagement in the home room situation with explicit teaching of social and communication skills. The ICT specialist program, which takes only 25 of approximately 80 applicants each year into the three-year program, is producing very high quality work and proving competitive at a national level as evidenced by student success in national competitions. The introduction of an all-girl class in 2013 is hoped to encourage more girls to pursue ICT as a career option. The two sport academies, soccer and netball, are providing an encouraging option for students gifted in these sports to choose Ashdale Secondary College as their secondary school.

Observation in classrooms and discussion with key staff also highlighted the role of professional learning strategies in improving pedagogy and the learning of all students. Classroom Management Strategies (CMS) training has been widely introduced in the College along with peer mentoring. The specially designed classrooms to enable observation of classroom teaching in action as a part of the peer mentoring process confirmed teacher commitment to improve pedagogy based on reflection and discussion of practice. The focus is clearly on improving pedagogy to benefit student learning through the use of a range of well-researched strategies. The College is to be commended on the provision of specialist programs and teacher professional learning to improve the learning outcomes of students.

The curriculum offerings of Ashdale Secondary College are consistent with a school catering for 21st Century learning needs. With a strong emphasis on science, literacy and numeracy the technology available to students underpins these foci. The Business Plan demonstrates well thought-out strategies and directions to support this learning. High expectations have been established of both students and staff as was evidenced in discussion with student leaders and teachers. The reviewers affirm the College's strategies and programs implemented to challenge, engage and improve learning for all students.

Student performance is reviewed through comparison with national and state standards and with like and local schools. Staff demonstrated an explicit understanding of their role in student learning and accountability for reviewing student performance. Thorough analysis of student performance by teachers is supported by an external consultant's independent analysis. In addition cluster performance is independently reviewed with trends highlighted. Mapping the

NAPLAN progress of students through Years 3 to 9 within the Cluster is a valuable longitudinal tool to assess individual and cohort data. Sound comparisons made with national and state standards are acted upon as evidenced in planning for year cohorts, groups of students as well as individuals. An example of the strategy is the whole cluster approach to numeracy being developed by each school linking to the K-12 philosophy. The quality of the evidence-based approach used by the College in providing a reliable platform to assess student performance is commended.

The College has responded to its community in developing a relevant and engaging curriculum that improves student learning. It caters for individual student learning needs, diverse interests and provides high level support for teaching and learning, resulting in sound levels of student progress over the short history of the school. Communication with parents is frequent and an important part of the strategy to improve learning with performance information relating to their child current and relevant, particularly in terms of student achievement and progress. The comprehensive, ongoing review process undertaken by the College has resulted in improved target setting and support strategies for the next Business Plan currently being developed.

4b. School Performance - Quality of Learning Environment

Since its inception, Ashdale Secondary College has placed a major emphasis on its plan to create an environment that fosters student learning. The success of that plan can be observed through the dedication shown by the Principal, Deputies, HOLAs and staff to making a difference for all students. The College has had the benefit of being able to match the newly built and designed physical environment with a learning environment created in conjunction with its cluster members. The College and the Cluster seek to promote a school environment that fosters exposure to the global community through technology. It is to the credit of all schools in the Cluster that they have taken considerable steps to create one learning environment through collaboration on curriculum, teaching and learning strategies and policies and procedures that ensure a seamless and consistent approach to a K-12 learning environment for students and their families.

The College is to be commended for the shared ethos and culture that is evident in high expectations set for the delivery and outcomes of the teaching and learning program, the expectations of students and staff, as well as in documentation and communications with its community. This culture of 'making a difference' is evident throughout the College in levels of support from staff, students and community members.

The College is commended for achieving the goal of developing an inclusive environment that values and supports all students. This is confirmed through the planning and strategies in the creation of middle and senior school environments, a learning environment embedded with technology, effective approaches to student welfare and engagement, and a focus on a positive education philosophy. Cluster goals in Positive Education aim to develop in students thinking skills, creativity, self-management, teamwork, intercultural understanding, ethical behaviour and social competence. The Positive Education approach to Student Services was verified through meetings with the Student Services team who provided evidence of the strength of their processes in supporting all students. The development of those skills and knowledge are demonstrated in the positive psychology rationale, consistent procedures applied to student engagement and the Virtues and Strengths focus to develop social optimism and resiliency.

A further key to meeting the needs of all students is developed through planning and implementation of professional learning programs for staff to promote a 'culture of learning, achievement and excellence'. These attributes are supported by the constant review of teaching and learning strategies and staff access to current and researched resources to support the needs of 21st Century learning. The College and the Cluster have also responded to a key element of their context: a high enrolment (35%) of students with EAL/D. Student progress is monitored by the College and across the Cluster with the aim of increasing the oral and written competency of students and in responding to their needs. The College is commended for the wide range of strategies and resources it employs to meet student learning needs.

Curriculum development is a strong feature of the College particularly given that it is progressing to its first Year 12 studies in 2013. There are constant refinements being made to the curriculum at all levels as a result of evaluation of strategies and student learning and in planning for future delivery. As a developing school there has been the opportunity to use research into best practice, extensive staff professional learning and a strong focus on developing effective school-wide pedagogy for the middle and senior schools. Evidence of the focus on pedagogy has been the large number of staff trained in Classroom Management Strategies (CMS) to support appropriate student engagement and participation. The staff has also made considerable progress in implementing the Australian Curriculum with cluster members and in developing consistent approaches to teaching practice and resource use - particularly in science, literacy and numeracy.

From its earliest beginnings the College has developed a strong partnership arrangement through the Cluster. The joint efforts of staff and the broader

community to provide vibrant and seamless education for its students is evidenced in the ongoing planning and strategies applied across the Cluster for the benefit of students. The College has actively sought other partnerships to support its specialised work and also that of the cluster schools. Partnerships with ECU, Scitech, and ICT Groups are well documented particularly in the benefits brought to the College. An example of this is seen in the support of Apple and Winthrop Australia in the provision of the One to One laptop program that operates in the College and across the Cluster to assist in providing students with access to the curriculum through ICT.

The College is to be commended for its outstanding student-centred learning environment focusing on student engagement and well-being in a culture where students feel valued. The structure of Student Services and the leadership across year levels, along with a holistic approach to the delivery of the curriculum provides further evidence of commitment by the College to creating the context for learning. Discussions with students, parents and community members provided verification of their high level of involvement and the successful outcomes of the College. Parents and students commented favourably on the individual pastoral care provided by the College and the after-school tutorial assistance that supported students.

The College has developed an excellent learning environment with a range of programs and strategies that are challenging, future oriented, inclusive, engage students and promote learning in an atmosphere that fosters care and well-being to a high degree.

4c. School Performance - Sustainability

Ashdale Secondary College has initiated a strong focus on leadership development since commencing in 2009. Outstanding leadership from the Principal has modelled the high level commitment and quality work ethic evident throughout the College. This is supported through the 2010-2012 Business Plan which outlined three main themes in leadership:

- Development of the Leadership Team to support the development of the College and build capacity and professional knowledge of leaders.
- Nurturing leadership across the College to develop shared leadership models and creating links between sub-school leaders.
- Establishing an effective board to establish corporate governance.

The College is commended for a very strong distributed leadership model with a focus on instructional leadership. Leaders have developed a practice of constant refinement and review to improve processes for student engagement and achievement and in determining future priorities. Key to the sustainability of quality leadership can be found in strategies to promote growth through coaching, mentoring, professional learning, aspirant development, succession planning and work shadowing. Reviewers met with a group of early career teachers who provided positive feedback about the support from leadership for their aspirations and career development. The challenge for the College will be maintaining the quality of its leadership development during a period when Year 12 is added in 2013 and Year 7 in 2015. The resultant increase in students and staff in excess of double the existing numbers will provide a challenge for leadership at all levels.

The College has developed an evidence-based, self-review culture that will provide an excellent basis for managing future growth in enrolments and the added complexity of senior school performance in the public domain. Analysis of student performance is not only thorough but is setting a high standard in using a wide range of performance information to identify areas for improvement. The subject HOLAs and team leaders engage staff in analysis ensuring that improvement areas identified will result in improved teaching and learning at the classroom level. The quality and diversity of self-review across the curriculum in both academic and non-academic areas is affirmed as being a solid foundation for future analysis, identification of focus areas and improvement in student outcomes.

A feature of the self-review process at the College is the strength of the evaluation of teaching and learning practices. All members of staff are involved in quality professional learning experiences with links to performance management. There is a focus on using research to enhance teaching and learning programs with staff members continually encouraged to build on their skills and enhance their instructional leadership role. Strategies developed include the approach to have as many staff as possible engaged in CMS training and support to develop individual staff expertise. The direction the College has taken to improve the effectiveness of teaching practice at both the subject and individual level is commended.

The College has maintained quality planning regimes since inception and has included a broad range of priorities many associated with establishing the appropriate expectations, standards and culture for a new school. The maturity that has come through the establishment process is exemplified in the draft priorities, foci and targets established for 2012-2014. A comprehensive range of achievement targets and foci have been proposed for academic achievement, school growth and

sustainability, managing curriculum change and Department of Education focus. Critical elements of the priority areas include senior school outcomes and the integration of Year 7 into the College. This planning is to be further developed as a result of a full consultation process. The direction and scope of the 2012-2014 Priorities, Foci and Targets is affirmed as being consistent with the development and growth of the College, in fostering changes to pedagogy and being responsive to identified areas for improvement in student learning.

The Ashdale Cluster Board performs the function of being the representative governance and public accountability face of the federation of schools that form the Cluster as well as performing the function of being the Board for the Secondary College. Membership of the Board is representative of the member schools through their principals and school staff and community representatives. In addition, members of community, education, business and industry groups are invited to contribute their expertise. Through the leadership of the Chair, the Board has established effective processes for its operations and provides vital oversight of cluster schools' performance. While still in a development phase it is recommended that the Board reviews its own performance and directions for the future, in line with the self-review processes carried out by cluster schools. This process would also form a part of the cluster review process reporting and contribute to the Ashdale Cluster Review.

The College and cluster schools have developed a strong culture of engaging the community in developing the seamless K-12 approach to education. The collaborative approach has been evidenced by the common messages and strategies to inform and engage the community in understanding and involvement in the educational experiences and learning of each student. To continue the sustainability of practices the Cluster Board has a role to play in community engagement through its representative structure and communications.

In an environment of further rapid growth and expansion in enrolments, staff and facilities, the College has developed comprehensive planning, strategies and actions for the future that will enable it to sustain and improve its performance.

5. School and Cluster Performance

Prior to becoming Independent Public Schools the Ashdale Cluster was being developed with a clear vision of collaboration between the schools to establish a common learning environment to improve attainment, achievement and progress for students. The catalyst for the collaboration was the development of the College as the secondary school for the local primary schools. The Cluster has developed considerably in parallel with the expansion to the enrolment and facilities at Ashdale Secondary College. It has developed its concept of providing a seamless K-12 education for its community by providing:

- a common, representative governance structure
- shared goals and vision for education
- a focus on inclusion and the needs of the student
- integrated curriculum and pedagogical practices
- a focus on 21st Century learning
- targeted approaches to improving student learning in curriculum areas
- common administrative and policy practices.

The Ashdale Cluster 2010-2012 Review provides a comprehensive assessment of the strategies employed in developing the strategic directions of the Cluster. It demonstrates the progress made in areas such as literacy, numeracy, science, technology, student and staff well-being, facilities management, budgeting and the educational vision for future development. The K-12 approach taken by the Cluster highlights the potential long-term benefits to student learning. The targeted focus on literacy, numeracy and science at the primary level will have a flow-on effect to the students' secondary education through the commonality in practice and consistency of programs. The same can be said of the strategies developed in creating a common learning and cultural environment with all schools that provides confidence and consistency to students and parents in a seamless transition from primary to secondary schooling. Feedback from the Cluster Board, cluster schools and staff provided strong evidence of the benefits of cluster membership for Ashdale Secondary College and member schools.

It was evident to the reviewers through observation of teaching and learning environments and in discussions with staff that the benefit to teachers from collaborative professional learning has an impact on developing the educational pathway for students.

It was further evident from discussions with school leadership, staff, parents and students that there was a range of benefits in cluster membership. It is significant that the parents canvassed were able to articulate knowledge of the Cluster and what it meant to them personally. Members of the Student Council were able to demonstrate from their own experiences the seamless transition from primary to secondary school. The positive role and purpose of the Cluster is affirmed as being of benefit to students, staff and parents at Ashdale Secondary College.

The collaborative leadership which drives much of the direction for the vision and planning is a great strength. It is acknowledged that changes to leadership of the member schools in the future have the capacity to impact on the sustainability of the Cluster without planning for succession that involves cluster representation in leadership selection processes. While every member school has a high degree of autonomy much of the success of all schools depends on the continuity and development of the cluster model. It is recommended that sustainability of the leadership vision for the Cluster is enhanced by developing planning and strategies for succession of school leaders.

Leadership and accountability through the common governance structure of the Ashdale Cluster Board has provided member schools with two important insights. Firstly, representative membership provides the opportunity to examine proposals for application across the Cluster to improve student learning, pedagogy and policy. Secondly, there is an opportunity to be engaged in the development of both primary and secondary educational practice. Both of these benefits take place in an environment where the three primary schools still maintain their own governance structures. The Board operations are supported by a Terms of Reference document which sets out operational and functional matters related to the role and responsibilities of the members. As the student population increases in the near future it is recommended that the Cluster Board operations will need to be responsive: to increased enrolments; potential new cluster membership; establishing new partnerships; strategies for developing common governance understandings between members; and, succession planning to ensure consistency of operations. Recommendations have been made on self-review and connection with community in the Sustainability section of these Findings.

Ashdale Secondary College is a key participant in the development of the Ashdale Cluster of schools. The College is proactive in providing strategic leadership and direction for cluster initiatives and practices that support the development of strategies to improve student learning. It supports teacher and curriculum

development, improved personnel management and assurances to the community of the quality of educational provision for students K-12.

Declaration

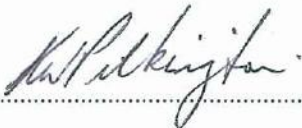
We the undersigned hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on our assessment of the evidence provided by Ashdale Secondary College as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process.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




(Signature of Kerry Usher, Lead Reviewer)



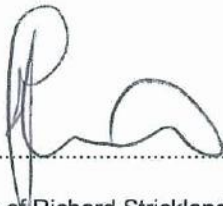
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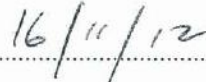
(Signature of Kevin Pilkington, Reviewer)



(Date)



(Signature of Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services)



(Date)