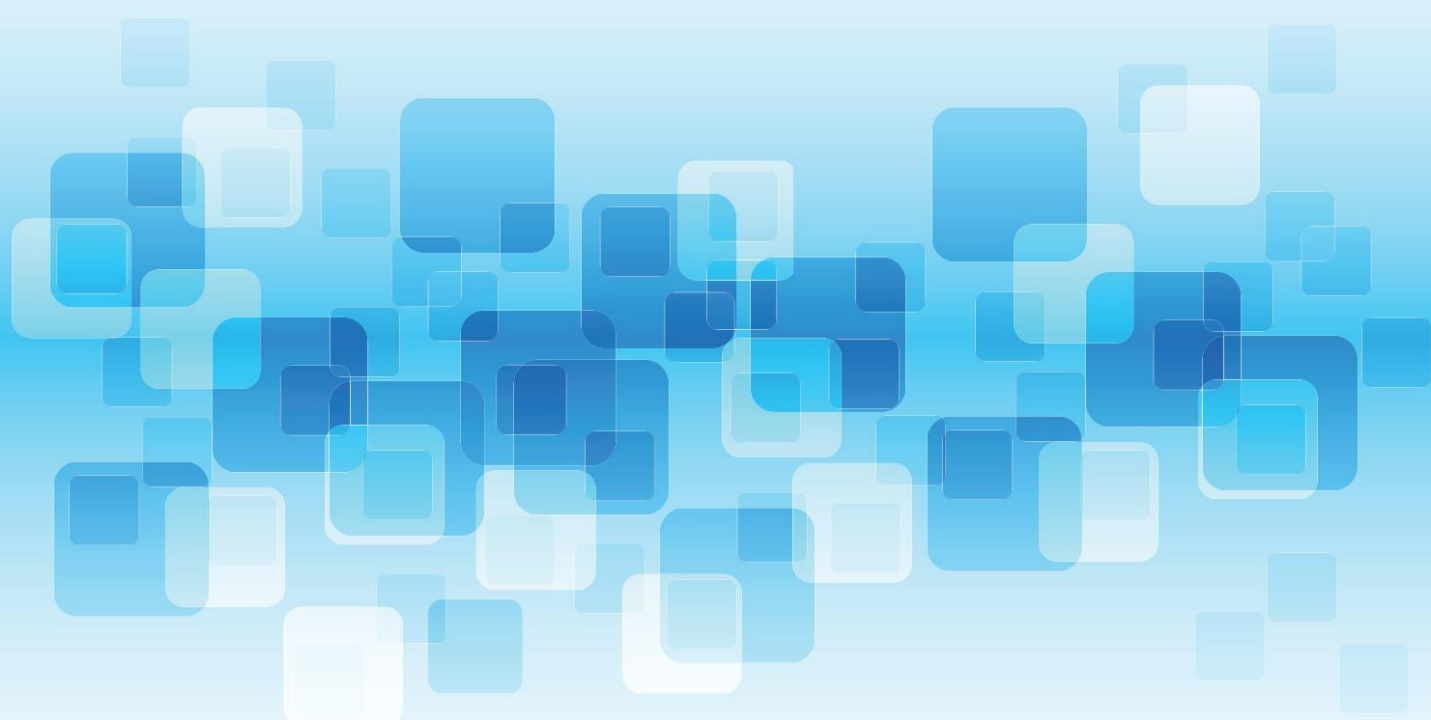




School Improvement Unit Report

Currajong State School





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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Currajong State School from 9 to 12 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

Location:	140 Palmerston Street, Currajong
Education region:	North Queensland Region
The school opened in:	1954
Year levels:	Prep – Year 6
Current school enrolment:	587
Indigenous enrolments:	20 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	5 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	938
Year principal appointed:	2010
Number of teachers:	25 classroom teachers
Nearby schools:	Pimlico State High School, Heatley Secondary College, Vincent State School, Garbutt State School, Mundingburra State School, Aitkenvale State School, Hermit Park State School
Significant community partnerships:	The Smith Family Learning Tutors, Good Beginnings, local early childhood providers, James Cook University Education Faculty, Townsville Bulletin, MIX 106.3FM, reading support programs – North Queensland Cowboys & Townsville Crocodiles.
Unique school programs:	Reef Guardian School

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 four days
- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:
 - Principal, two Deputy Principals, Head of Pedagogy (HOP), Head of Special Education Services (HOSSES) and Head of Student Services (HOSS)
 - Guidance Officer, two Support Teachers Literacy and Numeracy (STLaNs)
 - 25 teachers and nine teacher-aides
 - Three specialist teachers
 - Business Services Manager (BSM) and three support staff
 - P&C president and 16 parents
 - Outside School Hours Care, previous State Member of Parliament, local early childhood provider
 - Principal of local state school, Deputy Principal of feeder high school
 - Ten student leaders, 16 student councillors and 14 other students

1.4 Review team

Bert Barbe	Internal Reviewer SIU (Review chair)
Bob Cole	External Reviewer
Judy Dale	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 has a broad improvement agenda that is known by most teachers.

The improvement agenda has five key areas – reading, spelling, upper two bands, oral language and ‘no opt out’. Many teachers express feeling overwhelmed by the number of priorities and believe that reading should be the major focus.

- Communication between school leaders and staff members has not always been effective.

Several staff members express a lack of ownership of school improvement strategies. They believe these strategies were imposed upon them, rather than as a result of collaboration.

- There is no evidence of whole-school formal coaching and mentoring protocols.

There is evidence of a range of observation strategies in place to provide feedback to teachers in regards to their classroom practice. Some staff view the feedback approach as a compliance activity, rather than developing their capability. Some coaching is occurring for self-identified staff.

- A range of professional learning opportunities are provided to staff.

The school has provided timely professional learning for staff in line with key improvement strategies. However, there is limited evidence of strategies to embed, monitor and resource sustainable change.

- All staff members are committed to ensuring that all students are successful.

The school uses data effectively to differentiate learning for the full range of students. A positive culture of learning is established and maintained across the school. However, student learning in some classes is impacted by inappropriate and disruptive behaviours.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Refine the current improvement agenda to identify a sharp, narrow and deep focus with achievable, measurable targets and timelines.
- Enrol and engage all staff in collaboratively setting and implementing the improvement agenda.
- **Develop and implement a whole-school coaching, observation and feedback cycle enacted by all members of the school leadership team.**
- Sustain and maximise the impact of professional development opportunities through ongoing resourcing, monitoring and support.
- Provide targeted ongoing support for classroom teachers according to the complexity of their class' learning and behaviour needs.
- **Formalise the instructional leadership roles for all school leaders in regards to high quality coaching, observation and developmental feedback processes.**
- Develop a whole-school reading program.



3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

School leaders and staff are committed to improving learning outcomes for students in the school. Planning documents are evident in many areas.

The school has a broad improvement agenda that is known by most teachers. Many teachers express feeling overwhelmed by the number of priorities being addressed simultaneously, and believe that reading should be the major focus.

There are a number of support documents intended to guide teacher planning for the consistent teaching of reading. There is no explicit whole-school reading program that clearly outlines for all teachers, the what, how and why of teaching reading at Currajong State School.

Teachers report that further clarity has been provided from the leadership team about their role in influencing and actioning the school's improvement agenda.

The school communicates that it expects all students to learn successfully and has clear expectations for student attendance and learning.

Some staff report that strategies and processes within the improvement agenda are imposed upon them rather than the result of a consultative process.

Supporting data

School Data Profile, curriculum documents, interviews with principal and staff, Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), Great Results Guarantee (GRG) plan.

Improvement strategies

Refine the current improvement agenda with staff to identify a sharp, narrow and deep focus with achievable, measurable targets and timelines.

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

Formalise the instructional leadership roles for all school leaders in regards to high quality coaching, observation and developmental feedback processes, with a stringent focus on the school's refined improvement agenda.

Develop a whole-school reading program as the guiding document for teacher planning and delivery, aligned to the pedagogical framework.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

School leaders are committed to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systemically collected data in student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behaviour.

The school has developed and implemented a plan for the regular collection of student achievement data in English. Assessment tools include PM Benchmark, PAT-R, PROBE and Words Their Way.

Data pertaining to student behaviour is recorded centrally in OneSchool and analysed by the behaviour team to inform school practice. This is further supported by the regular delivery of the Essential Skills in Classroom Management. Classroom profiling data supports some teachers to inform their classroom practice, and maximise opportunities for students to engage in learning.

Attendance data is effectively tracked and actioned, as evidenced by improvements in student attendance.

Baseline data is established for all Prep students through use of screeners such as Oral Language in the Early Years (OLEY). Targeted support is provided for identified student needs.

Teachers routinely use student achievement data in English to monitor individual progress, identify priority groups and personalise learning. Data is analysed at whole-school, cohort, class and individual level to support teaching and learning.

Staff data literacy is developing through the multiple opportunities provided for teachers to engage in discussions focused on student achievement data.

Short term data cycles in English have positively impacted on the quality of curriculum planning.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2014 effect size data relative to the Nation, indicates that Year 5 and Year 7 reading and numeracy gain was greater than Queensland State Schools (QSS). NAPLAN 2014 reading data identifies that the number of students in the upper two bands (U2Bs) in Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 are significantly below state and National results.

Supporting data

Data walls, assessment schedule, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, OneSchool records, classroom displays.

Improvement strategies

Continue to build staff data literacy through regular, planned opportunities for data analysis at whole-school, year level, class and individual student level.

3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

Staff and students generally appear to enjoy their time at school. Most parents interviewed express broad satisfaction with the school.

Members of the leadership team are viewed as supportive and approachable by the majority of staff. Several teachers were unsure of the specific roles of school leaders. The Head of Pedagogy (HOP) and Head of Student Services (HOSS) are viewed as highly supportive and professional colleagues.

Staff members care about the progress and well-being of students and the majority of staff-student relationships are positive.

Most classrooms are orderly and well managed. In some classrooms, teachers are struggling to manage challenging student behaviour and maintain learning engagement.

Explicit teaching of routines and expectations is based on regular behaviour data. Some staff members and parents are concerned about the consistency of consequences for high level inappropriate behaviour.

Attendance has improved for all students from 90.9 per cent in 2013 to 93.8 per cent in 2015, with indigenous student attendance improving from 85.2 per cent to 90 per cent of the school year.

The school grounds are welcoming and well maintained. The majority of classrooms are organised and provide students with relevant visual scaffolding to encourage and support learning.

Supporting data

Interviews with staff, students, parents and community partners, School Opinion Survey, Responsible behaviour plan for students (RBPS), Headline Indicators, School Data Profile, OneSchool, classroom observations.

Improvement strategies

Provide targeted ongoing support for classroom teachers according to the complexity of their class' learning and behaviour needs.

Establish, communicate and embed consistent high expectations in regards to student attendance, learning and behaviour.

3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

Physical spaces and digital devices are used effectively to maximise student engagement and learning. Teachers use their classroom spaces creatively for whole group, small group and individual work.

Systematic testing and assessment of students is well established, held centrally and used to prioritise human resource allocation, according to identified student achievement data.

The STLaNs coordinate the bandscaling, development and implementation of personalised learning plans for indigenous students across the school.

The school bank balance is \$487, 581.34 which includes a direct to market maintenance allocation of \$35 850, Great Results Guarantee (GRG) funds of \$276 000 and a carry forward of \$78 000. A significant proportion of the school resource allocation has been used to establish additional middle management positions.

Several teachers expressed frustration in regards to accessing resources to deliver priority school programs and meet class needs. A number of teachers are financing basic classroom resources personally. School leaders recognise that classroom resourcing is an area for review in order to ensure that teachers are effectively resourced to implement school-wide programs.

Supporting data

Budget overview report, timetables, interviews with leadership team, BSM, teachers.

Improvement strategies

Review roles of all school leaders to ensure instructional leadership is a key component of every leader's responsibilities.

Review the human and resource allocation across the school to specifically target school priority programs and areas of highest support needs.

3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

School leaders have established year level opportunities for teachers to work together, to discuss planning, student achievement data and effective teaching strategies in order to learn from each other's practice.

The school prioritises the professional learning of all staff. The professional learning plan is based on the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) process and reflects the school's improvement agenda.

Some teachers visit each other's classrooms and other teachers have expressed a keen interest in engaging in this process as a planned learning opportunity. Most teachers are open to constructive feedback, and have expressed a desire for coaching in regards to agreed priorities.

School leaders are seen by teachers as supportive of effective practice and the development of their capability. Classroom walk-throughs and some modelling is evident in classrooms with varying degrees of impact on teaching.

There is no evidence of whole-school formal coaching and mentoring protocols. The HOP and HOSS are providing modelling, coaching and feedback on a needs basis for self-identified teachers.

Although there is a documented process for induction of new staff, there is limited evidence that this is undertaken in a planned and timely manner.

Professional learning opportunities are provided to introduce new initiatives and programs, however there is limited evidence of consolidation and monitoring to embed quality implementation across the school.

Supporting data

Professional learning plan, annual performance development plans for teachers, induction program, interviews with staff.

Improvement strategies

Develop and implement a whole-school coaching, observation and feedback cycle which involves all members of the school leadership team.

Continue to use the skills of the HOP and STLaNs to coach teachers in high yield teaching strategies.

Sustain and maximise the impact of professional development opportunities through ongoing resourcing, monitoring and support.



3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The whole-school curriculum, assessment and reporting plan makes explicit what teachers should teach and students should learn. Curriculum planning reflects the subjects delivered through both the Australian Curriculum (AC) and Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework (QCARF).

Curriculum documents reflect a clear alignment of curriculum, assessment and reporting. The current school priority is English and curriculum planning is scaffolded through the use of an English unit alignment planner. Consistent guides to making judgements are used across year level cohorts, and moderated at school and cluster level. There are some inconsistencies however, in classroom curriculum delivery.

The Curriculum team, comprised of school leaders and a representative from each year level, guide the direction and expectations of curriculum delivery.

Fortnightly cohort meetings provide a vehicle for ongoing discussion and review of curriculum planning and alignment. Additionally, teachers are released in year level teams twice each term to analyse short term data and plan for adjustments to student learning programs.

Supporting data

Whole school curriculum plan, year level curriculum and assessment folders, individual teacher planning, learning walls, interviews with staff.

Improvement strategies

Continue to embed the English curriculum planning model with a plan to extend the model to other subjects.



3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

There is a widely held belief by all staff that all students are capable of learning.

School leaders actively encourage teachers to tailor teaching to student needs and readiness.

Planning by class teachers in English, using the school's differentiation surfboard, is evidence of teachers' willingness and commitment to meeting the needs of all students.

There is evidence of consistent school-wide practices, using assessment instruments in English to identify individual strengths and weaknesses as starting points for teaching. Some teachers are using this information effectively to encourage and assist students to monitor and set goals for future learning.

There is some use of differentiated teaching strategies for example, levelled reading and spelling groups, however this is not consistently practised across the school.

Curriculum and learning experiences are largely drawn from Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) units. Some teachers access modified units to meet identified needs of students.

Special Education Program (SEP) staff work collaboratively with classroom teachers to ensure reasonable adjustments are made to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Reports to parents show student progress over time, but do not provide specific suggestions for ways parents can support their child's learning.

Supporting data

Differentiation surfboards, student work samples, class data walls, interviews with staff and students

Improvement strategies

Monitor and review the effectiveness of school programs for the full range of learners.

3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

School leaders are explicit about a desire to see effective teaching throughout the school. There is limited clarity and inconsistent support for teachers to embed effective teaching strategies across the school.

An extended school leadership team comprises of the Principal, two Deputy Principals, the HOP, the HOSS and the HOSSES to drive the improvement agenda. This is further supported by the curriculum team, which includes teacher representatives from each year level.

Whilst school leaders take a close interest in student academic results and behavioural data, there is an 'ad hoc' approach to providing feedback on teaching, with limited coaching and modelling of effective teaching practices. Some teachers are engaging in video reflection with school leaders and vignettes are used to model and reflect on practice.

Teachers are working collaboratively to plan and reflect on teaching practice. The school is establishing protocols and explicit expectations in regards to how data is used to inform teaching.

Professional development opportunities, which focus on effective teaching strategies are provided for teachers and teacher-aides on a regular basis. There is however, limited follow-up and support to ensure the uptake and consistent application of these strategies by all teachers.

Supporting data

Interviews with leadership team and teachers, pedagogical framework.

Improvement strategies

Collaboratively develop and embed a set of agreed high yield teaching strategies through targeted professional development and continual coaching, modelling and feedback.

Monitor the effectiveness of the agreed strategies through regular review and data analysis.



3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

There is some evidence that the school is using partnerships to advance the improvement agenda for example, the reading programs supported by the North Queensland Cowboys and the Townsville Crocodiles.

The P&C support the school through fundraising activities and provision of Outside School Hours Care (OSHC).

The school has a positive reputation in the wider community and regularly provides articles for Townsville media.

There are strong partnerships with cluster primary and high schools. Moderation activities each term with the local cluster schools are valued by teachers. High school students assist the Under 8s Day activities. The school participates in science days, networking meetings and transition days.

The school has established close links with feeder early childhood programs, providing them with access to professional learning on oral language development and identifying skills children need to transition successfully to Prep.

Supporting data

Interviews with staff, students, parents, community leaders and partners, school opinion survey, school website, newsletters, school data profile, local media.

Improvement strategies

Continue to explore local and broader community opportunities to support the improvement agenda.



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.
- Action plan to be developed and submitted to SIU and Region within 3 months of receiving this report.