



Department of  
Education

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Public education  
**A world of opportunities**

# John Curtin College of the Arts

## Public School Review

March 2021



# PUBLIC SCHOOL REVIEW

## Purpose

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

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

The Principal provides the review team with a self-assessment of the school's performance based on evidence from the school. Information to be validated by the review team is considered before and during the school visit. This forms the basis for the school review report and determines when the next review will occur. The report is provided to the Principal, the Chair of the School Council/Board and the regional Director of Education.

## Expectations of schools

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The Statement of Expectation (Statement) makes clear and public the expectations and responsibilities of schools and the Department in student achievement and progress.

The Statement is between; the Department of Education, represented by the Director General; the school, represented by the Principal; and is noted by the school council/board, represented by the Chair.

The Statement sets out the expectations of Principals in relation to the delivery of the 2020-2024 strategic directions *Every student, every classroom, every day*, and *Building on Strength*.

The Statement will underpin each school's strategic planning and self-assessment and will form part of the school's Public School Review, as well as the Professional Performance Review of the Principal.

## Public School Review – The Standard

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

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

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



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## Context

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John Curtin College of the Arts (the college) is located in Fremantle, approximately 20 kilometres south-west of the Perth central business district within the South Metropolitan Education Region.

Opened as Fremantle Free Grammar School in 1856, the college was most recently renamed in 2000 in recognition of its long history as a school offering specialist and selective arts programs. In 2010, the college became one of the first Independent Public Schools in Western Australia.

Currently, there are 1843 students enrolled from Year 7 to Year 12. The college has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage of 1120 (decile 1).

The college has been acknowledged through various awards for its achievements, including being awarded the WA Education Award - WA Secondary School of the Year in 2016 and the Governor's School STEM<sup>1</sup> Award for Leadership Excellence in 2017.

A range of specialised curriculum is provided for Gifted and Talented (GAT) students including academic, ballet, dance, drama, media arts, music, music theatre, visual arts and a specialist football program. The college is also a Registered Training Organisation providing nationally recognised certificates in the creative arts industry.

The College Board is an integral part of the college, contributing to the development and review of college priorities and general policy directions. The Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) supports the college and its community through fundraising, with a focus on 'creating a better future'.

## School self-assessment validation

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The Principal submitted a comprehensive and rigorous school self-assessment.

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

- The rich history and strong culture of the college was outlined in the Electronic School Assessment Tool (ESAT) assessment summary.
- Academic progress over time was included in the summary, providing an overview of the improvement journey of the college.
- The ESAT submission provided good examples and evidence supporting the judgements made by the college within each domain.
- A broad range of staff, students and families participated in discussions during the validation visit, adding strength to the ESAT submission.
- A multi-disciplinary student performance during the validation visit demonstrated an artistic representation of the appreciation they have for their college.

## Public School Review

### Relationships and partnerships

Maintaining respectful and sustained relationships is inherent in the way the college interacts internally and with families and the community. This has resulted in a collective commitment to the success and wellbeing of every student.

#### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The college values the integral part the Parent Support Group and Vocational Education and Training (VET) students play in the success of any arts production.
- Communication with the parent body is enhanced through the Professional Learning Academy's Conversation Series. Presentations provide valuable information for parents on how to best understand and support their child's learning.
- The College Board is a strong advocate with considerable positive influence on the good governance of the college. It is instrumental in developing the Business Plan, maintains attention to the funding for the Master Plan and provides valuable scholarships for students.
- Significant industry support complements and adds value to the education provided by the college. Tutors for GAT students, Professor Fiona Woods' involvement with STEM and the partnership with Perth Glory, are examples of how learning experiences are enriched for students.
- Respectful relationships between staff, students and parents are evidenced by the interactions and commentary observed during the validation visit. This provided an insight into the strong and positive culture of the college.

### Learning environment

The college is unique in its complexity. A college for the Arts, with specialist GAT and football programs, results in an intake of students from over 120 primary schools. The 'child first' philosophy and deliberate strategies to create connectedness provides for a safe, caring, inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

#### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Student wellbeing underpins the decisions and interactions of staff. As one of three college priorities, 'Wellbeing' is at the heart of core business, which allows 'Creativity' and 'Excellence' to thrive in students. The Peer Support, Enrichment and Stepping Up programs are enhancing the health and wellbeing of students.
- Students describe the college as a place that is safe and supportive of who they are as individuals and their concern for their peers is evident. They indicate an appreciation of the opportunities for student voice, which is genuine in influencing positive change.
- Parents of students requiring additional learning and/or social and emotional support celebrate and credit the PROPEL<sup>2</sup> program as making a significant difference for the wellbeing, progress and ultimate success of their children.
- There is an authentic commitment to becoming increasingly culturally responsive. The RAP<sup>3</sup> Committee is representative of all learning areas, promoting cross-curricular activities and projects to increase awareness and celebration of culture. The Aboriginal Student Group (Maali) is providing a sense of connection and student voice for Aboriginal students.

## Leadership

College leaders, staff, students and the Board all demonstrate a commitment to and ownership of the clearly articulated strategic direction, values and priorities of the business plan.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The 2019 – 2021 Business Plan is a transformational document developed by the College Board in collaboration with staff, the strength of which is reflected in the narrative shared by the entire college community.
- All decisions across the college demonstrate a ‘can do’ approach in providing students opportunities that promote student wellbeing, creativity and excellence. Alignment to ‘what is important’ is evident in the actions of leaders and staff for the benefit of all students.
- Level 3 classroom teachers (L3CT) provide an important role in promoting consistency in pedagogy and curriculum delivery. L3CT (23) across all learning areas provide instructional support, mentoring and professional learning through the Professional Learning Academy.
- As a Teacher Development School in the arts, and until more recently STEM and science, the college has provided system leadership in supporting schools with professional learning and advice to develop, progress and sustain their programs.
- A significant number of staff contributed to the connected ‘Learning Hub’ during COVID-19.

## Use of resources

The college’s resources and financial position are unique in nature. The two theatres have operating budgets and staffing requirements larger than that of medium sized schools. They are overseen through sound financial management and targeted resource deployment.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- Financial decisions are collaborative and involve all relevant stakeholders. Strong and open communication exists between the executive team, the Finance Committee and the College Board.
- The use of resources is aligned clearly to the values and priorities outlined in the business plan. Providing a learning environment that enhances wellbeing, learning excellence and creativity in every student, underpins resource allocation.
- Targeted initiative funding for the GAT program is a high priority for the college. Efficiency in financial resourcing enables savings that are used to augment the staffing profile to enhance student outcomes.
- Monitoring and forward planning is ensuring the college has the flexibilities required for increases in student enrolment and transition of staff toward retirement.

## Teaching quality

The college is committed to developing curiosity, innovation and imagination in every student through inspiring minds and learning for life. Staff use 'The Arts' as a vehicle for engagement and motivation.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- All teachers are trained in UNSW GERRIC<sup>4</sup> units providing best practice in differentiation and gifted underachievement. The Professional Learning Academy provides weekly opportunities for teachers to engage in collaboration and professional learning.
- Significant extra-curricular programs enhance student learning. Staff passion and goodwill drives the commitment for the success of the college and its students.
- Data are used to inform learning plans for students requiring literacy support and students in the Academic Excellence Program. Individual student achievement is monitored and their wellbeing is paramount to decision making.
- A philosophy of 'thinking' is at the core of the college vision for student learning. The college has developed a reputation as a leader in STEM education in Western Australia.
- Parents are partners in student learning. The Study Hack program includes information for parents on how they can assist their children to develop study habits and a sense of wellbeing.

## Student achievement and progress

With 'Excellence' as a school priority, the college has long been one of the top 10 performing Western Australian public secondary schools. Individual student achievement is balanced by the complementary focus on wellbeing and creativity.

### Commendations

The review team validate the following:

- The college uses student achievement and progress NAPLAN<sup>5</sup> data in a predictive manner as a good indicator of senior school potential. These data influence teaching in lower school and individual pathway planning.
- Western Australian Certificate of Education achievement and student attainment are both higher than that of like schools.
- NAPLAN achievement is consistently above that of like schools in all aspects apart from numeracy. The college has identified an understanding around this discrepancy and strategies are closing the gap between Year 7 and Year 9.
- Longitudinal data consistently indicates over 95 per cent of students are meeting the standard in the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment.

## Reviewers

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Vicki McKeown  
Director, Public School Review

Michael Morgan  
Principal, Shenton College  
Peer Reviewer

## Endorsement

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

Your next school review is scheduled for Term 1, 2026.



Melesha Sands  
A/Deputy Director General, Schools

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## References

- 1 Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
- 2 Providing Real Opportunities – Participation, Empowerment, Learning
- 3 Reconciliation Action Plan
- 4 University of New South Wales - Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre
- 5 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy