



Department of  
Education

D20/0548229

Public education  
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# Northam Senior High School

## Public School Review

October 2020



# PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

## Purpose

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

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

The principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence from the school. Information to be validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the school review report and determines when the next review will occur. The report is provided to the principal, the chair of the school council/board and the regional executive director.

## Expectations of schools

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For all Western Australian public schools, expectations are set out in either:

- the Delivery and Performance Agreement, which is an agreement between the Department (represented by the Director General), school (represented by the principal) and school board (represented by the school board chair); or
- the Principals' Statement of Expectations

together with the Funding Agreement for Schools.

## Public School Review – The Standard

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

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

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



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## Context

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Northam Senior High School is located in the town of Northam within the Wheatbelt Education Region, approximately 97 kilometres from the Perth central business district.

Established in 1921, the school is one of the oldest in Western Australia. The buildings exemplify the tradition and history of the school and ongoing upgrades provide modern resources, including a state-of-the-art Trade Training Centre for hospitality and catering. In Semester 2, 2020 the school became an Independent Public School.

Northam Senior High School has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 924 (decile 9). Currently, there are 666 students enrolled from Year 7 to Year 12 with numbers remaining relatively steady in recent years.

Community support for the school is demonstrated through the work of the School Board.

## School self-assessment validation

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The Principal submitted a comprehensive school self-assessment.

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

- The self-assessment time period outlined the school's progress over the time of the Principal's leadership.
- The school updated the original self-assessment submission created prior to the postponement of their Term 1, 2020 review due to COVID-19.
- Reference to the Standard and other support documents was made throughout the submission, providing direction and clarity to the school in their self-assessment preparation.

The following recommendation is made:

- Complete an internal school self-assessment using the ESAT in 2021 to measure progress of the school's improvement agenda against The Standard.

## Public School Review

Relationships and partnerships	
<p>The school acknowledges the value of effective relationships and partnerships in supporting student learning and has engaged the community authentically in its strategic planning. The school's vision, 'A Community United', encompasses this collaborative approach to school improvement.</p>	
Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has developed mutually respectful relationships with its Aboriginal community. Aboriginal elders and staff provide an advisory role and support in the school's growing cultural responsiveness.</li> <li>• The school actively seeks community involvement in providing educational opportunities for its students.</li> <li>• The school has gained credibility in the community for being open and accessible to families. This is reflected in the increasingly positive reputation afforded the school.</li> <li>• Staff/student relationships are respectful and often strengthened through sporting involvement beyond the school gates.</li> <li>• The School Council played a significant role in the successful submission to become an Independent Public School.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to build relationships with community and industry groups.</li> <li>• Explore the potential of an aspirant teacher partnership through connections with universities.</li> </ul>

Learning environment	
<p>A safe and orderly learning environment is at the forefront of the Northam Senior High School improvement agenda. A committed team is leading the implementation of the Positive Behaviour Support framework.</p>	
Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student services team has been bolstered to better support the health and wellbeing of students at the school.</li> <li>• Alternative methods of program delivery have been designed to meet the needs of disengaged students. These programs are well resourced and supported by local community organisations.</li> <li>• Student voice played an important role in the development of the school vision. The agreed values are displayed visually and referred to consistently with staff and students.</li> <li>• The heritage-listed buildings provide a special and unique school environment for students.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align student services structures and processes with Positive Behaviour Support principles and school values.</li> </ul>

## Leadership

The leadership team are united and relentless in improving the reputation of the school and the outcomes for its students. High levels of accountability exhibited by the leadership set a positive tone and level of expectations for all staff.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong leadership is promoting the 'A Community United' vision and enlisting school and community commitment to its values.</li> <li>• The leadership team has engaged a leadership development coach to optimise the talent and potential of the group.</li> <li>• Staff are encouraged to take on the leadership of improvement initiatives within the school.</li> <li>• Well-executed change management has resulted in significant improvements in the 'areas of focus' outlined in the School Improvement and Accountability Framework.</li> <li>• The school is developing a culture of professional review that is based on the sharing of feedback.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalise the planned school aspirant leaders program.</li> </ul>

## Use of resources

The deployment of resources reflects the targeted needs of students and the priorities of the school's business plan.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A robust process for budget submission ensures decisions are made in the best interest of the school as a whole.</li> <li>• The development of a budget forecasting tool ensures the school's current and future needs are aligned to the school plan.</li> <li>• An increase in staff allocation in student services and alternative programs is contributing to improvements in student behaviour and attendance.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further refine the allocation of human resources and workforce planning to ensure alignment with the strategic plan.</li> <li>• Communicate broadly the current budget against the school's priorities to ensure transparency and greater understanding around expenditure.</li> </ul>

## Teaching quality

The school leadership is creating the conditions for quality teaching to occur at Northam Senior High School. Staff are committed to the future directions for consistent practices across the school.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review of the Instructional Framework has led to the development of a classroom document that is common across learning areas.</li> <li>• The Instructional Strategies team are progressing the work using evidence-based practice and by providing professional learning to staff.</li> <li>• Classroom observations occur through senior leader walkthroughs to monitor the uptake of the agreed classroom framework.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to progress classroom observation including a coaching element for reflection.</li> <li>• Support staff to continue to improve their teaching practice and to fully participate in whole-school initiatives.</li> </ul>

## Student achievement and progress

Student achievement at Northam Senior High School predominantly reflects that of like schools. There is a commitment from the leadership team to improve student achievement and progress.

Commendations	<p>The review team validate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A literacy operational plan is targeting areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Differentiated learning programs are supporting students with learning gaps.</li> <li>• Specialist teachers are being recruited to ensure high levels of knowledge in Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) subjects.</li> <li>• Improvement in the median ATAR of Year 12 students and most Year 9 NAPLAN<sup>1</sup> assessments was evident in 2019 data.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p>The review team support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support teachers to better analyse school and system data to inform teaching practice.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for continual moderation within learning areas and seek more external opportunities for ATAR teachers.</li> <li>• Find data sources that show the achievement and progress of alternative programs and certificate courses, to celebrate the gains made by students.</li> </ul>

## Reviewers

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Vicki McKeown  
Director, Public School Review

Rebecca Bope  
Director, Public School Review

## Endorsement

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

Your next school review is scheduled for Term 4, 2023.



Stephen Baxter  
Deputy Director General, Schools

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## References

1 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy