School Improvement Unit
Report

Torquay State School

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Queensland Government
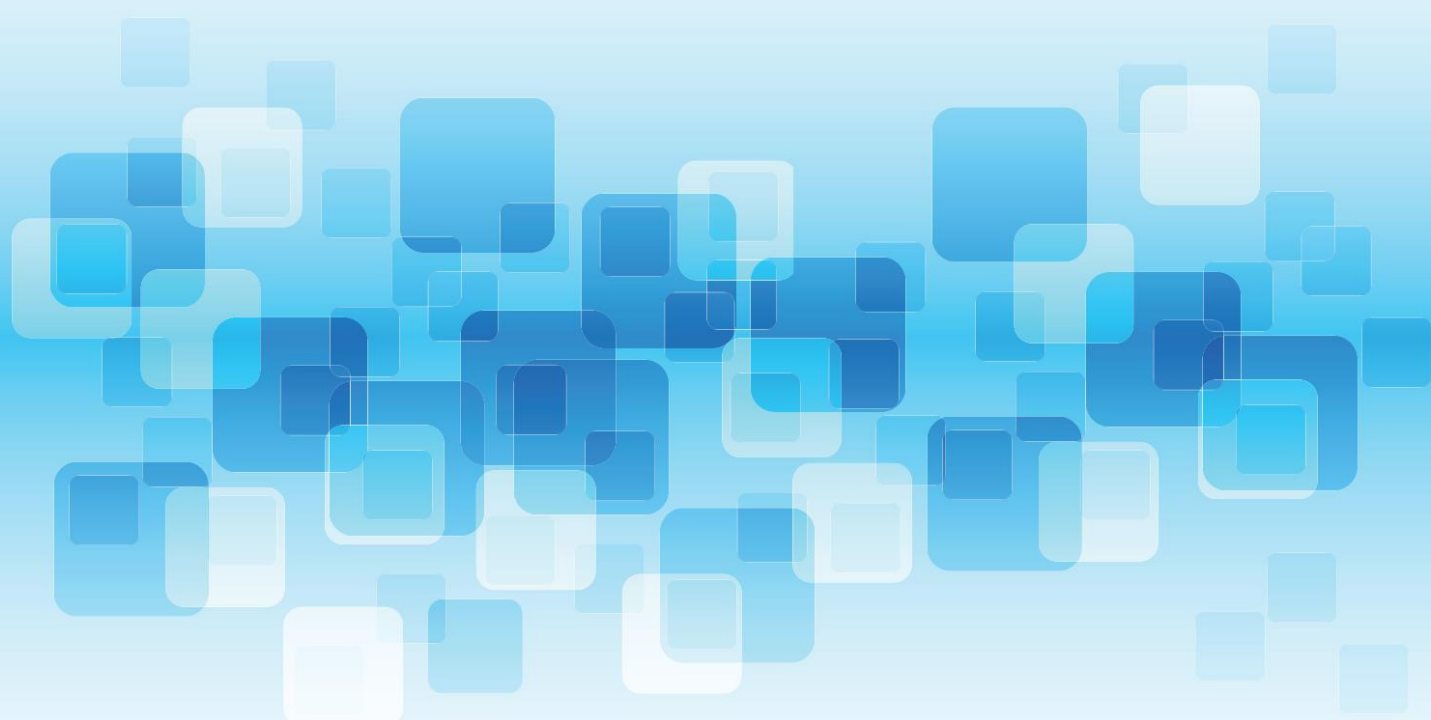
1. Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Torquay State School from 4 to 6 May, 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

Location:	Tavistock Street, Torquay
Education region:	North Coast
The school opened in:	1901
Year levels:	Prep to Year 6
Current school enrolment:	483
Indigenous enrolments:	14.5 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	5.4 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	942
Year principal appointed:	2012
Number of teachers:	36
Nearby schools:	Pialba State School, Sandy Straits State School, Urangan Point State School, Kawungan State School, Yarrilee State School, Hervey Bay State High School, Urangan State High School,
Significant community partnerships:	Galangoor Medical Centre, Bay Safety Mates, Helping Hands, Literacy Initiatives for Tomorrow.
Unique school programs:	Indigenous Community Partnership and Engagement Program, Maths Coaching Program, High Impact Instructional Leadership.

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:

    o Assistant Regional Director

    o Principal

    o Five members of the leadership team

    o 30 classroom teachers and specialist teachers

    o Business Services Manager (BSM)

    o 20 non-teaching staff

    o 15 parents

    o Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association vice president

    o Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaison Officer

    o 20 student leaders, students in classrooms and the playground

    o Representatives from five community groups

1.4 Review team

Patrick Murphy	Internal Reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Ian Hall	External Reviewer
Lee Gerchow	Peer 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 promoting a positive culture of collegiality and trust.

  The principal and school leadership team have developed a strong culture in the school based on collegiality and trust. The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) program and the coaching and mentoring program are examples of this renewed culture.

- The school has a curriculum plan informed by the Australian Curriculum.

  The whole school plan is based on the Curriculum into the Classroom resource which is used with staff to examine the assessment in units and to align lessons. This document forms the basis for discussion and collaboration between teachers. The school is yet to develop a planning template that creates an alignment of curriculum throughout the school.

- There has been a modest improvement in the attendance of students. In 2015 data indicates further improvement is required.

  The school attendance data (2014) identified a rate of 90.4 per cent attendance for all students. The data further identified that 17.9 per cent of students attended the school less than 85 per cent of the school year. The attendance rate to date for 2015 is 91.4 per cent.

- The school recognises that the school behaviour plan is in need of refinement.

  The school has adopted a new approach to managing behaviour which places greater emphasis on rewarding students for positive behaviour. School documentation substantiates some improvement in student behaviour. It is acknowledged by staff, parents and the school administration that further development is required.

- The use of technology across the school is unable to significantly enhance the curriculum offerings for students.

  Progress of the school's use of technology is impeded by the speed of internet connectivity. There is limited use of technology to support the differentiation of student learning.

- Consistency in the delivery of teaching strategies to meet the full range of learners is yet to emerge.

The school has a current enrolment of 483 students and of these 14 per cent identify as Indigenous students. School data indicates that the schools 'Closing the Gap' data has not improved in recent years.

Upper Two Bands data in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is inconsistent. Teaching strategies which cater for a diversity of learning styles is not consistent across the school. A culture of high expectations for students is yet to emerge.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Refine a whole school strategy to enhance student attendance and ensure that all members of the school community are committed to enhancing student attendance.

- Implement a school-wide unit planner for teachers to plan learning episodes, identify local school needs and priorities and evaluate effectiveness of units.

- Reflect on the teaching practices to cater for the learning styles of all students. Continue to develop teachers' ability to differentiate learning through professional development and coaching to meet the needs of Indigenous students and high achieving students.

- Continue to refine the schools positive behaviour for learning strategy to ensure that students are able to engage in learning successfully.

- Develop a plan to enhance technology that supports teachers to deliver differentiated teaching and learning practices that challenge and engage all students.

3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The school has an explicit improvement strategy based on enhancing the teaching of reading and number in the school. The Art and Science of Teaching[1] (ASOT) is being implemented as the schools' pedagogical framework. Most areas of the improvement agenda have specific targets and timelines for action.

The principal and school leadership team have developed a strong culture in the school to ensure that the improvement agenda is progressively embedded in school practice. The culture of the school is based on trust and collegiality. The implementation of the coaching framework and review of the behaviour management practices within the school has been instrumental in achieving a positive change in school culture.

Staff are committed to enhancing learning outcomes for the students although a school-wide culture of high expectations has not been embedded.

The school lacks structural accountability measures to ensure alignment and consistency are evident in all aspects of school operation.

The school attendance data for 2014 identified that the school had 90.4 per cent attendance for all students and 87.3 per cent attendance for Indigenous students. The attendance for 2015 is 91.4 percent. The data indicates that in 2014, 17.9 per cent of students attended for less than 85 per cent of the school year.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Strategic Plan 2012–2015, school attendance data, staff, student and parent interviews, Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, School Opinion Survey data, Great Results Guarantee 2015.

Improvement strategies

Review the sustainability of the literacy reading program and the maths program to ensure continued student success. Ensure the school community are engaged in supporting the long-term viability of the improvement agenda.

Establish structural accountability measures to ensure that the alignment and consistency of staff practice and school policy are clearly measured and delivered.

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[1] Marzano, Robert J. 2007, *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction.* ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

Refine a whole school strategy to enhance student attendance and ensure that all members of the school community are committed to the ongoing improvement of attendance.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

A school data schedule is part of the whole school curriculum overview. School leaders utilise student learning data with teachers throughout the year to drive school performance. Some teachers use student data to inform class and individual planning.

School staff access behaviour data to identify and explore trends. Data is monitored across all classrooms and students are individually recognised for excellent behaviour. The school Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association is supporting this initiative by donating $10 000 to student rewards.

The school's National Assessment and Reporting Framework (NAPLAN) performance is varied. There are positive improvement trends across most mean scale scores (2008-2014). In recent years, there has been significant improvement in spelling and grammar and punctuation. Relative gain recorded by students varies considerably against national gains. Upper Two Band (U2B) data is inconsistent.

The leadership team is leading data collection processes and analysis. The school has significantly enhanced the number of diagnostic tests that are administered in line with the schools assessment framework.

Teachers exhibit some data literacy. Staff conversations, language and data analysis do not yet reflect a sophisticated understanding of data concepts by all staff. Not all staff utilise diagnostic testing to inform their planning or make adjustments for individual students.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015, school attendance data, staff, student and parent interviews, Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, One School, school records, teacher planning, school archives.

Improvement strategies

Further develop the school-wide professional learning plan to include specific data literacy training in order to build teacher capacity in accessing, analysing and using data, to inform teaching practice.

Review the diagnostic testing measures in the school to gauge their effectiveness and relevance to ascertain student performance gains.

3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

School leaders place a high priority on maintaining caring and positive relationships between staff, students and parents.

The school leadership team is focused on developing a culture that promotes quality learning.

Some effective practice was observed where students were being challenged with meaningful learning, however, consistency across the school is yet to be achieved.

A strong collegial culture is evident amongst teachers, who provide professional and personal support for each other through informal interactions and partnerships. Interviews with staff indicate that staff morale has improved since the School Opinion Survey in 2014 and greater levels of trust are evident.

A strong commitment by all staff to support student wellbeing is evident. A wide range of cultural and sporting activities is provided across the school and is highly valued by students, parents, staff and community groups.

Parent involvement in the school is evident and there is an organised process for encouraging and inducting school volunteers. The majority of parents speak highly of the school and the work of the staff.

The school recognises that the school behaviour plan is in need of refinement. The school has adopted a new approach which has a greater emphasis on rewarding students for positive behaviour. School documentation substantiates some improvement in student behaviour. Staff, parents and the school administration agree that further improvement in behaviour is required to enable all students to engage in learning successfully.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Strategic Plan 2012-2015, school attendance policy, staff, student and parent interviews, Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, School Opinion Survey data, newsletters, website.

Improvement strategies

Continue to refine the schools positive behaviour for learning strategy to ensure that students are able to engage in learning successfully.

Utilise the coaching and mentoring practices that are in place in the school to lift the expectations and the performance of every student.

3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The balance of the school bank account is $181 018. The school has allocated $50 335 for the professional development of staff. The budget includes allocations for additional staffing to support the school improvement agenda. The principal estimates that in excess of $90 000 is allocated for the coaching of staff to support the implementation of a consistent language in reading and number.

The school has allocated $147 440 of the Great Results Guarantee (GRG) in 2015 to increase the percentage of students achieving the National Minimum Standards (NMS) through an allocation of additional teacher and teacher-aide time. While there are some expectations associated with this additional resource, not all allocations had clear accountabilities understood.

The school has established science as an area of distinction and has utilised the school budget to specifically enhance the teaching and learning of science. The school ensures that the program is effectively resourced, inclusive of teacher-aide time to drive this initiative.

A new leadership structure has recently been developed. At this early stage there is a lack of clarity between coaches and other school leaders in regards to responsibility and accountability.

The school has a current enrolment of 483 students and of these 14.5 per cent of students identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. NAPLAN data indicates that the schools 'Closing the Gap' data has not improved in recent years.

The school operates a computer lab which is extensively utilised by school staff and students. Other technologies in use that enhance teaching and learning are iPads, interactive whiteboards and classroom computers. The progress of the schools use of technology is being impeded by the speed of the connectivity.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Plan 2015, Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015, staff, student and parent interviews, Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, Great Results Guarantee 2015, OneSchool finance, school budget overview.

Improvement strategies

Strategically monitor the effectiveness of resources provided to promote improved student outcomes.

Develop a plan to enhance the use of Information and communications technology that supports teachers delivering differentiated teaching and learning practices that challenge and engage all students.

3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

Interviews and documentation show that the leadership team has established a culture of distributive leadership and deprivatised practice which encourages teachers to work together and learn from each other in an authentic professional learning community.

Coaching and mentoring processes are in place between teachers, with strong collegial support evident across the school.

The principal has strategically identified and promoted staff to be involved in leadership positions. The leadership team are undertaking professional development in 'High-Impact Instructional Leadership'[2].

The school has sourced additional regional funding to establish coaching in literacy and numeracy pedagogy.

New staff undertake an induction program with the principal and other school leaders. Opportunities exist for staff to specialise in areas of talent and interest.

Collective responsibility for improving student learning through collaborative planning is evident in some year level teams.

The 2014 School Opinion Survey identifies that 86.4 per cent of staff believes the school encourages staff to undertake professional development activities. Evidence exists that this has increased in 2015.

The principal has identified the strengths and weaknesses in the school staffing team and has implemented strategies to recruit staff to enhance the performance of the school.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Strategic Plan 2012-2015, staff, student and parent interviews, Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, School Opinion Survey data, Great Results Guarantee 2014, 2015, teaching planning, curriculum documents, pedagogical framework.

Improvement strategies

Continue to promote the expertise of staff to fulfil the leadership roles of the school.

Further embed the coaching and mentoring program throughout the school.

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[2] Knight, Jim 2013, *High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great teaching,* Corwin, USA

3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The school has a whole school curriculum plan that provides a structure for the units of work to be taught and the assessment practices that will measure student performance.

The units of work developed are predominately reflective of Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C). When planning, staff reference the Australian Curriculum and supporting resources.

The school assessments are as recommended by C2C units. Moderation of assessment occurs and provides some direction for future learning.

The school curriculum plan balances the requirements to address the learning areas in all key learning areas.

There is no clear whole school practice in place to quality assure the alignment between the overall delivery plan, term and unit plans, classroom teaching and the regular assessment of student progress. There is no evidence of a school unit planner that contextualises local issues.

The vertical alignment of curriculum planning is developing. Tracking and recording of changes that occur to meet the needs of students is not evident in school planning documents.

Supporting data

Interviews with staff and the leadership team, school curriculum plan, teacher planning, pedagogical framework, classroom observations, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school website, newsletters, School Professional Development Day agenda, Annual Implementation Plan 2015

Improvement strategies

Implement a school-wide unit planner for teachers to plan learning episodes, identify local school needs and priorities and evaluate effectiveness of units.

Implement a school-wide structure that will enable teachers to plan units of work to ensure consistency across year levels and vertical alignment through the school.

Review the structure used by teachers to moderate the success of units to ensure that recommendations for future units are recorded.

3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

School leaders have implemented a process for the collection of data in regards to literacy and numeracy in order to establish learning needs and identify gaps in student learning. Discussions among staff reflect on appropriate teaching strategies to meet the needs of students. Plans are developed which establish points to measure the effectiveness of teaching practices. This process is in the early stages of implementation.

A range of documents is used across the school to identify and track the individual needs of students.

Student goal setting is a common practice across the school. Classroom observations indicate that the use of goals to provide feedback and direction for students is varied.

Reflective practices of differentiated teaching and learning practices were observed especially in classrooms implementing the school reading program.

School data, school leaders and teacher discussions indicated that students who are capable of achieving at a high standard are not being challenged to do so consistently.

The use of technology to support teachers differentiate learning to meet the needs of students is not being utilised extensively.

'Closing the Gap' data indicates that the performance of Indigenous students has not improved in recent years.

Reports to parents summarise where students are at in their learning but do not provide guidance on what parents can do to support learning.

Supporting data

Differentiation plans, student academic reporting, staff, parent and student interviews, School Data Profile.

Improvement strategies

Continue to develop teachers' ability to differentiate learning through professional development and coaching to meet the needs of Indigenous students and high achieving students.

Explore further utilisation of technology in order to support teachers provide differentiated learning opportunities for students.

Further develop teacher use of learning goals to encourage students to monitor their own learning and progress.

3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The school has implemented a whole school curriculum framework which is researched-based and reflects the principles of the Art and Science of Teaching[3] (ASOT). Due to the many school programs implemented during the past 18 months the framework is not current.

The school has used research and external expertise to develop a plan to improve teaching practices across the school. The focus has been on the gradual release of responsibility model. A strong emphasis on strategies that cater for kinaesthetic learners was not observed.

Reading is a focus for the school. The school has developed a school reading plan to support the implementation of this agenda. There has been a focus on guided reading practices in Years 1, 3 and 5. Coaching and mentoring practices are in place to support teachers. The impact of these programs is yet to be realised in NAPLAN data, however, school data sets are demonstrating improvements.

The numeracy project implemented this year in Years 2 and 4 involves pre and post testing, data analysis, discussion of appropriate teaching strategies to address gaps in student learning and coaching and modelling for teachers has been deemed a success by staff involved. Initial data sets demonstrate student gains in performance.

Feedback practices to teachers are developing through the coaching and mentoring program and walk-throughs delivered by the principal and the deputy principal.

Expectations for student performance benchmarks were commented on by staff and students as not being sufficiently challenging for all students.

Supporting data

Curriculum planning documents, interviews with staff, leadership team and parents, curriculum documents.

Improvement strategies

Refine the whole school pedagogical framework to represent current school expectations.

Embed literacy and numeracy programs to ensure a consistency of practice across the school.

Reflect on the teaching practices to cater for the learning styles of all students.

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[3] op. cit.

Ensure high expectations of work for students to ensure that more able students are being challenged in learning.

3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. The school actively recruits and inducts parent and community volunteers to assist in various capacities.

The school accesses external organisations to support students at risk. Partnerships with allied health, family support and counselling services have been established to improve opportunities and outcomes for students. These include Galangoor Medical Centre, Bay Safety Mates, Helping Hands and Literacy Initiatives for Tomorrow. Resources are committed to support the success of these programs.

Community engagement programs facilitated by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community liaison officer such as 'Deadly Dads', 'Little Brothers and Sisters', yarning circles further promote Torquay State School as a school of choice in the local community.

Students are engaged in a range of extra-curricular activities including sporting, cultural, community and educational.

The school has worked with local state high schools in developing a transition program to secondary education.

There is little evidence of a systematic partnership between pre-Prep providers and the school.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Strategic Plan 2012-2015, school attendance policy, staff, student and parent interviews, Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, School Opinion Survey data, Great Results Guarantee 2014, 2015, newsletter, website.

Improvement strategies

Establish stronger relationships with local pre-Prep providers in collaboration with Prep teachers in order to share expertise and foster student school-readiness.

Ensure that all partnerships with parent and community organisations enhance learning outcomes for students of Torquay State School.

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.