



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education Services

# Shenton College

2013

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

<b>Principal:</b>	Mr Michael Morgan
<b>Board Chair:</b>	Ms Barbara Goldflam
<b>School Location:</b>	227 Stubbs Terrace, Shenton Park WA
<b>School Classification:</b>	SHS Class 6A
<b>Number of Students:</b>	1306 (Semester 1, 2013)
<b>Reviewers:</b>	Mr Lindsay Usher and Mr Gerry Chapman
<b>Review Dates:</b>	Self-review presentation: 9 August 2013 Review visits: 22 and 23 August 2013

### 1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Shenton 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 formed the basis for the school's self-review which was presented to the reviewers for verification at the commencement of the independent review.



Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review, reviewers were 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 *My School*<sup>TM</sup> website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports
- School Curriculum and Standards Authority Year 12 Student Achievement data.

Reviewers 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 then negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of further evidence to clarify or confirm the claims made in the school's self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school's 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

Shenton College is an independent public school with a reputation as a centre for educational excellence. It operates in a highly competitive environment and has recognised the complexity of the challenges involved in developing the 'whole child' through the contributions of students, parents and staff. The college has developed a unique, relevant and comprehensive suite of academic and co-curricular programs to ensure its continuing success in meeting its vision of 'Excellence' and delivering for students an education that is 'More than Marks – Learning for Life'.

Shenton College offers its student and community a challenging curriculum that enriches, engages and improves student learning at all levels. Its achievements indicate an exceptional level of student attainment across the range of academic activity. It adds great value to student learning through focusing on all aspects of achievement, progress and engagement with high quality academic programs delivered by quality staff who are advocates of the college's teaching and learning values.

The college culture is built around actions that are embodied in the key statements of 'excellence, learning for life, developing the whole child' that drive the ethos and extensive curriculum for students at Shenton College. The critical elements that give life to the vision are evidenced by the respectful interactions that are displayed between staff, students and parents and the shared expectations of high academic, sporting and cultural performance. The shared vision is enacted in an environment that supports learning and social and emotional development to meet the individual needs of students.

Shenton College has developed sustainable practices across all key areas of its operation, making it well placed to continue its outstanding success into the future.

The following **commendations** support the college's claims of significant strengths and areas of improvement:

- the outstanding level of successful student achievement and progress, verified against the Business Plan key performance indicators and demonstrated through the commitment to well-targeted strategies for improved student learning

- the development of staff leadership capacity and quality professional learning to embed whole-school planning and strategies in classroom practice
- the scope and quality of the partnerships developed with parents, business and local and international organisations and communities, to add value to student learning
- the quality, breadth and depth of the curricular and co-curricular programs offered to students at Shenton College and the high level of staff expertise and commitment to supporting those activities
- the development of the 'whole child' through an inclusive approach that provides academic and socio-emotional support to students through well-planned strategies and programs, delivered by staff who share the college vision and maintain a strong focus on the needs of the individual student
- the leadership by the Principal, Executive Team and leaders at all levels, to improve student learning, develop an inclusive school environment and deliver a challenging and enriching curriculum
- the comprehensive analysis of student performance data and the strategies used to effect improvements to student learning.

The following **affirmations** support continued implementation of processes and initiatives:

- the leadership empowerment, staff professional learning, mentoring and self-reflection processes with a focus on improving pedagogy and achieving student learning improvements
- the role of the Shenton College Board in proactively demonstrating its accountability, ensuring the maintenance of high expectations, providing oversight to ongoing development, actively participating in improvement planning and in representation of its community.



### 3. School Context

Shenton College is a modern, purpose built, co-educational, independent public secondary school located in close proximity to a cluster of high-performing private schools. The college opened in 2001 and is in competition for enrolments with these schools. It also competes for academically-talented student enrolments with the fully-selective Perth Modern School. The culture and educational philosophy of the college is based on its highly valued middle and senior school learning communities. The college aims to develop students to attain high levels of academic success in an inclusive learning environment to meet the college ethos of 'More than Marks – Learning for Life'. Inclusion is a feature of the college with integration of the co-located Shenton College Deaf Education Centre as a part of college life. Meeting the needs of all students is an evident focus in planning and implementation of the curriculum.

The college has a high Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 1154 which places it in the first decile of schools in Western Australia. It has a relatively low transiency rate of 10.4% and a student attendance rate of 92.5%, which is above the State average of 87.7%.

Catering for 1306 students, inclusive of 62 special-needs students and 27 students from the Deaf Education Centre, the college has a large campus and an upward trend in enrolment. It is predicted that student numbers will reach 1600 by 2015 with the Year 7 intake commencing in 2015. As a school of choice there is considerable interest from out-of-boundary applications for enrolment. Approximately 25% of enrolments are selected as part of the Department of Education's Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program with local contributory schools providing most of the 75% of annual enrolments. Students selected in the GATE program are drawn from across the State.

The school offers an extensive array of co-curricular activities which provide strong incentives for prospective enrolees and numerous opportunities for the academic, sporting, cultural and social development for a full spectrum of students attending the college. It has also responded to the need to provide diverse pathways for students with an increasing number of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs on offer. The co-curricular program is used to support the college vision of 'Excellence' and in creating the 'Shenton Difference'. The college utilises Department of Education endorsed programs

for academically talented students in humanities and science/mathematics, support for students with English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) and VET courses. In addition, the college is a hub for Asian language providing a pathway to language proficiency. It also offers a wide range of music experiences with choirs, bands, ensembles, orchestras and instrumental tuition through the School of Instrumental Music for 340 students.

Shenton College has strategic partnerships which provide mutual benefits and support the range of co-curricular programs offered by the college.

Partnerships with The University of Western Australia, BHP Billiton, National Australia Bank and schools in Asia indicate the diverse range of partnerships developed by the college to support student learning experiences.

Workforce development planning and being an Independent Public School have enabled the college to closely align the staff skill set with student learning requirements and the broad range of programs offered. Merit selection has been available to the college since its opening, with high levels of staff retention and an evident collegial atmosphere supportive of the college's direction and ethos.

The college has utilised its resources and IPS flexibility to deliver comprehensive and targeted programs. Resources are allocated in accordance with the DPA and Business Plan and targeted for learning support, student wellbeing, transition and high performance and talented programs. Additional staff support has been recognised through the resourcing of a distributed leadership model and the provision of administrative support including a Level 6 Business Manager.

The physical environment of the college is functional and well maintained to meet the learning needs of secondary students and staff in delivering a broad and comprehensive curriculum. Site works have commenced to accommodate the entry of Year 7 students in 2015.

The College Board has made the transition from Council to Board with the increased accountability for its governance role well understood. It has cross-representative membership inclusive of key partners and the wider school community. The Board has been actively engaged in developing the Business Plan and monitoring the school's DPA and Business Plan implementation including analysis of key performance indicators and student performance.



#### 4a. School Performance - Student Learning

The *Shenton College Business Plan 2011-2013* was developed in conjunction with the College Board, community and staff. The development process was based on:

- a rigorous, evidence-based analysis of student performance
- reflection on student, staff and community academic expectations
- a need to add further value to student learning experiences
- an embedded culture of continuous improvement based on self-assessment
- the centrality of student learning
- the development of a shared purpose and vision.

The Business Plan is linked to Department of Education key planning documents and has an operational overlay approach. This aligns the Business Plan and audit processes, school improvement operational planning, learning area, faculty and specific project plans for improvement.

The plan has three focus areas to realise the stated priorities of academic progress and personal and social development for students. Each of the focus areas has whole-school strategies for implementation and key performance indicators to measure success.

- *Quality Teaching and Learning* – to support teacher development through professional learning, performance management and the implementation of pedagogical strategies to maintain the college as a 'centre for excellence'.
- *Curriculum Differentiation* – to cater for all students to enable them to reach their potential.
- *Educational Partnerships* – to form strategic alliances to make learning more meaningful and authentic through real life applications.

The Business Plan focus areas have been the subject of continuous review to identify the success of implementation of strategies and achievement of targets set in key performance indicators.

In *Quality Teaching and Learning* the strategies focus on student learning with a considerable number of key performance indicators reflecting the level of targeting of improvement in:

- Year 12 attainment in WA Certificate of Education (WACE) Graduation, Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) assessments and VET Certificate achievement
- Year 9 progress and achievement in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE).

The college has demonstrated through its rigorous and ongoing self-reviews that it is already meeting the great majority of its targets based on the analysis of 2012 data. In a number of instances the performance is outstanding (ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in Top 50 VET Schools) and consistently higher than like schools in all NAPLAN and WAMSE science and society and environment assessments. The college's 2012 ATAR performance ranks it as 16<sup>th</sup> amongst all schools and 4<sup>th</sup> amongst public schools. Evidence indicated that the school is on track to achieve its target in the few areas identified as not being met at the time of review. Aspirational targets for 2013 have been developed from the 2012 self-review analysis to continue to monitor further progress in areas where targets have been met. The college is considering the challenge faced in maintaining improvement when performance already exceeds like schools. It is likely that it will continue to focus on comparing its performance to local schools that draw on the same community for their enrolment.

The outstanding level of successful student achievement and progress, verified against the Business Plan key performance indicators and demonstrated through the commitment to well-targeted strategies for improved student learning is commended.

This area also had a focus on establishing a culture of learning amongst administrators and teachers. Strategies implemented included attracting and retaining quality staff, supporting pedagogical development through professional learning, establishing collaborative decision-making, planning Year 7 transition and enhancement of the physical learning environment. Reviewers were able to verify the achievement of targets in this area from documentation and discussions with leadership teams at all levels within the college.

The *Curriculum Differentiation* focus area sets out strategies to continue to develop an appropriate curriculum for those students needing support to achieve learning outcomes and for those requiring extension and enrichment. This area includes developing methodologies to enhance learning through technology, expanding Certificate II vocational pathways, addressing



individual learning differences especially for special-needs students, staff development in pedagogy for gifted students and to promote improved student engagement in the learning process. The college is able to demonstrate its ability to apply a differentiated curriculum in meeting the needs of students requiring support or at risk of not achieving their potential, through comprehensive tracking of individual performance and targeted interventions to ensure that student achievement, progress and engagement is maintained. Evidence gathered from documentation and discussions with staff and team leaders supported the view that the school was well on track in achieving milestones and able to demonstrate meeting targets through consistently high graduation rates, retention of students in Gifted and Talented courses and an increasing trend in those applying for selective entry to the college.

The development of staff leadership capacity and quality professional learning to embed whole-school planning and strategies in classroom practice is commended.

The *Educational Partnerships* area focuses on high levels of parent and community involvement in the college. Strategies are numerous and aimed at supporting the co-curricular activities within the school, developing opportunities outside the school, State and country to provide experiences to enrich academic and social learning for students. The partnerships developed are mutually beneficial arrangements with parents, business and the local and international community to engage students in learning for life. Achievement of the key performance indicators in the partnerships area presented as a very broad canvas of strategies and projects. Students were able to clearly articulate and discuss key opportunities of engagement in local and international events, competitions, challenges, exchanges, alliances and research that provided them with enriched learning, an expanded world view and enhanced opportunities to reinforce and demonstrate community and Shenton College values. Feedback from satisfaction surveys, the Board, parents and students verified the remarkable achievements in developing partnerships that establish the college as a centre for excellence.

The scope and quality of the partnerships developed with parents, business and local and international organisations and communities to add value to student learning is commended.



#### **4b. School Performance - Quality of the Learning Environment**

Shenton College staff and community have high expectations of learning for students in an environment that caters for a diverse range of needs.

Structures, programs and strategies established by the college reinforce these expectations and deliver a quality learning environment and outstanding academic achievement. Evidence of the inclusive approach and focus on the student can be found in the integration of 62 students with special needs, 27 of whom are deaf, into mainstream classes and programs and outcomes indicative of a school that is able to deliver on its vision.

The college meets the high expectations set for it and places considerable emphasis on celebrating and sharing successes at an individual, whole-school and community level. The extensive communications, billboards, and formal acknowledgement of success ensure that staff, students and the community are embedded in the life of the college and are able to share the experience of being part of a school that demonstrates outstanding success in academic, sporting, cultural and community-based endeavours at a State, national and international level.

The college uses a wide range of strategies and resources to meet student learning needs. It has extensive specialist programs offering:

- academically talented and high performance learning
- music extension
- specialist sport and fitness for life
- links with The University of Western Australia to enrich learning experiences in science, maths, humanities, the arts, sport, languages and international partnerships
- vocational training including industry partnerships, career access and workplace learning
- enrichment programs in debating, mock trials, maths and international competitions
- international academic partnerships in Singapore and China.

Learning areas are delivered by dedicated and expert staff and provide extensive curriculum opportunities to add value to students' education. All learning areas have focused on extending students' interests and learning through public performances, competitions of an academic, sporting and cultural nature, participation in challenges at State, national and international

level, offering university-level research options resulting in some 20 published works in academic journals and programs designed to meet the needs of students requiring a differentiated approach to their learning with pathways that lead to success.

The quality, breadth and depth of the curricular and co-curricular programs offered to students at Shenton College and the high level of staff expertise and commitment to supporting those activities is commended.

While the curriculum offers diversity, challenge and is rich in targeted learning experiences the level of support for students to assist their learning is equally as extensive. Students entering the selective Academically Talented Program (ATP) are engaged with the college through the 'GO' program while in primary school. This provides both social and academic transition upon entering the college in Year 8 as students come from diverse schools and backgrounds. Students entering from either the ATP or local intake are monitored prior to and after entry for learning and emotional issues that may impact on their ability to access the college's programs.

Student health, wellbeing and academic progress monitoring is through a comprehensive process that involves the class teachers, team leaders and pastoral care staff. Academic monitoring is ongoing and the availability and use of the online marks book caters for one aspect in monitoring academic progress. Behaviour and attendance monitoring provide two further avenues to alert staff to issues that may arise and impact on learning. The quality and range of staff positions to support the inclusive learning environment are impressive and indicative of the emphasis placed on creating an environment that supports learning. Course and career advisors, learning support coordinators, VET and workplace coordinators, the college's own psychologist, the Defence Force mentor, school nurse and student service leadership provide expert support for staff and leaders in the middle school communities and senior school learning areas. Parents and staff verified the two-way policy of engaging parents in any academic and social issues that may be impacting on a student's learning and emotional health. Discussions with team leaders, staff, students and parents pointed to the strength of the monitoring process, the timeliness of interventions and the involvement and support of parents in assisting students to reach their goals.

All students benefit from the extensive professional learning program for staff including Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) training that enhances the understanding and delivery of the



curriculum specifically for talented students. Every student has a laptop and the associated training for staff in digital learning is further indication of the emphasis leadership has placed on supporting student learning through creating a rich and challenging learning environment.

Staff use many other tools to assist in maintaining an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Evidence-based decisions are a feature of all aspects of planning in the academic and social domains. Student surveys, performance management processes and staff mentoring are used to great effect to modify and evaluate the effectiveness of leadership structures, programs and strategies that all focus on the student.

A team of specialist learning and emotional wellbeing support staff work in a complementary manner with the shared understanding that all staff are implicitly and explicitly involved in identifying and monitoring students in need of assistance for their learning. Additionally, the college has a proactive approach to the provision of a range of curriculum programs to build resilience from an academic and social perspective, provide activities that support the development of relationships and promote and create awareness of mental health.

The development of the 'whole child' through an inclusive approach that provides academic and socio-emotional support to students through well-planned strategies and programs, delivered by staff who share the Shenton College vision and maintain a strong focus on the needs of the individual student, is commended.

The college has developed effective partnerships with parents and the community. Satisfaction surveys provide evidence of strong support for programs and leadership. Discussions with key partners highlighted the benefits of programs to enrich learning. The "Learning Links" partnership with The University of Western Australia strongly reinforces the academic focus with regular engagement of students in extension programs across learning areas. Examples include engagement in university standard research projects at the university and ongoing involvement of university staff at the school in enhancing the curriculum opportunities thereby significantly broadening the scope for learning. Additionally, university students mentor Shenton College students and engage them in work experience at the university. This reciprocal arrangement strengthens the links and learning opportunities for both parties.



The international links to Asia, particularly in Beijing schools, provide students with strong connections of high relevance to their learning and ongoing engagement in cultural exchange programs. The BHP partnership supports links between Shenton College and Newman Senior High School to enable students to work together and teachers to engage in moderation exercises. BHP also provides mining-related, university-level scholarships for Year 12 Shenton College students.

### **4c. School Performance - Sustainability**

Shenton College has developed a very strong and accountable leadership structure based on meeting the needs of students and staff. Quality leadership is recognised and developed through ongoing mentoring and training of staff. It is fostered to ensure that leaders establish relationships with staff and develop processes to make evidence-based decisions and develop evaluative processes to monitor their own and staff performance in meeting targets. The Board, students and parents were unanimous in their support of the Principal for the high quality of his leadership, and his approachable and inclusive manner. This was reiterated by school staff during the interview process.

The leadership by the Principal, executive team and leaders at all levels, in improving student learning, developing an inclusive school environment and delivering a challenging and enriching curriculum is commended.

Shenton College has developed a strong culture of self-reflection and self-review centred on analysis of student performance data and value adding provided by an extensive range of additional curricular and co-curricular activities. There is comprehensive collection of data across the school and deep analysis to monitor standards of student achievement. These processes provide a manageable, measurable and sustainable approach to monitoring student performance and school improvement.

College staff use a suite of assessment mechanisms to invigilate college processes and sustain the quality of its educational programs. Evidence provided in self-review documentation, operational plans and through discussions with leaders at all levels indicates that self-review processes are well embedded, cyclical and focused on providing accountability to the whole school community. This process is further supported by comprehensive summaries provided to staff and the Board which form the basis for thorough analysis across all levels of the organisation.

The Business Plan has been developed and implemented clearly articulating college values within the context of its priorities. Priorities are underpinned by whole-school strategies linked to key performance indicators which provide the basis for reviewing attainment of targets. This evidence-based self-review is supported by staff across the college with operational planning at learning area level reviewing student achievement and using the data to focus on specific student learning needs. College and system data is cross referenced to closely monitor student progress and to identify specific students underperforming and/or in need of additional support. Teachers across the college are trained in interpreting and using performance data and are fully engaged in analysis. They reflect on each student's performance after each phase of assessment. Students are then asked to reflect on their own performance and to provide feedback on the teaching and learning process.

Teachers use a number of survey tools to obtain feedback about the quality of their teaching and learning programs and to modify and adjust their pedagogy to align with student learning styles and needs. These include the student feedback surveys and the peer feedback provided by the 360 degree REACH process.

The comprehensive analysis of student performance data and the strategies used to effect improvements in student learning are commended.

The school executive team provides a clear focus for future directions and the re-alignment of the Business Plan to meet emerging system and college priorities. Planning for 2014 onwards is currently occurring with a focus on meeting WACE requirements for 2016, Year 7 transition in 2015, Australian Curriculum implementation, the increasing student enrolment and subsequent building requirements, maintaining and developing strong partnerships and expanding communication with parents. Attention is given to the need to acknowledge the current high levels of student and staff achievement and be cognisant of these when setting future key performance indicators and aspirational targets. The college will also need to consider the means by which the current, highly positive culture and expectations of student performance are able to be sustained with a potential enrolment of in excess of 1600 beyond 2015.

Greater staff empowerment is a key feature of practice at Shenton College. The uptake on leadership roles and the strong sense of corporate endeavour to sustain the learning environment are critical sustainability elements. The REACH 360 Project, as a self-reflection and peer feedback tool, is a clear



example of staff empowerment and the endeavour to develop sustainable staff development processes. In this example, staff have been given the autonomy and resources to impact significantly on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This project has the potential to strengthen collaborative practices and improve student achievement.

Professional learning is provided to support teaching staff and is targeted at all programs and initiatives ensuring successful implementation. Staff performance management is linked to professional learning and priorities for college improvement.

The leadership empowerment, staff professional learning, mentoring and self-reflection processes with a focus on improving pedagogy and achieving student learning improvements are affirmed.

Executive team members are collegial and supportive of one another, recognising complementary skill sets, sharing roles and responsibilities with a view to appropriate succession planning. There is a culture of collaboration at the leadership level and across the college. Learning teams place high importance on the value of collaborative planning which provides the opportunity to monitor student performance and moderate assessments.

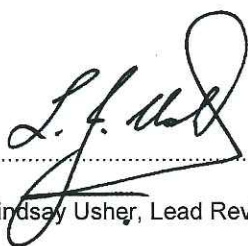
The College Board has been actively involved in the formulation of the Business Plan, adding a broader sense of community ownership and engagement and ensuring longer-term sustainability for the Business Plan and overall planning processes. The Board has instigated processes to ensure smooth succession will occur by analysing its skill set and inviting potential future board members to join their meetings as observers. The Board standing membership of representation from The University of Western Australia supports continuity and links with key partners and is aligned with the Business Plan outcomes. Satisfaction surveys have been used to obtain feedback about the school from parents and the data obtained has been analysed, acted upon and provided to the appropriate audiences and in annual reporting. Feedback from these surveys verified the reviewers' findings that the college is well organised, sets high academic standards, provides a stimulating learning environment and fosters a strong sense of community and commitment towards academic and non-academic excellence.

The role of the Shenton College Board in proactively demonstrating its accountability, ensuring the maintenance of high expectations, providing oversight to ongoing development, actively participating in improvement planning and in representation of its community is affirmed.



## Declaration

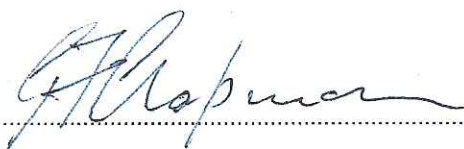
We the undersigned hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on our assessment of the evidence provided by Shenton College as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The Principal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



Lindsay Usher, Lead Reviewer

7 October 2013

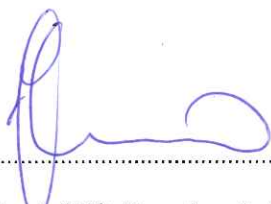
Date



Gerry Chapman, Reviewer

7 October 2013

Date



Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services

14 / 10 / 13

Date