Role
In 2010, the Department of Education Services was appointed by the Minister for Education to conduct reviews of Independent Public Schools. Independent reviews are identified in the Delivery and Performance Agreement for each Independent Public School as one of the suite of accountability instruments. These reviews commenced in 2012.

Purpose
The purpose of the independent review is to assure the Minister for Education, the Director General and the school community that the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement and associated Business Plan. This is done through a verification of each school’s performance in the self-review it has conducted against these documents.
Understandings

The independent reviews are based on the understanding that, by signing the Delivery and Performance Agreement with the Director General of Education, each Independent Public School is aiming to improve the quality of student learning and the learning environment through community empowerment, greater autonomy and flexibility, and increased accountability.

Independent reviews recognise that how the Delivery and Performance Agreement is enacted in each Independent Public School will vary according to its individual circumstances, specifically the extent to which:

- the local school community is empowered with greater authority and decision-making capacity to improve student learning through shaping the vision, culture, direction and distinctive features of its school
- the school acts autonomously and flexibly to be responsive to its community and fosters an environment of creativity and innovation which drives improvement
- the school with the local community exercises greater accountability for the quality of the learning environment and the standards of student learning
- the school's public accountability for its performance involves a greater role for the local community, with the School Board monitoring the school's performance against its Delivery and Performance Agreement and Business Plan and reporting to the school community.

It is understood that each Independent Public School will conduct a review of its own performance, based on the Delivery and Performance Agreement and the accompanying Business Plan. As a point-in-time evaluation, the self-review will be derived from the school's ongoing self-assessments and reports.

Being summative in nature, it is understood that each school's self-review will focus on providing answers to the following questions:

- What did we achieve and how will we sustain it?
- What can we improve and how will we achieve that?

The school's review of its own performance will be complemented by the independent review conducted by the Department of Education Services.

Through provision of an independent perspective, the process of complementary review will commend the strengths of a school's performance, affirm areas for development and, where applicable, recommend areas for improvement. In this way independent review has the potential to contribute to building the school's capacity for improvement at the same time as it demonstrates the school is meeting agreed responsibilities.
Principles

The Department of Education Services commits to the following principles of independent review:

1. **Improvement focus**
   Focusing on the improvement in student learning through evidence-based evaluation and actions generated in an environment of reflective practice.

2. **Responsiveness to context**
   Judgements of the school’s performance will be considered against the specific context of the school, its community and its vision.

3. **Complementary review**
   Complementary review integrates independent review with school self-review as a mutually informative process which builds capacity for school improvement.

4. **Transparency**
   Openness of processes will ensure there is understanding of, and general agreement about, the independent review, its procedures and conduct.

5. **Consistency**
   Reviewing consistently and with integrity in a clear, professional and impartial manner.

Independent Review Process

**What will be reviewed?**

The independent review will verify the school’s self-review of its performance against its Delivery and Performance Agreement and Business Plan commitments. The focus of the review is on:

- the standards of student learning
- the quality of the learning environment
- sustainability.

That is, what the school has achieved through creating an environment to improve student learning and enacting its shared vision with its local community.

Based on the process of verification, the independent review will confirm the school’s judgements on its areas of strength (commendations); affirm areas for development as identified by the school in its planning and review processes (affirmations); and, where applicable, recommend further areas for improvement (recommendations).

**What evidence will inform the review?**

The independent review will examine the school’s self-review, analysis and planning information related to the Delivery and Performance Agreement and the Business Plan.

The school’s self-review includes: the school’s analysis of evidence gathered; judgements made by the school regarding its performance, and the school’s subsequent plans for improvement. Evidence will be largely collated from existing documents and can be presented in either hard copy or electronic format.

Self-review and planning information may include any evidence that is seen to be relevant in assisting the independent reviewers to verify the school’s claims about its performance over the period of the Delivery and Performance Agreement, such as:

- student performance data
- annual self-assessments
- annual school reports
- the original and working versions of the Business Plan
- School Board procedures and minutes of meetings
- any new policies and/or practices developed
- survey data
- other documentation that has relevance to the school’s unique characteristics and success as an Independent Public School.
Independent Review Process

Independent reviewers may also source information from:
- the School Performance Monitoring System
- the School Curriculum and Standards Authority
- the MySchool™ website
- discussions negotiated for the review visit which may include school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and board members.

Who will the independent reviewers be?
Independent reviewers will be experienced educators trained in complementary school review. The Department of Education Services will appoint independent reviewers for each school. The number of reviewers will depend on the context and complexity of the school/cluster.

When will the independent review take place?
The review will take place in the final year of the school's Delivery and Performance Agreement or at a time before that specified by the Director General of Education.
The Department of Education Services will contact the school to confirm a timeframe for the review.

What role does the School Board have in independent review?
The School Board provides a mechanism for public accountability by engaging in active participation in planning, reviewing and monitoring school improvement. It does this in order to provide assurance to the community about the quality of school performance.

In recognition of this key role, School Board representatives will be invited to participate in the independent review process.

How will IPS school clusters be independently reviewed?
For schools in a cluster, Independent Public School status applies to both the individual school and the school as a member of the cluster. Therefore:
- independent review will consider both school and cluster performance
- each school review will be based on the school's individual self-review
- findings will include reference to the outcomes achieved as a cluster and the impact of the cluster on the school.

Because clusters have different purposes and arrangements, it will be necessary to negotiate the review procedure for each cluster prior to the independent review.

How will the independent review be conducted?
The independent review will occur in three stages. The Department of Education Services will contact the school approximately three months before the review visit to confirm dates.

Stage 1: Presentation of school self-review analysis
Up to half day meeting between reviewers, Principal and Board Chair.

Stage 2: Review visit
Approximately two days’ duration, conducted approximately two weeks after Stage 1.

Stage 3: Findings
Draft findings are forwarded to the school after the review visit for a check on factual accuracy.
Independent Review Process

Stage 1: Presentation of school self-review
Reviewers will meet the Principal and Board Chair for approximately half a day to develop their awareness of the school’s context and self-review. The Principal and Board Chair will provide an overview of the school’s self-review, analysis and planning information and discuss key achievements, school improvement and future directions. This will provide an understanding of the ethos, vision and setting against which school performance is understood. At the end of the visit, consultants will take away the school’s self-review and planning information for consideration.

Reviewers will contact the school after the meeting to negotiate details of the review visit, including the agenda, and any aspects of the school’s self-review and planning information that the reviewers may require clarified and confirmed.

Stage 2: Review visit
Approximately two weeks after Stage 1, reviewers will spend approximately two days at the school verifying the information provided in the school’s analysis. It is anticipated that while some time will be spent with the Principal and Board Chair, time will also be spent with other members of the school community. An exit meeting with the Principal and Board Chair will provide opportunity for the reviewers to discuss their preliminary observations and seek clarification of issues before writing the independent review findings.

Stage 3: Findings
The independent review findings will be summarised in four sections:

1. About the independent review
A section informing readers of the purpose of the independent review.

2. Summary
This provides a summary of the review visit, findings of the school’s performance against the Delivery and Performance Agreement and Business Plan, and any commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

3. School context informing the independent review
Outlines the important features of the school’s context that have an impact on student learning such as the school’s demographic, socio-economic and environmental features. It will provide background on the extent to which the school’s ethos and shared vision are driving the school’s improvement agenda.

4. School performance

a) Standards of student learning
Focuses on how effectively students and groups of students at the school are learning, progressing and achieving (academically and otherwise). This will include how the school’s curriculum engages, promotes and supports learning for all students.

b) Quality of the learning environment
Focuses on what the school has achieved and how this has been demonstrated. That is, in improving student learning, the manner in which the school and its community have implemented effective planning and evidence-based decision-making processes to develop a quality learning environment and enact a shared school vision.

c) Sustainability
Focuses on the extent to which the school’s performance can be sustained through an ongoing culture of self-reflective practice to provide a quality, improvement-focused learning environment which promotes achievement for all students.
Confirmation
After the review visit, prior to being finalised, independent review findings will be forwarded to the Principal and Board Chair for a check on the factual accuracy of the information. The Minister for Education, Director General of Education, Principal and Board Chair will then receive the independent review findings.

Response to the independent review
It will be for the Principal, Board Chair and Director General of Education to determine what action occurs as a consequence of the independent review findings.

The Director General of the Department of Education may at any time bring forward a Department of Education Services independent review in response to key indicators from its monitoring mechanisms.

The Department of Education Services plays a crucial role in strengthening and safeguarding the quality of education and training in Western Australia