School Improvement Unit
Report

Home Hill State School
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Home Hill State School from 23 to 25 March 2015. It provides an evaluation of the school's performance against the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool. It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to consider in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The review and report were completed by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU). For more information about the SIU and the new reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the Department of Education and Training (DET) website.

1.2 School context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>113 Fourteenth Avenue, Home Hill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education region:</td>
<td>North Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school opened in:</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year levels:</td>
<td>Prep to Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current school enrolment:</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous enrolments:</td>
<td>18 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disability enrolments:</td>
<td>3.7 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:</td>
<td>922</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year principal appointed:</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers:</td>
<td>10 classroom teachers</td>
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<td>Nearby schools:</td>
<td>Ayr State School, Ayr East State School, Home Hill State High School, Ayr State High School, St Francis School, Burdekin Catholic High School, St Colman’s Catholic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community partnerships:</td>
<td>Home Hill State High School, Village Kids Day Care Centre, Home Hill Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique school programs:</td>
<td></td>
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1.3 Review methodology

The review was conducted by a team of three reviewers.

The review consisted of:

- a pre-review audit of the school’s performance data and other school information
- consultation with the school’s assistant regional director
- a school visit of three days
- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:
  - Principal and three school leadership team members
  - 11 classroom teachers, part-time special education teacher and two specialist teachers
  - Business Services Manager (BSM), administration officer and eight teacher aides
  - Guidance Officer and behaviour management support teacher
  - Local high school Principal and one feeder day care provider
  - Three parents and the local member

1.4 Review team

Bert Barbe Internal Reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Paul Manttan Peer Reviewer
Peter James External Reviewer

1.5 Reading the Report

The executive summary outlines key findings of the review of this school. The key improvement strategies prioritise future direction for improvement. The executive summary should be read along with the findings and improvement strategies outlined in the nine domains which provide a strategic view for improvement.
2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- The school is a guiding Coalition school for the regional *Faces to the Data* project.

  The school has been involved in the regional project for two years, using reading assessment data to track and monitor student learning. Data walls and routine collection and analysis of short term data inform teacher planning, reading instruction and record student growth. This has become integral to the learning improvement agenda and teaching practice.

- The consistent focus on reading in the literacy block has led to growth in reading achievement.

  The National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) relative gain in reading from 2012 Year 3 to 2014 Year 5 are evidence of considerable growth in reading achievement as a result of the consistent focus on reading in the literacy block. This focus includes decoding strategies, guided reading and comprehension.

- Clear roles and responsibility statements for the leadership team are yet to be established.

  While there has been strategic development of the leadership team, this has not been accompanied by strategic identification of roles and responsibilities for each member of the team and communicated across the school.

- Instructional leadership rounds have commenced in the school.

  Two members of the leadership team have commenced formal instructional leadership activities in classrooms this year. Teachers are open to constructive feedback and welcome school leaders in their classrooms. The alignment of instructional leadership activities with the school’s improvement agenda is unclear.

- The explicit improvement agenda is not clearly and routinely articulated and understood by staff, parents and students.

  The school has an improvement agenda that identifies quality teaching and learning, explicit teaching of reading, attendance and retention, parent and community support services and engagement, and maintaining alignment with regional support to sustain school improvement. Most staff identify literacy and spelling as the key areas for improvement.
2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Collaboratively develop and communicate across the school, clearly defined roles and responsibilities statements for all members of the school leadership team.

- Formalise instructional leadership processes for all school leaders, including regular coaching, observation and feedback cycles focussed on school priorities.

- Revisit the school key priorities to clarify and engage all staff in driving the agreed agenda.

- Enrol and engage all staff in collaboratively setting and implementing the explicit improvement agenda.

- Extend the school-wide expectations of literacy blocks to include the explicit teaching of all aspects of literacy.

- Collaboratively develop and implement a whole school literacy document as the guide for teacher planning and consistent delivery of reading, writing and spelling aligned to explicit teaching.
3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings
The school leadership team has aligned the explicit improvement agenda (EIA) with regional priorities in explicit teaching and literacy. They have maintained this agenda over two years and continue to also address attendance as an ongoing focus. Staff are unclear as to the narrow, sharp focus for the school in 2015.

The school has been a guiding coalition school for the *Faces to the Data* regional project, using evidence-based research and regular visits to other schools to continually consider and reflect on strategies to improve student outcomes.

There are visual data walls identifying clear year level targets and timelines and these are continually referred to in staff meetings and on student-free days.

There are several school documents that identify a range of reading and literacy block components, however, there is no clear guide for teachers to implement one consistent high-yield literacy block protocol across the school.

There is some evidence that the EIA is beginning to be enacted in classrooms and would be further developed with a clear instructional leadership model.

Supporting data
Strategic plan 2012-15, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), curriculum assessment and reporting plan, interviews with school leaders and staff.

Improvement strategies
Formalise instructional leadership processes for all school leaders, including regular coaching, observation and feedback cycles.

Collaboratively develop and implement a whole school literacy document as the guide for teacher planning and consistent delivery of reading, writing and spelling aligned to explicit teaching.

Enrol and engage all staff in collaboratively setting and implementing the explicit improvement agenda.
3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings
The school leadership team systematically collect and analyse a comprehensive range of school-wide data, including academic, behaviour and attendance data, to monitor school performance.

Student data in reading is displayed on a data wall in the staff room and routinely updated to monitor student reading progress over time. Reading data walls are evident in classrooms, with some showing student aspirational goals as well.

Members of the leadership team have responsibility for implementing the school assessment plan, working with teachers to analyse their class data to inform starting points for teaching. Regular data discussions with class teachers are developing their data literacy skills.

Teachers are using OneSchool to enter student data and the Class Dashboard to review learning progress and ability group students.

In reviewing the percentage of students scoring above the National Minimum Standards (NMS) in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy Program (NAPLAN) 2014, Year 3 students scored 3 out of 5 strands statistically similar to and numerically above the Nation and Year 7 students scored 4 out of five strands statistically similar to and numerically above the Nation.

Members of the school leadership team are quality assuring reading data by randomly assessing students.

Supporting data
School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, assessment schedule, OneSchool performance dashboard and class dashboard, interviews with staff.

Improvement strategies
Develop teacher data literacy through routine whole school, class and individual student data analysis with school leaders.
3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

There is a safe, happy tone in the school, with few obvious behavioural or engagement issues. Attendance is an issue for a very small number of students, with strategies in place to increase their attendance.

Attendance has been a priority for improvement over a number of years. In 2014, attendance was 92.6 per cent with 83.7 per cent for indigenous students. However, the percentage of students attending less than 85 per cent of the time is 17.1 per cent with 45.1 per cent for Indigenous students. There is an identified issue with some families moving and not enrolling their children in another state school. Current attendance is 93.7 per cent with 89.1 per cent for Indigenous students.

School leaders focus on quality teaching and learning success for all students and ensure that students are engaged in meaningful learning.

The 2014 School Opinion Survey indicated a strong morale amongst staff, with 85 per cent of staff indicating that the school staff have a positive morale. 96 per cent of parent respondents indicated that they believed that Home Hill State School was a ‘good school’.

Parents, staff and students interact positively and relationships are mutually respectful and caring. Parents are encouraged and welcomed as partners in their child’s learning, however this is an area the school would like to see significant improvement in.

There is a whole school process for positive school behaviour that is due for review this year. The principal has identified that Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) will be introduced over the coming months. Several of the PB4L processes are already in place.

There is a collegial culture of trust and mutual support amongst staff members. Staff morale is generally high. Teachers are open to sharing and demonstrate a commitment to improvement in teaching.

Supporting data

Responsible behaviour plan for students, School Opinion Survey, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, One Portal team site, interviews with staff, parents, students

Improvement strategies

Introduce the Positive Behaviour for Learning processes to increase school-wide positive learning behaviour for all students.

Maintain the focus on the range of proactive attendance strategies already in place.
3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The school leadership team have introduced programs and strategies to identify and address students’ needs, in literacy particularly. These include the provision of additional reading materials and the *Cars and Stars* comprehension program.

The school has implemented systematic diagnostic testing to monitor and track students’ learning achievements and progress which PM Benchmark, PROBE, PAT-R and PAT-M. Student data is used as the basis for strategic human resource allocation across the classes.

OneSchool is used to centrally record, monitor and access student achievement data. Support staff are allocated to implement programs for students with individual learning needs.

Prior to school entry, young children are assessed in terms of their readiness for learning. This data is used to inform teaching and learning programs for the early years.

The school’s current bank balance is $242 000 which includes allocation of $83 300 for the resourcing the priority areas of literacy and numeracy and Great Results Guarantee (GRG) funds of $89 000, including the provision of a part-time coach to further develop teacher capability.

Physical spaces and technology are used effectively to support and enhance learning programs.

Supporting data

Interviews with BSM and staff, Annual Implementation Plan, budget overview report, Great Results Guarantee Agreement.

Improvement strategies

Strategically allocate financial, human and physical resources to targeted areas based on student achievement data.
3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

It is evident that the school leadership team values the development of staff into an expert teaching team to improve student learning. The principal has strategically led staff renewal and the development of the school leadership team. However, consultatively developed, clearly defined and documented roles and responsibilities for leadership team members are yet to be established.

The school has a documented professional learning plan which aligns with and enables staff professional learning focussing on the school’s improvement agenda priorities of reading, attendance, closing the gap and writing.

Collaboration in curriculum planning, teaching, assessment and moderation is evident in the scheduled Burdekin cluster activities for this purpose.

Participation in the Guiding Coalition project, Putting Faces to the Data, led by the Literacy Coach has been the stimulus for considerable professional learning opportunities for teaching staff.

The school has commenced implementation of the Teacher Performance Review procedures but comprehensive development of teaching practice and feedback processes aligned to the school’s improvement agenda, are yet to be established.

The literacy coach has commenced instructional coaching with two staff members in reading.

Mentoring and informal collegial support is evident across the school, which is indicative of a positive, supportive school culture.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan, budget overview report, 2015 professional learning plan, staff interviews

Improvement strategies

Collaboratively develop and communicate across the school, clearly defined roles and responsibilities statements for all members of the school leadership team.

Consultatively develop and implement development of teaching practice and provision of feedback as an integral element of the whole school’s Performance Development Framework.
3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings
The School’s curriculum, assessment, monitoring and reporting framework identifies teaching and learning priorities and requirements across the school from Prep to Year 6. This framework reflects a shared vision for the school and provides a localised context for curriculum delivery aligned with the Australian Curriculum (AC) and Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) framework, supported by Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) resources.

The school curriculum plan implemented through class teaching and learning programs balances requirements to address all learning areas, giving priority to the literacy and numeracy needs of students.

Teaching staff collaborate with cluster colleagues to unpack the planned curriculum requirements and to moderate assessment tasks to ensure validity and consistency in assessment and reporting.

Support programs for students with disabilities and significant learning needs have been developed but further monitoring and review is required in this area.

Individual Curriculum Plans (ICP’s) have been completed online for all verified students requiring curriculum at a different year level to the age cohort. However the process is yet to be extended for all students identified within current departmental policy.

Supporting data
Home Hill State School curriculum, assessment, monitoring and reporting framework, staff interviews, OneSchool reporting and class dashboard

Improvement strategies
Further develop curriculum planning to ensure vertical alignment of curriculum delivery, especially in literacy and numeracy, across the school.
3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings
The school uses standardised assessment tasks to track student progress over time.

The school has successfully implemented the “Faces to the Data” project to gather student reading data each term and track individual student reading achievement over time. This program has positively influenced differentiated teaching and learning across the school.

The school collects internal monitoring data at the end of each term to track student progress.

There are examples of teachers using differentiated work booklets to ensure engagement and successful learning of the full range of students.

Teachers have recorded two simple reading goals for each student on OneSchool. Goals are reviewed and updated each term and would benefit from identifying the strategies for student improvement.

The school conducts formal data planning meetings involving the classroom teacher, Head of Curriculum (HOC), STLaN and Literacy coach/Special Needs teacher each term. During data planning meetings, teachers discuss the individual learning needs of each student.

School leaders are providing ‘in-class’ support to extend and challenge high achieving students and intervention for students with identified learning needs.

Supporting data
Interviews with leadership team and teachers, OneSchool classroom dashboard, classroom differentiation surfboards

Improvement strategies
Further develop individual student goals to describe what students specifically need to do to improve their learning.

Maintain the whole school approach to ensure differentiation is a feature of every teacher’s planning and practice.
3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings
The school has developed a Pedagogical Framework based in part on a model of explicit teaching. There is evidence that this framework is driving explicit teaching pedagogy in the classroom.

The school delivers 3 one hour literacy blocks in every classroom every week which involves small differentiated groups of students working through CARS and STARS or guided reading. School leaders are currently reviewing expectations for practice to further extend the time allocation to 100 minutes and incorporate other aspects of literacy.

The HOC is providing teachers with observation and constructive feedback to support the consistent implementation of explicit teaching pedagogy across the school.

There is evidence that in every classroom, learning goals and success criteria are used as an effective teaching strategy.

The school has adopted the teacher performance review process as a starting point for discussion between staff and leadership team to improve teaching methods.

Induction processes for new and beginning staff members are ad hoc and lack formal documentation.

Supporting data
Pedagogical framework, classroom observation checklists, interviews with staff and leadership team, classroom posters

Improvement strategies
Develop a succinct induction program for new staff members which clearly defines school expectations in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting.

Implement instructional leadership through regular modelling, observation and feedback to ensure the consistent implementation of the school’s pedagogical practices.

Extend the school-wide expectations of literacy blocks to include the explicit teaching of all aspects of literacy.
3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

There is evidence that the school has developed strong links with the local high school. The school has deliberately and strategically used these links to provide a comprehensive transition program for students from primary school to high school. The majority of students attend the local high school as a result of this partnership.

There is evidence that the school has developed links with one local kindergarten and a long day-care provider. These links have been established to provide a smooth transition for pre-prep students into the school.

There is strong community support from parents and local organisations for school events and activities, such as the Fancy Dress Ball and Literacy week.

Members of the local Indigenous community are invited into the school to celebrate special events. The school has run a successful National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) celebration in 2014.

The school has established a purposeful relationship with the local police. This relationship is used to support student behaviour, engagement and well-being.

Supporting data

Interviews with local community members, interviews with staff and leadership team

Improvement strategies

Investigate options for engaging local Indigenous students and their families in the school to improve attendance and learning outcomes for Indigenous students.

Continue to foster strategic partnerships within the community with the express intent of improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

Expand transition processes for pre-Prep aged students which may include a playgroup operated on the school campus.
4. Follow-up timelines

- School to publish this report on their website within two weeks.
- School to meet with the assistant regional director to discuss review findings and improvement strategies.