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 Education and the Minister for Education.

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School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Darrel Le Mercier

Board Chair: Ms Susan Pethick

School Location: 106 Fisher Street, Belmont WA 6104

Number of Students: 739

Reviewers:
- Mr Gerry Chapman (Lead)
- Mr Ross Sweeney
- Mr Bill Mann

Review Dates: 8 and 9 March 2016

Initial Review: 2013

Purpose of the Review

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

Belmont City College is a first-cohort Independent Public School having now completed the second three-year Business Plan cycle. The first IPS review in 2013 identified many strengths and some areas for improvement. The college has built on these strengths and addressed the areas for improvement over the period of the 2013 to 2015 cycle.

Located in the eastern corridor in the City of Belmont, seven kilometres from the Perth CBD, with an enrolment of 748 (and increasing) the college draws on a very diverse demographic. Forty-four per cent of students (327) were born overseas, a number being refugees and families on 457 visas, originating from 43 countries. There are 110 Aboriginal students (15%). This broad range of student backgrounds is supported by a raft of programs targeted at increasing opportunities and academic success for these students. English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students are endeavouring to learn English literacy skills which will be reflected in both National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) results. The college has implemented additional elective programs to support students with the skills to succeed in both OLNA and NAPLAN.

The demographic is steadily changing because of the increasing number of families coming from overseas who see education as a vehicle for improved opportunity (for example the recent enrolment of students from 100 Filipino families). This is contributing to a changing school culture where parents place a higher value on education and students are more motivated to learn and are seeking out additional opportunities.

The college Index of Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is 945 (2014) with 7% of students in the top quartile and 43% in the bottom quartile of the national distribution. Incoming primary cohorts typically show up to 50% of students to have limited achievement on NAPLAN assessments. To support students in this category, the college operates a combined cross-curricular approach and consistency of whole-school pedagogies. For example, the whole-school pedagogies of the Monroe model and literacy focus.

Twenty-nine per cent of students claim secondary assistance; fees collection rates for lower school are 62% and for senior school 67%. This affects
resourcing levels across the college and the range of activities that can be delivered. The school attracts additional resourcing through partnerships and grants to support programs.

The student attendance rate averages 85%; however, regular attendance is 58% and the transiency rate is 26%. A raft of strategies have been implemented to support improvements in attendance with varying degrees of success. The continuing development of the Teaching and Learning Support team and the streamlining of programs with targeted outcomes is aimed at effecting improvement in attendance and participation.

To meet the academic and non-academic needs of this diverse student population the college has provided a comprehensive range of specialist and support programs aimed at improving student achievement and well-being.

Staff retention is strong with a range of experience in each learning area. Four graduates and five ‘Switch’ teachers add diversity and rejuvenation. Some staff in leadership positions are in their first or second year, with the majority an average of five years. Staff stated they had an enthusiasm for working at the college and affirmed the changing culture as supporting improved job satisfaction and retention. College staff are refreshingly enthusiastic about the roles and responsibilities they undertake. Recruitment strategies have ensured the key college priorities and programs have the necessary personnel to enable them to succeed. The Principal has used IPS flexibility to select staff that support the school’s educational agenda and suit the profile. Workforce development and deployment reflects the diverse needs of the student population. For example, the learning needs of students at educational risk have resulted in specific classroom and curriculum initiatives supported by the Teaching and Learning Support team.

College staff have developed a deep understanding of the local context and the interwoven complexities of the local community. They have responded proactively to the needs of the students and their families. Challenges have been (or are being) met. For example, the fall in ATAR student numbers resulted in the A Plus program for Years 7 to 10 students, which in turn led to increasing student numbers resulting in strategic deployment of additional staff to accommodate specific support initiatives.

Partnerships with industry and other educational institutions add value and provide wider opportunities for students. The specialist hospitality program students benefit from industry partnerships with the Sheraton, Accor group, Australian College of Applied Education and Hospitality Group Training.
Aboriginal students benefit from the Aboriginal Community Partnership and involvement in the BHP Billiton-funded *Follow the Dream* program. The *Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience* (AIME) program supports the college's *Ambassador* Program. The University of Western Australia (UWA) *Aspire* program also supports student learning through links to the Year 7 to 10 *A Plus* enrichment program and the UWA *Fairway* program provides mentoring, study skills and support for Year 11 and 12 ATAR students. There is a productive partnership with the City of Belmont with the resourcing of YMCA youth support workers. Local industry provides a high level of support for the workplace learning program. The college is fortunate in its geographic location (the only public secondary school within the local council area and surrounded by strong but small local industries) and has successfully developed partnerships and links with key stakeholder groups. This important work has added significantly to the capacity of the college to meet the current and future needs of its students.

In response to the 2013 IPS recommendation that the Board undertakes a regular process of self-review and considers the composition of the Board to encourage inclusion of ATSI and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse parents, there has been a broadening of member representation.

The recommendation for the Board to explore access to training as part of an induction program has resulted in some members having been trained; however, the timing of the available training sessions has made it difficult for some members to attend.

A further recommendation was to investigate ways to raise the profile of the Board within the parent community and enhance the college's reputational capital. The Board has increased its profile at school events and in the community and board members have used their professional capacity to promote the college wherever possible. Reviewers acknowledge the Board has broadened its composition and the level of local representation and local community membership has increased. The current membership includes a number of very competent high-profile local and wider-community members.

The college reflects the deep pride in its presence within the Belmont community: its neat and tidy grounds, well-resourced facilities, strong compliance with school dress code and a welcoming, positive culture. Increasing student numbers reflect this inclusive culture, and the community accepts that the school has significantly improved its quality and reputation.
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?

Business plan target setting is in the context of the Department of Education Strategic Plan and Priorities. College targets are strategically chosen to align with system priorities and the college priorities. There is a clear process of planning, monitoring and reviewing underpinning the formulation of targets.

Recommendations from the 2013 IPS review have been analysed and incorporated into the current Business Plan. The college has addressed the recommendation to improve its reputational capital by implementing a range of programs including working with local primary schools to provide and promote specialist and transition programs; for example, the Epic Science, Combined Band, Music Excellence, Ambassadors and the A Plus enrichment program.

Priorities in the 2013–2015 Business Plan were developed in response to the college context, needs and the 2013 review:

- Students are successful
- The college will be a school of choice
- Staff will excel at their jobs
- The college will be fully prepared for Year 7 transition.

The cycle and process of school self-review involved the setting of targets inclusive of the 2013 recommendations and developed to support implementation of these priorities. Operational plans in learning areas and program areas were developed to implement the strategies and address the targets. These are reviewed annually and refined in response to findings. Additional resources were also allocated to enable achievement of the targets. For example 0.8 FTE for the focus on increasing enrolment.

A very thorough self-review summary details the college’s clear and transparent self-review processes and the extent to which targets have been achieved. Each target is then fully analysed and strategies to support improvement are outlined. The analysis recognises areas of concern or weaknesses and provides strategies and programs to address these.
Data is drawn from a number of college and system sources to determine the extent to which targets have been achieved. These include First Cut, SAIS 1–10 Reports-data triangulation template, Schools Online administrator data tools, SAIS Learning Area Grade distribution graphs, School Summary Report WACE and School surveys.

In each of the 13 targets reported in the 2015 Business Plan review there is an in-depth degree of analysis and a comprehensive breakdown of the specific strategies that have been implemented to endeavour to achieve each target. It is clearly evident that planning is focused on improving achievement, and staff are expending an exceptional amount of effort and commitment in improving student achievement and well-being.

Approved specialist programs all underwent formal audits, with recommendations made in accordance with the Department of Education’s specialist program indicators regarding areas for improvement and strategies that need to be considered.

Teacher judgements are analysed at the learning area meetings and collaborative discussion involves moderation and invigilation of student performance at the individual student level. This information is used to inform target achievement and future target setting.

The college review process has identified future directions with a focus on ensuring that student achievement and progress continues to be the highest priority. Central to this will be identifying and supporting students to achieve OLNA and WACE, student engagement initiatives and supporting educational and non-academic outcomes of Aboriginal students.
How well has the school performed in improving learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students?

The essence of the college’s curriculum and school-wide pedagogy is to establish a safe, stable and reliable context for student learning. The college’s major priority is for its students to be successful. The 2013–2015 Business Plan selected targets to drive higher standards in grade allocation, NAPLAN performance, Year 12 outcomes and student attendance.

The first target sought to maintain improvements in students’ grade allocations and for these to be more comparable to the State grade distribution. The reviewers concur with the college’s self-assessment that although the school is on a par with like schools in Years 7–10, progress towards matching State-wide performance has not been made. The college acknowledges the over-representation of E grades and under-representation of NA may be the result of its assessment policy, which seeks greater accountability in recording classroom achievement. There is also a significant grade misalignment in mathematics when compared to an expected grade distribution based on NAPLAN performance. This was ‘red-flagged’ in 2014 and 2015 in Schools Online data, suggesting the college’s grade allocation in Years 7 and 9 was below that indicated by NAPLAN performance. Grade allocation and alignment have been identified as an area for improvement in the developing 2016–2018 Business Plan.

The college sought to match or exceed like schools in the two NAPLAN dimensions: achievement and progress. The target has been met in lifting the rate of progress of its students. From 2013 to 2015, Year 7 and 9 students exceeded like-school progress in all NAPLAN domains except writing. The staff are commended on the sustained improvement in the progress of students from Year 7 to Year 9 in 2014 and 2015.

The college’s NAPLAN results have generally improved over the three years, but remain slightly below that of like schools. Schools Online data show that overall, NAPLAN performance is within the expected levels. However, with the benefit of the National Partnership initiative bearing fruit in the local primary schools, the college is expected to deliver significantly higher standards of achievement in the future, as demonstrated by the exceptional performance of the 2015 NAPLAN results for Year 7 students.
The college is committed to finessing the achievement of every Year 12 student with the opportunity to continue further education or training upon leaving school. This is measured by the attainment of either at least a vocational education and training (VET) Certificate II or a university entry ATAR. The college had a target of improving attainment from 90% in 2013 to 100% in 2015. This target was met in 2013 and 2014 but was not quite met at 97% in 2015. Allied to this, the college set a target of at least 98% success in high school graduation through WACE certification. This target has been met year on year with a 100% graduation rate of Year 12 students in the life of the 2013–2015 Business Plan. The staff are commended for the successes in Year 12 attainment and graduation rates, placing the college well above the achievement of like schools.

The Business Plan sought to lift the standard of achievement in the ATAR scores of Year 12 students. Two targets were set in this regard. The first was for the median ATAR to match or exceed like schools and the second was to achieve an increasing percentage of students who gain an ATAR of 55+. The first target has been exceeded in the last three years to the extent that the college result closely matches the median of all WA public schools. The significant variability in ATAR enrolments year by year (20 in 2014, 14 in 2015) makes interpretation of the second target unreliable.

Belmont City College has a long history of success in VET programs, with high levels of participation and high rates of course completion. The target of maintaining a VET achievement rate of at least 90% has been met in two of the three years of the Business Plan, culminating with 100% of Year 12 VET students achieving at least a Certificate II in 2015. The college is responsive to industry needs and readjusts its VET offerings accordingly. For example, with a surfeit of students with business qualifications, the college changed the program to a VET tourism qualification. This included a Certificate I in Tourism (Indigenous Tourism) targeted at Year 10 Aboriginal students. The college is commended for the breadth and depth of its VET programs and its 2015 achievement in ranking equal first in VET achievement among WA schools.

Three targets were set to improve student engagement, behaviour and attendance. The first two relate to the comparative performance in the regular attendance category against like schools and comparable schools within the South Metropolitan district. For comparable schools in this instance, the college uses a cohort of four similar socio-economic schools within the district, namely Swan View Senior High School, Armadale Senior High School, Governor Stirling Senior High School and Southern River College.
The reviewers endorse the validity of this selection and verify the resulting self-assessment that the target to exceed the attendance rate of this collection of comparable schools has been met. However, the college has not met its target in moving towards the attendance rate of regularly attending students when compared to secondary schools in the South Metropolitan district. The final target within the attendance category was to increase the rate of attendance of regularly attending Aboriginal students year by year to 30% by 2015. The attendance of regularly attending Aboriginal students did improve in 2015, falling short of the target by only 1%. Overall attendance rates of Aboriginal students remain of concern, as indicated by Schools Online data. In the last three years, the overall attendance rate of Aboriginal students remained substantially below that of comparable schools. Aboriginal student attendance warrants further investigation and inclusion as an area for improvement in the next iteration of the Business Plan.

The second priority area in the 2013–2015 Business Plan was to establish the college as the school of choice within its intake area. Enrolment data in Year 8 and the participation in the specialist programs were set as key indicators. The Year 8 target has been met with strong enrolment growth, suggesting that progress has been made in improving the college’s attractiveness to local families. The two centrally-approved specialist programs, hospitality and contemporary drama, have in general, shown steadily increasing enrolments within the life of the Business Plan. The facilities for the programs are excellent and higher-level outcomes have been achieved recently within both programs. For example in 2015, the college’s hospitality program was awarded the School Partnership of the Year 2014/2015 accolade by Hospitality Group Training, and three Year 12 drama students gained entry into the prestigious West Australian Academy of Performing Arts.
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?

Following a review of the 2010–2012 Business Plan, the college’s vision and values statement was revised to better capture the purpose and learning culture, stating that the college is ‘an inclusive, respectful and productive educational environment where students achieve success in their academic, social and community endeavours’. Interviews with the leadership team, staff, parents and students together with direct observations and survey results enable the reviewers to verify that the school’s vision and values are embedded and underpin all aspects of the school’s operation. The motto ‘Do Better at Belmont’ is an affirmation of identity and success well understood and valued by students.

Two recent initiatives have been implemented to further underpin the college’s commitment to its purpose statement. The Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) program seeks to improve communications and behavioural expectations through development of positive interactions among students and teachers. The explicit values underpinning PBS are The 3 Ps: Participation, Positivity and Preparedness, underscoring the college’s commitment to building a culture of engagement, respect and productivity. Through use of the web-based  Vîvo scheme, students receive acknowledgment and rewards for demonstrating one or more of The 3Ps. Staff monitor the scheme and early indications show a successful take-up by teachers and improved behaviour by students. In addition, a new house system has been implemented with the purpose of enhancing identity, competitive spirit and developing leadership opportunities within the social environment of the college.

Anecdotal evidence from staff, students and parents supports the view that the college has a safe and inclusive school culture, embracing its multicultural context as a strength and using it to build a positive and productive learning environment. Students reflect very positively on this key feature. A brief tour of classrooms reinforced this observation. Curtin University’s WHITS survey is used to independently monitor the school climate, student agency and risk factors from the student perspective. The 2015 WHITS data concurs with the reviewers’ findings by revealing high levels of peer and school connectedness, ethnic identity, rule clarity and well-being with a low incidence of bullying/antisocial behaviour.
The establishment of a secure and inclusive learning environment that nurtures teaching and learning in a diverse student population is commended.

The Teaching and Learning Support team has implemented many targeted programs, often in conjunction with external agencies, and in each case reviews their efficacy. For example, when funding stopped for the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, the college stepped it to maintain and broaden the program due to its success. Homework support and tutoring services are now provided in the library two afternoons per week for any student. Also, through IPS flexibility, a student support coordinator is deployed to oversee the learning of identified students and to intervene with engagement and support programs. An inclusion coordinator oversees the negotiation and delivery of documented plans and classroom accommodations. In 2015, 120 students were counted in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students with a Disability. Student behaviour is perceived by parents and teachers to be satisfactory, although the student survey showed it to be of some concern. Student behaviour is monitored with reference to Vivo awards, suspension rate and teachers to whom disruptive students have been referred. Analysis of Vivo data shows most rewards have been issued for Participation followed by Positivity. The suspension rate shows a downward trend since 2010. Overall, the support services team has established an extensive and well-resourced re-engagement structure for students at risk, with a particular focus on identified sub-groups (for example Aboriginal, ESL and students with a hearing disability).

To promote a purposeful learning environment the college is implementing a school-wide instructional strategy termed the ‘Belmont Model’. The model merges the purpose statement with elements of explicit instruction, including use of Monroe techniques promoting literacy development. Monitoring of its implementation reveals a positive uptake with strong compliance by staff and appreciation from students for the uniformity and clarity in lessons. Furthermore, curriculum rigour is established and sustained through deep reflective practices within learning teams; regular data interrogation that informs future directions and priorities; the support and supervision strategies of pedagogical practices with administration staff ‘walk-throughs’ in classrooms and collaborative instructional rounds.

In line with the priority to be a ‘school of choice’, significant improvements have been made in developing and implementing a broader, better targeted and more appealing curriculum in Years 7 to 10. The college adopts an independent stance on curriculum improvement by researching, trialling and
then customising programs to ensure alignment with the needs of its students. Over the life of the 2013–2015 Business Plan, the following range of innovative programs was developed to support student learning, engagement and well-being:

- Transition programs from Year 5 to Year 7 offering early entry and continuity in the specialised curriculum streams in music, drama, Japanese language and Epic Science; together with enabling on-entry analysis of student need.

- Implementation of the school-based A plus academic enrichment program from Years 7 to 10. The program seeks to drive higher outcomes for the academically more able and provide a secure pathway to ATAR courses in senior school.

- Follow the Dream: Partnerships for Success and Aboriginal Ambassadors leadership programs. The former targets academically able indigenous students, while the latter targets students with leadership potential to promote and celebrate Aboriginal culture. These programs set standards for attendance, provide tutoring and homework support while offering challenging leadership development opportunities.

- Deaf Education program. The college has steadily built up the capacity of this program to equal the offering of lead schools. With supplementary external funding and the employment of specialist staff and facilities, the program was successfully delivered to all five Year 12 students with a hearing disability, who went on to post-secondary apprenticeships or other training courses.

- AUSLAN (language of the deaf) was offered as a language-other-than-English elective to Year 7 to 9 students as an educational and socially inclusive strategy.

The final targets in the Business Plan relate to staff ‘excelling in their jobs’. In particular, improvements were sought in attitude to school improvement, increased student motivation and increasing the support and professional feedback to staff. Using the staff survey to assess progress from 2014 to 2015, the College met most targets. However, the target relating to staff receiving useful feedback about their work at school showed no change over the two years and remains the item with the lowest rating on the whole survey. Some staff members told the reviewers they doubted the validity of the response as the question was misleading. It is recommended the college staff support and feedback processes be investigated to ascertain the nature of the dissatisfaction.
The 2015 parental survey (n=52) shows a high level of satisfaction with the top two ratings being ‘teachers at this school expect my children to do their best’ and ‘I can talk to my child’s teachers about my concerns’. Parents told the reviewers they were satisfied with the quality and timeliness of communications including reports on student achievement and were delighted that in addition two new web-based feedback schemes were being implemented: the Vivo rewards scheme, and the marks-book reporting system Connect. Although the small membership of the Parents and Citizens’ Association is of concern, parents continue to provide school canteen services.

Strong, purposeful partnerships with local stakeholders provide additional learning and support services. One example is the partnership with the City of Belmont, which results in an annual grant of $25,000 to underwrite the delivery of programs in student well-being, chaplaincy support, scholarships for incoming Year 7 students, English language support for culturally and linguistically diverse students, and an annual performing arts drama festival. These programs are well aligned to the needs of students and to the priorities of the Business Plan, such as the highly effective resilience and personal adjustment program conducted in small groups by the YMCA.

Another example is the partnership with UWA which provides enrichment courses and pathways to university for students from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The agreement gives the college access to UWA’s facilities throughout the year, motivating and enhancing the likelihood of student entry into university.
School Performance—Sustainability

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

School planning includes the Business Plan, learning-area plans and operational plans for priority program areas. Learning-area plans are focused on student achievement and the review of student performance. Additional documentation outlines a semester-based detailed analysis of student performance data and a review meeting to determine student progress and standards of student achievement. The process of ongoing self-assessment and self-review is embedded in operational area planning. An excellent example of this was evidenced in VET planning with a data-driven and performance-analysis focus. The planning and review process in the Aboriginal Education area needs to identify relevant data and provide more detailed analysis as to the success of the programs and strategies. The college’s overall self-review process is systematic, cyclic and well understood across the organisation, with semester-based analysis of data followed by modification and remediation as needed.

The college Executive Team members have clearly defined roles and responsibilities; there is a similar structure that devolves responsibility to learning area leaders and program coordinators. This is supported by a 1.4 FTE allocation to provide resourcing for aspirant leaders, providing a number of staff with roles as program area coordinators or project leaders. Within operational areas, staff take responsibility for specific projects. Distributed responsibilities and a devolved leadership structure have built capacity across the college to respond at classroom level to student learning and social need. The alignment of key staff to this organisational structure demonstrates an important local solution to the identified needs of the students (and their parents). This provides a sustainable distributed leadership structure and engagement of staff at all levels. Reviewers observed an underlying willingness for staff to engage in whole-school improvement and a passion for providing students with the best educational opportunities.

The Workforce Plan analyses and details ongoing and future staffing requirements, setting out additional resourcing and staff allocation to support and sustain these roles. In the context of current reduced funding, the college is assessing the purpose and value of some roles which may need to be reduced, discontinued or reallocated to meet future planning and priorities.
The allocation of resources to support priority areas is well aligned to the Business Plan, operational plan targets and to ensuring that stated strategies, programs and outcomes are supported with financial and human resources. The school priority to be the school of choice and to build its reputational capital is supported by the use of programs to encourage enrichment and higher achievement which have helped attract additional students. Increasing student numbers are putting pressure on existing resources and programs, but to date, the college has been able to absorb these additional students in ways that have enhanced the school culture and supported curriculum development. Preparation for additional enrolments, as the college continues to grow, will need to be addressed and factored into the next planning cycle.

College policies, processes and practices are well documented and reviewed regularly. Relevant policies are taken to the Board for discussion and endorsement.

Student support and well-being programs also provide a positive approach to pastoral care; however, sustaining the resourcing level required to ensure ongoing success is challenging in the context of current funding. This, coupled with relatively low fee payment percentages and limited fundraising capabilities, will make continued viability of some programs challenging. The college’s support from external agencies and partnerships helps to sustain the broad range of programs on offer.

Discussion with the school officer representing the Manager Corporate Services confirmed that financial, physical and human resources are distributed to achieve Business Plan and DPA outcomes. Learning-area resourcing, whilst not generous as a consequence of collection levels of contributions and charges, is adequate and additionally supplemented to enable sustainability of a quality learning program.

Staffing levels and future staffing needs are scheduled in the Workforce Plan and focused on ensuring alignment to college priorities and programs. The challenge will be to sustain the high level of human resourcing required to maintain the current number of additional programs and activities. Achieving continuity in appointing long-term staff to the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer positions has frustrated efforts to achieve sequential improvement of service delivery.
Building staff capacity through collaborative processes, targeted staff
development and professional learning will continue to be aimed at overall
improvement in student performance. Readiness for progressing peer
professional observation and support as part of the professional improvement
agenda was demonstrated. The staff continuously reflect and review their
programs and practices, with the view to improvement in student engagement
and achievement. There is ample evidence of initiatives designed to give
students the best possible opportunity to experience success at school, from
remedial interventions in Years 7 and 8, to academic extension initiatives
across Years 7 to 12. The VET outcomes are highly commendable. Year 12
data reflects a commitment to successful learning and effective teaching, with
ATAR results improving.

Performance management processes are implemented using the leadership
organisational structure, with performance goals linked to Business Plan
priorities and programs. The use of the Australian Professional Standards for
Teachers forms the framework for improvement and the vehicle for staff to
achieve the Business Plan target of ‘BCC staff will excel at their jobs’.

The Principal acknowledges the performance development aspect needs to
be further improved and there is an intention to progress the peer observation
and support processes. There was strong anecdotal evidence of capable staff
who understand the school culture and priorities and are equipped to deliver
the curriculum in a safe and supportive learning environment. Staff regard
self-reflection and data analysis as an opportunity for improved instructional
practice, and they build collegiality as a tool to reinforce college priorities.

Survey data was used to demonstrate the college priority: ‘this school looks
for ways to improve’. From 2014 to 2015 there was a significant improvement
from 52% to 92% respectively, with staff responding ‘agree’ or ‘strongly
agree’.

Governance processes are developing as the Board continues to consolidate
its membership and processes. Board members have extensive experience
and there is good cross-sectoral representation bringing considerable
expertise and relevant skills. Greater local community parent representation
would add a further dimension and perspective to the governance process.
Board meeting minutes and discussion with members confirmed the Board is
fully appraised of planning and financial processes with opportunity for
discussion and input. Relevant college policies are reviewed by the Board and
updated, amended and endorsed as required.
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There is not yet a clear ‘governance’ perspective within the Board or within the college Executive Team; however, the Board demonstrates capability to deliver the governance expectations of a School Board within an IPS environment.

Succession planning at the executive level is acknowledged and leadership opportunities are available to support prospective applicants.

Annual reporting to the school community provides a comprehensive coverage of school achievements and is focused on ensuring that the school and wider community is informed on the extent to which the college has improved student performance and participation. Data is clearly presented in a readily understandable language and engaging format. The Annual Report would be enhanced by the inclusion of survey data with commensurate analysis. While reviewers did not see the details of the next Business Plan (2016–2018) the proposed targets provided during the visit strongly suggested the next plan would be built on an evidence-based and outcomes-focused approach to school improvement.
Conclusion

The reviewers verify the findings of the self-review of the Belmont City College 2013–2015 Business Plan. The college has met its obligations under the Teaching and Learning and Student Performance Monitoring commitments in the DPA. The college, through its business planning, has met or made significant progress in 11 of its 13 targets. The reviewers confirm that the Business Plan has successfully driven gains in student performance.

The college delivers an appropriate balance of academic and extracurricular programs that are carefully chosen to enable students to have success and develop a set of skills that will enable them to seek employment or pursue further education. The diverse student population is provided with high-level additional support and opportunity. Enrolments have increased and the college has enhanced its reputation in the community to become a school of choice for many primary school students.

The Principal and Executive Team provide instructional leadership with clear and strategic direction. Distributed and aspirational leadership is encouraged and supported. Staff work together collegially and demonstrate a high level of commitment to providing students with appropriately challenging learning opportunities in a caring and inclusive learning environment. The Board works collaboratively and supportively with the college staff. Practices, procedures and policies are updated and reviewed in a timely manner. The college is well placed to sustain the significant improvements achieved over the period of the current Business Plan and to embark upon the next cycle with purpose and enthusiasm.
Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the very thorough self-review summary that outlines the college's processes and details the extent to which targets have been achieved
- the review process which identifies future directions with a focus on ensuring that student achievement and progress continues to be the highest priority
- an underlying willingness of staff to engage in whole-school improvement and a passion for providing students with the best educational opportunities
- the sustained progress of students from Year 7 to Year 9.
- the successes in Year 12 attainment and graduation rates, placing the college well above the achievement of like schools
- the breadth and depth of the VET programs and the 2015 achievement in ranking equal first in VET achievement among WA schools
- the establishment of a secure and inclusive learning environment that nurtures teaching and learning in a diverse student population.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement are identified:

- enhancement of the annual report by the inclusion of survey data, with commensurate analysis
- endorsement of the Business Plan and Annual Report through the signatures of the Principal and Board Chair
- further investigation of Aboriginal attendance and its inclusion as an area for improvement in the next iteration of the Business Plan
- further development by the Board and Executive Team of a clear 'governance' perspective, and greater local community parent representation on the Board
- investigation of college staff support and feedback processes to ascertain the nature of the dissatisfaction expressed in survey responses.
Belmont City College

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 Belmont City College as part of the Department of Education Services’ independent review process. The Principal and Board Chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.

Mr Gerry Chapman, Lead Reviewer

6 May 2016
Date

Mr Ross Sweeney, Reviewer

6 May 2016
Date

Mr Bill Mann, Reviewer

26 May 2016
Date

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,
Department of Education Services

31/5/2016
Date