School Improvement Unit
Report

Kairi State School
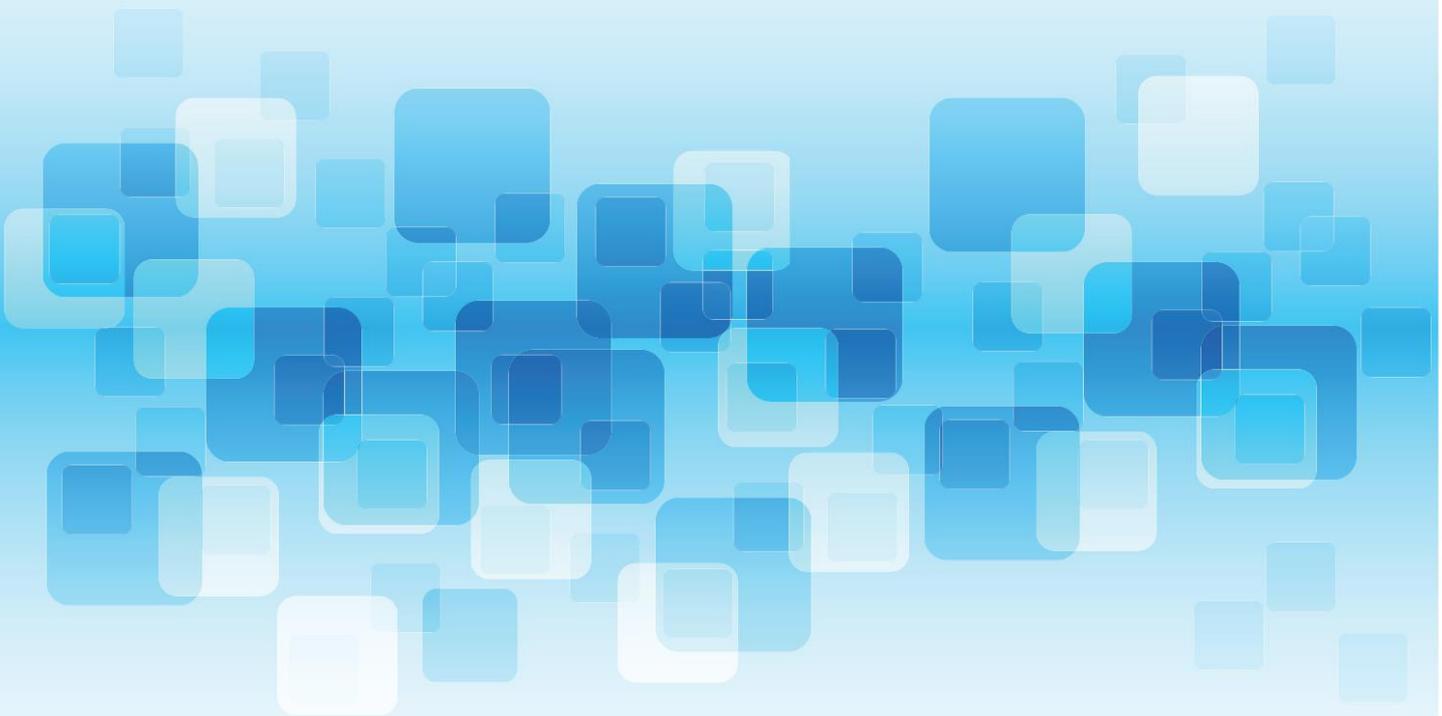
1. Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Kairi State School from 29 to 30 April 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:	McGeehan Street, Kairi
Education region:	Far North Queensland
The school opened in:	1911
Year levels:	Prep to Year 6
Current school enrolment:	95
Indigenous enrolments:	8.4 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	4 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	997
Year principal appointed:	2005
Number of teachers:	5
Nearby schools:	Tolga State School, Yungaburra State School, Atherton State School and Atherton State High School
Significant community partnerships:	
Unique school programs:	

1.3 Review methodology

The review was conducted by a team of two 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 two days

- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:

    o Assistant regional director

    o Principal and ten other school staff

    o 40 students

    o 12 parents and community members

1.4 Review team

Patrick Murphy   Internal Reviewer, SIU (review chair)

David Curran   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 has a stated improvement agenda that has been successful in enhancing literacy outcomes most noticeably in improving student results in reading.

  The current school improvement agenda provides the school with a broad framework for action. The new improvement agenda focuses on five key areas of action. The school community is able to recognise some elements of the improvement agenda however not all elements are embedded in school practice.

- A collegial culture is apparent amongst staff. The principal undertakes walk-throughs in class however a formal process for feedback coaching and mentoring is not embedded.

  The principal is leading a small school and is teaching four days a week in a multi-age class. The principal undertakes some supervision during her time off class which includes walk- throughs. Teachers consistently indicated that they are very open to receiving feedback on their teaching. Currently there is an informal school-wide process for teachers to gain coaching.

- The school has developed a well-organised whole school curriculum plan informed by the Australian Curriculum.

  The whole school plan is based on the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) which is used extensively for lesson plans, resources and assessment. This document forms the basis for discussion and collaboration between teachers.

- A culture of diagnostic testing is a feature of the assessment framework that informs teaching practice to positively impact on student learning outcomes.

  Teachers exhibit very strong data literacy skills. Staff conversations, language and data analysis reflect a sophisticated understanding of data concepts. The school utilises a range of diagnostic tests and these are scheduled in the schools assessment framework.

- The school receives specialist teaching support from a range of schools. Many of these services are historic in their delivery and some have little alignment with the Australian Curriculum expectations.

  Staff identified that with the significant changes in curriculum in recent years through the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, the need to ensure specialist support mirrors the new curriculum is critical to advancing student learning. Specialist programs, do not all align with the Australian Curriculum and class teaching programs.

- The principal encourages teachers to tailor their teaching to meet student needs and readiness.

  Class teachers differentiate their planning by focusing on student needs 'at, below and above' school benchmarks. The implementation of these strategies is at an advanced stage and there is substantial consistency in terms of teacher practice across the school. Diagnostic data is used as the basis for discussion in determining student needs.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Narrow and sharpen the school improvement agenda and ensure this is widely communicated through a range of sources including the school newsletter and website.

- Embed a systematic whole school approach to the provision of feedback, coaching and mentoring for all teachers.

- Review the use and appropriateness of each diagnostic testing instrument to ensure the school is gaining critical student data that enhances student learning outcomes.

- Seek regional assistance in the development of a workforce management plan to progress a creative solution to best meet the learning needs of the students of the school.

- Investigate the use of individual learning goals for all students in the school that are informed by diagnostic data and other sources of data to drive individual achievement.

3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The principal and school team have a strong commitment to providing a quality education to the community of Kairi. The school is well organised and high level systems are in place and embedded at all levels to achieve quality student learning outcomes.

In 2014 the explicit improvement agenda of the school was reading. The school achieved positive gains in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results in reading, most noticeably in the Year 5 reading which recorded results statistically above the national mean. Parents, staff and students were all able to articulate that reading was the schools explicit improvement agenda.

The school in 2015 has an explicit improvement agenda which includes enhancing pedagogy, spelling, writing, data and building community relationships. Strong evidence was found of the school improvement agenda in spelling, data and enhancing pedagogical practice. Significant evidence could be found of enhanced community relationships. Little evidence could identify that writing was a key component of the explicit improvement agenda at this stage.

The school has extensive data gathering and tracking processes that are embedded throughout the school. Data plays a critical role in underpinning differentiation and driving the individual learning of every child.

The improvement agenda has impacted significantly on classroom practice most noticeably in the area of spelling, although limited traction on enhancing the performance of students in the Upper Two Bands (U2B) of NAPLAN has occurred.

The improvement agenda of 2014 was widely understood by the parents in the school community. The school enjoys high levels of satisfaction in the local community. The 2015 school improvement agenda has been communicated to parents. However a widely shared and understood commitment by parents and the wider community to the 2015 school improvement agenda is not evident.

Supporting data

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

Improvement strategies

Refine the current explicit improvement agenda to enable a sharp, narrow and deep focus with achievable, measurable targets and timelines which are rigorously actioned.

Further develop strategies to build a shared commitment by students, staff, parents and the broader community to the school's improvement agenda.

8

3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The principal has embedded a culture of diagnostic testing in the school assessment framework that informs teaching practice to positively impact on student learning outcomes.

Teachers triangulate student assessment data, diagnostic data and NAPLAN data to identify individual students' strengths and areas for development to inform class and individual planning. The disparity of student results in NAPLAN, U2B with report card data and diagnostic testing has not been fully examined.

The school's NAPLAN performance is varied. There are positive improvement trends across most Mean Scale Scores (MSS) between 2008-2014. In recent years there has been significant improvement in reading and number. Relative gain recorded by students varies considerably against national gains. U2B data is inconsistent while being strong in reading and number. Cohort data is not consistent in U2B with reading and number improving significantly, and writing and spelling showing little improvement.

Teachers exhibit very strong data literacy skills. Staff conversations, language and data analysis reflect a sophisticated understanding of data concepts.

A moderation process is in place within the school. An informal moderation process is in place within cluster schools with individual staff utilising personal networks to moderate some year level data.

The school utilises a range of diagnostic testing including PAT-R, PAT-M, PAT-S and the South Australian Spelling test. These diagnostic tests are scheduled in the schools assessment framework.

Supporting data

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

Improvement strategies

Continue to enhance the moderation processes across the school to ensure consistency of teacher judgement. Look to engage with cluster schools to develop a more sophisticated moderation framework. Critically examine NAPLAN data to identify disparity in U2B with moderated report card data.

Review the use and appropriateness of each diagnostic testing instrument to ensure the school is gaining critical student data that enhances student learning outcomes.

Utilise the extensive diagnostic, school and systemically generated data to develop appropriate data walls that create a visual representation of the progress of every student.

3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

The school places great emphasis on developing and maintaining caring and positive relationships between staff, students and parents. School Opinion Survey results indicate high levels of satisfaction in the school and its staff from parents and students.

A supportive collegial culture is evident amongst teachers, who provide professional and personal support for each other through informal interactions and partnerships. Staff morale is high.

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

Parent involvement in the school is evident and parents speak highly of the school and the work of the staff. This positive perception of the school is also shared in the wider community.

The tone of the school is calm and the staff team maintain a respectful, responsible and safe learning environment. Students indicate that student behaviour is excellent and this is supported by student school opinion survey results from 2014.

Student attendance for 2014 was 93.9 per cent. Attendance for 2015 is currently 93.3 per cent. Students who are absent are followed up with phone calls and letters and the principal takes personal accountability for ensuring student absenteeism is addressed.

The school newsletter is well presented and provides the school community with a valuable source of information regarding the positive achievements of the students of the school. Although there is evidence of the school improvement agenda being weaved into the fabric of articles, clear articulation of the 2015 school improvement agenda cannot be identified.

The school website provides the school and wider community with a valuable source of information. The website has not been updated to include the 2015 school improvement agenda.

Supporting data

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

Improvement strategies

Continue to explore opportunities to engage parents and carers as partners in their children's learning which includes the promotion of the school improvement priorities through the weekly newsletter and on the school's website.

3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The physical environment of the school reflects the strategic use of space to provide diverse and inclusive learning spaces for students. Classrooms are well-organised to support student learning.

The current school bank balance is $50 452.31. The budget includes allocations for additional staffing to support the school improvement agenda, chaplaincy and professional development.

The 2015 Great Results Guarantee (GRG) funds will be used to increase the percentage of students achieving in the U2B through purchased additional teacher time that targets the development higher-order thinking skills.

The school receives specialist teaching support from a range of schools. Many of these services are historic in their delivery. Staff reported that in some cases the services had had to be reduced to meet the current needs of students. Reducing services to such an extent has impacted on their efficacy.

Staff identified that with the significant changes in curriculum in recent years through the implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) the need to ensure specialist support mirrors the new curriculum is critical. Not all specialist programs are aligned to the AC.

Technology is readily available throughout the school and includes computers, iPads and smart boards in classrooms.

Supporting data

2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Great Results Guarantee, pedagogical framework, assistant regional director, parent, staff and student interviews, School Data Profile, school website, school budget and associated financial documentation.

Improvement strategies

Review the effectiveness of all school and specialist programs to ensure that positive learning outcomes are being achieved and the expectations of the AC are addressed.

Seek regional assistance in the development of a workforce management plan to progress a creative solution to best meet the learning needs of the students of the school.

3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

There is strong evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert teaching team as central to improving student outcomes.

School leaders and teachers speak of their collective responsibility for ensuring successful student learning outcomes and wellbeing.

The principal is seen as supportive of and deeply involved in the day-to-day practice and learning of teachers. The school leader takes personal responsibility for inducting new staff members into the school and maintaining high levels of expectations of all staff.

There is strong evidence of a systematic approach to providing feedback and sharing practice. This occurs through staff meetings that provide opportunities for teachers to ensure a strong focus on curriculum priorities that are vertically aligned. Teachers view these collaborative sharing practices very positively.

There is evidence of a strong whole school Professional Learning Plan specifically aimed at skilling teachers and the leadership team in coaching and mentoring capabilities. Teachers consistently indicate that they are very open to receiving feedback on their teaching. Currently there is an informal school-wide process for teachers to gain feedback and coaching.

Staff members have engaged in the developing performance framework process. Discussions with staff indicate that their professional development plans are clearly aligned with school priorities and provide for their growth through informing the provision of professional learning and building staff capacity.

Supporting data

School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, roles and responsibility spreadsheet, staff and school leader interviews, school professional development days agenda.

Improvement strategies

Continue to coordinate the delivery of quality pedagogical practice across all year levels to effect school-wide approaches and implementation of priorities.

Embed a systematic whole school approach to the provision of feedback, coaching and mentoring for all teachers.

Develop a robust induction process for beginning, new and returning staff in the event of a changeover in this very experienced and long term staff.

3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The school has re-developed the whole school curriculum plan based on the AC. This document forms the basis for discussion and collaboration between teachers.

The Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) is used extensively for lesson plans, resources and assessment and there is a Year A and Year B approach to ensure continuity of learning for the classes covering two year levels with a teacher. A range of documentation is evident to assist teachers to make judgements and assign levels of achievement consistently.

The timetabled block of two hours with an agreed approach to reading, writing and the use of a sequentially developed approach to spelling and grammar is the prime vehicle for improving student outcomes in English. There is a concerted effort by the principal and staff to ensure that students are grouped appropriately in spelling, writing and reading.

Teachers expressed agreement about consistent curriculum expectations. There are professional discussions about student learning and improved teaching in classrooms.

There was strong evidence of alignment between curriculum, assessment and reporting. The school meets all AC and Queensland curriculum requirements and expectations. Classroom teachers often have to ensure these are covered where specialist teaching staff have not aligned their programs with the AC.

Supporting data

Whole school curriculum plan, extensive curriculum documentation developed at school level, staff and student interviews, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school data plan and assessment framework, pedagogical framework.

Improvement strategies

Continue to ensure supervision and feedback systems are in place to quality assure the consistency and delivery of the enacted curriculum.

Embed processes to ensure that the curriculum plan is the reference against which flexible delivery is designed and implemented.

Continue to embed the implementation of the developing performance framework as an authentic vehicle to support teachers and other staff to develop their expertise.

3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The school streams all students into ability groups for the *Doorway into Practical Literacy* (DIPL). Groupings are expected to be reviewed and restructured regularly based on individual student achievement data.

The principal encourages teachers to tailor their teaching to match student need and readiness. Class teachers differentiate their planning by focusing on student needs at, below and above school benchmarks. The implementation of these strategies is at an advanced stage and there is substantial consistency in terms of teacher practice across the school.

There is significant evidence of differentiation to challenge and stretch more able students. This is a target area in the schools GRG agreement. Data in regards to student reading outcomes informs adjustments to the curriculum delivery and a focus for explicit teaching.

All teachers use a range of teacher-designed strategies to differentiate pedagogy and adjust curriculum delivery in their classrooms. Evidence-based data forms the basis of differentiation using standardised assessment tasks, and teacher-designed diagnostic testing and assessment.

Reporting to parents features a consistent protocol that includes identifying student progress over time to include strengths and current learning needs.

Supporting data

Reading differentiation documentation, staff and student interviews, School Data Profile. diagnostic testing results, school data base, OneSchool.

Improvement strategies

Review whole school differentiation practices based on longitudinal data analysis to determine whether current practices are improving student outcomes.

Further develop teacher capability in understanding how to use data to differentiate learning for the full range of students. In particular, develop evidence-based strategies to provide challenge and engagement for individuals in the U2B in line with the school's stated targets.

Investigate the use of individual learning goals for all students in the school that are informed by diagnostic data and other sources of data to drive individual achievement.

3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The principal and the leadership team recognise that consistency of delivery of quality teaching practices is critical to improving student outcomes. A comprehensive curriculum framework document is in place which provides an overview of school expectations of preferred practice and routines.

Explicit Instruction is a central feature of the school's pedagogical framework and is at an advanced stage of implementation. There are a suite of signature programs in terms of literacy support for students. Reading and the 'warm-up' phase of the explicit instruction model has been the main focus for coaching, feedback and supervision discussions at this stage.

Elements of these programs and the pedagogical framework have been trialled and implemented over recent years. There has been quality professional development and coaching support to assist with embedding these programs and processes.

Parents and community members report that the consistency of follow-up of student behaviour issues and the high expectations of the principal provide the platform for the school's highly favourable reputation in the wider community.

The development of extension programs for potentially high achieving students and the school's approach to teaching higher-order thinking skills is yet to be fully developed.

While there are some support provisions for students with special learning needs, the strategic approach for planning and delivery for extending students at the classroom level has seen significant progress.

Supporting data

Curriculum planning documents, interviews with staff, leadership team and parents, artefacts, School Data Profile, school website.

Improvement strategies

Clarify and strengthen the evidence-based research that underpins the pedagogical framework and signature programs to develop deep understanding of these links for teachers.

Continue to embed teachers' skills in terms of curriculum planning and delivering differentiated pathways for potentially high achieving students.

Continue to develop teacher ability in terms of goal setting with students and strategies for giving students feedback on their 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 P&C and principal have recognised and are working collaboratively on increasing the participation of parents and families in the school. A range of pro-active strategies are clearly evident and is having a very positive effect on school culture.

The school team actively seeks out partnerships with a wide range of community groups to enhance the school environment and provides opportunities for students outside the school. These partnerships include Terrain (an environmental action group), the Lions Club, the Men's Shed, the Golf and Soccer Club as a few examples.

There are strong partnerships with cluster primary and the secondary school, with staff members promoting these links.

Scripture Union has partnered with the school to provide a Chaplain who works two days a week.

Supporting data

Parent interviews, interviews with the principal and support staff.

Improvement strategies

Continue to focus on the school priority to increase the partnership with the community to support student participation and learning.

Explore opportunities to source and develop productive partnerships with the local high school for supporting upper school extension and enrichment programs.

Consider opportunities to link with pre-Prep and early childhood centres to enhance the transition of children to Prep and to engage parents to assist with any early intervention needs.

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.