



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education Services

# Shenton College

2016

## Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of  
Independent Public Schools

## 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 the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

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## School and Review Details

<b>Principal:</b>	Mr Chris Hill
<b>Board Chair:</b>	Mr Roger Castle
<b>School Location:</b>	227 Stubbs Terrace, Shenton Park WA 6008
<b>Number of Students:</b>	1946 (Semester 1, 2016)
<b>Reviewers:</b>	Mr Kevin Pilkington (lead) and Mr Peter Wilson
<b>Review Dates:</b>	23 and 24 May 2016
<b>Initial Review:</b>	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 the Department 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*<sup>®</sup> 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?***

Shenton College opened in 2001 with the amalgamation of Swanbourne and Hollywood Senior High Schools. The school is located on an 11 hectare site six kilometres to the west of the Perth CBD. Five non-government secondary schools are located a short distance from the college. An additional block of new classrooms and facilities was opened in 2015 to allow for the influx of a large cohort of Year 7 students entering secondary education for the first time. A further \$50 million building program expected to be completed by 2019 will cater for an anticipated increase in enrolments.

Shenton College presents as a modern, state-of-the-art learning environment. It is very well resourced. The current increase in student numbers is accommodated through the newly built Year 7 block, refurbished classrooms in the heritage precinct of the college and new demountable classrooms. There is extensive WiFi connection throughout the whole college allowing for broad use of information technology, both as a learning tool and to provide immediate access for staff to student records and attendance data. Students are encouraged to bring their own device. The college is also making considerable investment in employing extra staff to support student learning and well-being.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) for the college is 1166, placing it in the first decile of schools in Western Australia. Seventy-two per cent of students come from the top quartile of the ICSEA range and two per cent from the bottom quartile. The school has 20% of students from a language background other than English and 12 students from an Aboriginal background.

Following its opening, student enrolments rapidly grew to a relatively stable 1300 students. More recently, the college has experienced rapid enrolment growth across all years. With the inclusion of Year 7 students into high school in 2015, the student population has grown to 1946 students. The college experiences intense demand for enrolment places. The student population is projected to grow to around 2600 students over the next three to five years. The expected growth in student numbers along with the building program are the main contextual challenges the college will face over the life of the next Business Plan.

The college enrolls local students from within its catchment area as well as specially selected gifted and talented students, and students enrolled in the co-located Shenton College Deaf Education Centre. The selective gifted and talented program (GATE) is available to approximately 64 students each year who may come from out of the local area.

A further 31 students are part of the college but are enrolled through the Shenton College Deaf Education Centre. All of the Deaf Education Centre students take part in mainstream college programs for all or part of their courses.

A proportion of the student population have parents employed within the defence forces and live locally, often within the Campbell Barracks located in Swanbourne. These families have a high level of transiency resulting in frequent school transfers.

The school has 140 teaching staff and 35 non-teaching staff. The existing workforce is very stable, although the current strong enrolment growth has seen a corresponding increase in staff numbers. Teachers and support staff are highly experienced and of high quality, with 19 Level 3 classroom teachers and 32 senior teachers amongst the teaching staff. The influx of new teachers over the past four years has seen the average age of teachers drop from 50 to 45 years.

The college has strong partnerships with a number of local, national and international organisations which involve large numbers of students across a range of different academic, sporting and community fields. These arrangements contribute to the breadth of learning experiences on offer to students. The range of these experiences reflects the commitment of the college to the education of the 'whole child'.

There is a strong and capable board, with members who demonstrate an understanding of their role in governance and participate in the development and monitoring of the strategic direction of the college. Board members have various associations to the college, be that as a parent, staff member, community member or a university connection. The skill set of the Board is highly appropriate to the context and good governance of the college.

## **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?***

A rigorous cycle of self-review has been conducted throughout the period of the DPA and the 2014–2016 Business Plan. The college staff have made accurate and reflective judgements of progress toward milestones detailed in the Business Plan. The Business Plan is a collaborative document that is reflective of college and system priorities. Review of performance involves diagnostic analysis of appropriate data sets by leadership, teaching staff and the Board. This is a comprehensive process that is reflected in the Annual Report which details progress made in each domain of the Business Plan.

A range of quality data sets is used to inform judgement about student progress in academic and co-curricular domains. Detailed analysis is conducted at an individual, sub-group, class and cohort level. The very high academic standards traditionally achieved by students at the college makes demonstrating progress a challenge. Fine-grained analysis and small movements are indicative of the shared desire to constantly improve outcomes for students. The staff monitor all new programs for their effectiveness and adjust accordingly to meet student needs.

The Business Plan is reflective of the requirements of the DPA. The staff demonstrate through practices and student outcomes that they are exemplary in meeting these commitments. Staff can substantiate the claim of Shenton College being an 'excellent school.'

Areas of strength predominate on examination of the conclusions drawn from the college's self-review, particularly in comparison to like schools. Data pertaining to student performance, engagement, well-being and satisfaction are examined. All analysis includes areas of identified strengths and areas for improvement.

## **School Performance—Student Learning**

***How well has the school performed in improving learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students?***

Shenton College has been, and continues to be, an extremely high-performing public school which provides a high-quality education to the students in its care. Student learning outcomes are demonstrated throughout the college, in strong student academic performance as well as in the depth and breadth of the co-curricular learning experiences in which students engage. The school has been amongst the State's top-ranked schools in Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) results for a long period. The college's National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results are amongst the highest in comparison to all Australian schools. Year 12 vocational education and training (VET) students achieve regularly in the top bracket of schools. The broader success of students is seen in the areas of community service, vocational, sporting, social and intellectual-based endeavours. The development of students as thinking, socially aware, thoughtful citizens is evident throughout the college, and was confirmed by school data and interviews with students, staff and parents.

The Business Plan aligns well with the school vision, the DPA and with the strategic plan of the Department of Education. It contains three broad priority areas: quality teaching and learning; curriculum differentiation; educational partnerships. Each of these priorities has a wide array of success measures. The reviewers verify the achievement of all the stated measures of success contained within the college's Business Plan.

In the past three years, the number of students in Year 12 has increased significantly from 214 in 2014 to 308 in 2016, with a further rapid increase expected. Within the context of this increase, the college ATAR results for the life of the Business Plan have continued to show a consistently high standard. The 2015 ATAR results maintain the college position within the first rank of government and private schools. The number of students achieving VET competencies has improved dramatically over the past five years. The high level of VET achievement is now embedded within the culture of the college.

Analysis of student achievement shows the depth of the ATAR, VET and NAPLAN achievement. Within the life of the current Business Plan and previously, median ATAR has been above 84.8, with the 2015 results at 86.8



with a high percentage of students participating in ATAR. The participation rate for Year 12 students in ATAR in 2015 was at 73%, somewhat lower than in previous years; however, discussions with school leaders indicate an expectation that the 2016 cohort will return to a level around 80%, close to the average level for the past five years. The VET achievement of the college is also impressive. The number of students undertaking VET courses has increased from 113 Year 12 students in 2012, to 147 students in 2015. In 2015, 97% of Year 12 VET students completed a Certificate II or higher. The college has maintained its ranking within the top 50 VET schools. Analysis of NAPLAN results shows that students in Years 7 and 9 also perform well. Comparisons with like schools show that the college outperforms like schools across all NAPLAN domains. Indeed, average Shenton College Year 7 NAPLAN results are better than the average Year 9 NAPLAN results for WA public schools.

The college has numerous measurements of non-academic success within its Business Plan. Student attendance rates are targeted to be above 92%. This success measure was achieved with an attendance rate of 93.4% in 2015. Other stated success measures, or targets, are more difficult to quantify, such as “enhanced student values and understanding of equity”. The Business Plan measures of non-academic success generally accord with the ‘learning for life’ ethos of the college. The participation rates in, and success of significant numbers of students in the array of out-of-class activities (including competitions both sporting and intellectual), show the depth of student commitment to these activities. Large numbers of students also participate in school-based clubs, and many travel to local, State, national and international venues. Interviews with students indicate the high level of student understanding of their own ability to work within the wider society both for their own benefit and for the benefit of others.

Analysis of cohorts and sub-groups of students within the college shows positive results. The GATE program student results at Year 12 demonstrate some exceptional academic ability. The median ATAR for these students in 2015 was 95. Demand for the Year 7 GATE and the locally selected High Performance Learning (HPL) courses far exceed the college’s capacity. The GATE and HPL programs have led to some outstanding success for GATE students in other aspects of education. These students access a rich curriculum with broad educational experiences, with a focus on enrichment rather than acceleration of course content.

Detailed academic performance tracking similarly occurs across the college. The introduction of Year 7 students into the college has been seamless and analysis of results shows high academic achievement for this cohort. Year 7 NAPLAN results for the new 2015 group, the first Year 7 cohort to enter the college, are extremely positive compared to like schools. The VET student numbers in Year 11 and 12 have been increasing and together with the high number of students achieving Certificate II the staff plan to deliver some Certificate III programs in the near future. Another feature of the college is the integration of students from the Deaf Education Centre within mainstream classes. The total current enrolment for the Deaf Education Centre is 31. Three Year 12 Deaf Education Centre students achieved VET Certificates in 2015; however, small numbers in each year cohort make comparisons difficult.

Student achievement in relation to Business Plan targets is exceptional; however, some measures of success stated within the Business Plan are targeted well below the current high level of achievement. The reviewers affirm the intention of staff to review these measures of success to better align them with current achievement levels.

Student performance, demonstrated through academic marks, is exceptional and ranks the college in the top performing secondary schools in Western Australia. The intention to develop young people who are socially aware, skilled in diverse areas of endeavour and highly engaged in their community is also being realised. This aspect of the college is highly valued amongst parents, students and staff.

## 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?***

A strength of the college is the educational culture which promotes student learning and encourages the attainment of the vision. The motto: 'Much More than Marks—Learning for Life' demonstrates a commitment to providing educational experiences that embody a broad definition of success for all students. This culture is embedded throughout the operations of the college. The three priorities within the Business Plan support the vision. These priorities are understood by all staff and are intertwined in all planning, teaching and learning.

The college caters well for different groups within its student body. Interviews conducted by the reviewers verified the clear sense of inclusion within the learning culture. One example of this is the integration of students from the Deaf Education Centre into college mainstream classes. This integration has been enhanced through the introduction of the Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) as a third optional language other than English for hearing students in Years 7 to 10. Thirty-two staff are also undertaking AUSLAN courses. Uptake has been high amongst students, with more applications than the program can cater for. Teachers within the Deaf Education Centre stated that having more AUSLAN speakers within the school improved the opportunity for deaf students to communicate with their mainstream peers and their teachers. The teachers report that this results in greater engagement of these students at school, improved social links between deaf students and other students and broader engagement with the wider world.

The school has a strong culture of social and behavioural support for a diverse student body to ensure their well-being. Greater staff time has been allocated to support Level 3 heads of community and heads of learning areas. These staff members have assisted in the identification and support of students with high social, emotional and educational needs. A Defence Transition mentor assists students who come to the college from defence force families. Many of these students have had significant educational disruption through multiple changes of school. The college also offers a Career Access Program which sits alongside the VET program and provides

educational support in a mix of school-based courses and external training for approximately 20 students per year.

The school vision, values statements and motto emphasise a broad definition of success for students in striving for excellence in every aspect of their school life. The extensive co-curricular program demonstrates this level of opportunity for success. The co-curricular activities allow students to develop academically as well as within social, artistic, cultural and sporting realms. This includes a music program which provides opportunity for between 80 and 100 students to perform at festivals overseas every two years. Success is also manifested through the college teams' participation and success in State-wide debating and sporting competitions. The most prominent of these programs occurs through the well-established Learning Links partnership with UWA. Numerous other clubs and out-of-class activities are offered by the college, some of which involve students in community service and other social action activities. These non-academic pursuits aim to support the development of the students into adults engaging and coping with the wider world across a variety of fields.

The college appears safe and welcoming to all students and inclusive of students from a range of backgrounds. School documentation states that it is 'proudly public, proudly co-educational'—a significant point of difference from the local private schools. A number of parents reported to the reviewers that the college's inclusive nature was a significant reason behind their choice to send their child to Shenton College.

The school leaders, Principal and Vice Principals with the support of the Board have been flexible in changing the structure of the school in response to emerging issues. Administrative support structures have been changed over the past three years to better support students within the context of rapidly increasing enrolments. The college administration has changed the structure from a twofold middle school and senior school administrative split into three different schooling areas: middle school catering for Year 7 and 8 students; lower senior school for Year 9 and 10 students, and upper senior school catering for Year 11 and 12 students. Concomitant changes have been made to the number of vice principals to support this change. There have been increases in mentor, learning area and social and emotional support staff to assist in meeting individual student needs within the context of increasing student enrolments.

The timetable structure has also changed in 2016 to allow, in particular, Year 10 students to study subjects within the physical education, languages, arts and technology and enterprise learning areas in greater depth and for four learning sessions each week. This is aimed at better preparing students for the changing Year 11 and 12 courses under the new WACE and WA Curriculum and Assessment Framework which require students to engage earlier in more complex content.

In the current period of rapid enrolment growth, the college has adopted a new online communication system that has been favourably received by parents, students and staff. The new *Compass* online school and student management system, introduced in 2015, provides on-demand access to data and communication. Staff have better access to student performance and well-being data. Attendance data is taken electronically by teachers and feedback given during the review indicates this is likely to lead to better attendance tracking. Communication in relation to the use of individual education plans for around 180 students has also enhanced the consistency of classroom learning for students with identified learning needs.

The level of parent satisfaction is evaluated by the college on an annual basis through the online National Opinion Survey. The response rate for this survey is strong and indicates very high rates of satisfaction with the operations, culture, student safety and educational progress of students. The staff are responsive to concerns expressed in the survey. One area that survey responses showed as satisfactory, but which rated below other areas, was collaboration between the school and parents to support student learning. The new *Compass* communication system is assisting in addressing this concern as parents are now increasingly aware of the learning undertaken by their children at school and are better able to provide their support.

The depth and breadth of the partnerships that the college has developed is impressive. The partnership with UWA encompasses large numbers of students, across many areas: academic, sporting, mentoring, work experience and school and staff development. The staff are exploring joint use of facilities with UWA, which has a representative on the College Board. Extensive partnership agreements also exist with overseas schools in Singapore, Japan and China. Each year, around 50 students undertake the World Challenge Program where students experience a challenge overseas and work alongside a local community project.

Shenton College has links to other localities within Western Australia. A partnership exists with Newman Senior High School which is sponsored by BHP. The college is also actively involved in the local community through arrangements with sporting clubs, in debating and other competitions, in community service and through links to local primary schools.

The reviewers confirm that the college has achieved its goal to create a broad culture of student endeavour across both academic and non-academic endeavours. Achievement for all students is underpinned by the delivery of differentiated learning experiences. A culture of teaching improvement has been critical in assisting the continued development of the college within current and projected increases in student enrolments.

## **School Performance—Sustainability**

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

Shenton College has established a culture of striving for constant improvement as the aim for both students and staff. The improvement is not limited to academic performance outcomes, but also includes the development of the whole person. The staff were able to demonstrate an embedded practice of self-review that is analytical, diagnostic, conducted regularly, owned by the staff and the results of which are widely distributed. Focusing on areas where improvement is required has resulted in the introduction of new courses, new internal structures, new leadership positions and continual development of teacher skills and accountability.

The engaged and effective Board provides governance to the college and is diligent in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities. Minutes of meetings provided, and discussions with reviewers, clearly demonstrate board members are well informed, interrogate data presented to them, and aware of the challenges that face the college in the future. The Board played a pivotal role in the development of the current Business Plan which is a constant reference point to monitor and measure progress. Members expressed a keenness to refine and articulate the next Business Plan to reflect the direction of the college as it expands in student numbers. Board members are aware of the strong connection between quality teaching and student outcomes and as a result monitor teacher development and recruitment closely.

There is a constant improvement focus amongst staff, both in terms of teaching and leadership improvement and in student performance and the differentiation of curriculum. This focus is clearly seen in the performance management undertaken by all staff. The college's self-described REACH teacher performance management process (Reflect, Engage, Aspire, Collaborate, Here) has been adopted based on the principles of self-reflection, peer observation and student feedback to assist teachers to analyse and improve their teaching performance. Student feedback is consistently canvassed by teachers using a common student survey across the college with this forming an important part of the feedback to teachers on their performance. Teaching performance is evaluated against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and uses rigorous student results data as a benchmark for student improvement. There is an increasing use of

classroom video to assist in peer and self-reflection of classroom practice. The staff is also at the beginning stages of undertaking the Instructional Rounds teaching improvement process.

All staff undertake high-quality professional learning. Teachers have a strong commitment to professional development within their learning areas. College results in NAPLAN and ATAR over many years demonstrate the success of this commitment. There is also a clear development of cross-curriculum learning approaches within the learning communities and the mentor group activities. This is evident for all students through learning areas and through their mentor groups. Instructional improvement is a focus for much of the professional learning. Teachers have opportunity to undertake the Harvard University Graduate School of Education professional learning modules as well as *Instructional Rounds* and *Making Thinking Visible*. All teachers undertake the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) modules to support the teaching of GATE students. The support for new and beginning teachers is strong. In the last two years, 46 new teachers have been inducted into the college. Each new teacher takes part in a focused development program and is mentored by other staff members. The strong professional learning support for these teachers enables them to enhance the culture and learning focus of their students.

The Principal has been effective in recruiting staff that have the capacity to meet the challenges of a complex, high-performing environment while at the same time meeting the needs of individual students across a wide spectrum of abilities and special needs. As the college continues to expand, it will benefit from the development of a comprehensive workforce plan, in line with Department of Education guidelines, to ensure the ongoing recruitment and development of high-quality teachers.

The college is well-positioned financially to continue to provide the extra resources required to maintain current programs, implement new strategic initiatives and provide additional targeted staff positions. Physical resources are currently under pressure due to the rapid expansion in student numbers but it is anticipated the completion of new buildings to house the senior school will alleviate these issues.

The provision of a holistic educational experience to each student is the focus of Shenton College. Planning to improve outcomes in the academic domain is supported by the provision of complementary co-curricular opportunities which give meaning to 'learning for life'.



## Conclusion

Shenton College staff continue to provide a high-quality educational experience and comprehensively meet student needs and those of the school community. Strong leadership, coupled with outstanding staff members that are supported by an effective Board, enables the college to deliver on its promise of being an 'excellent school.'

The Business Plan 2014–2016 has clearly articulated the foci of the college. The leadership, staff and Board have closely monitored all facets of college performance and conducted rigorous analysis of quality data to identify strengths and weaknesses. Student performance measures (targets) have been met or exceeded in all instances. The staff have demonstrated commitment to continual improvement by being flexible and innovative in sustaining improved student outcomes.

Staff members are fully cognisant of the requirements of the 2014–2016 DPA, ensuring compliance in all college operations. The highly professional and skilled staff have the school motto of '*more than marks, learning for life*' guiding their planning and actions. The college offers a wide-ranging, inclusive and differentiated curriculum that provides the opportunity to all students to fulfil their educational potential. The Board, in conjunction with the active parent body, provides support that contributes to ongoing success. Recognition of the importance of quality teaching to effect quality learning has given focus to strategic staff development initiatives. This has led to the growth of a genuine learning community of engaged staff who share a common vision and resultant high morale.

## Commendations

***The following areas are commended:***

- the rigorous and inclusive process of cyclical self-review evidenced throughout the life of the current DPA and Business Plan
- the detailed analysis of student performance data at all levels and its consequent application in informing teaching and learning

- the outstanding ATAR results over the life of the Business Plan that:
  - provide students with a firm basis for post-school university study with a wide selection of tertiary courses available to them
  - contribute to the positive perception of the college in the community
- the results in lower school, particularly the NAPLAN results that show the excellent broad education delivered at the college
- the emphasis on enrichment within the Gifted and Talented program that has provided this group with a fulfilling broad educational experience and resulted in the excellent Year 12 median ATAR outcome of 95
- the integration of the Gifted and Talented Program within the curriculum, which focuses on providing students with cross-curricula and concept-based advancement, noting the program experiences high demand and produces excellent results
- the co-curricular program's breadth, level of participation and the contribution it makes to the learning development of students
- the development of a culture of continual teaching improvement involving reflection, feedback, sophisticated analysis of student results, the use of a range of support tools such as videos of classroom practice, student surveys and the use of authoritative teacher development standards.

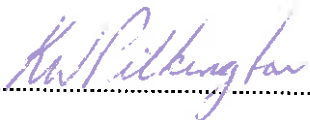
## **Areas for Improvement**

### ***The following areas for improvement are identified:***

- the setting of more challenging targets in the Business Plan aimed at continuous student academic achievement and progress, and the development of measures to demonstrate non-academic achievement
- continual redevelopment of the Workforce Plan, in line with the accountabilities of the DPA and the intention expressed by the Board, to ensure the ongoing strategic recruitment and development of high-quality staff in line with predicted college complexity and growth.

**Declaration**

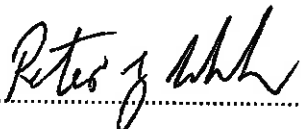
We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Shenton College as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The Principal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



Mr Kevin Pilkington, Lead Reviewer

22 July 2016

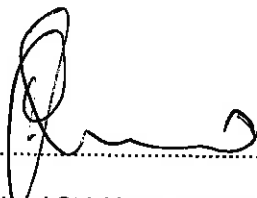
Date



Mr Peter Wilson, Reviewer

22 July 2016

Date



Mr Richard Strickland, Director General,  
Department of Education Services

10/8/2016

Date

