School Improvement Unit
Report

Gindie State School
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Gindie State School from 24 to 25 February 2016. 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>Cnr Old Cullen-la-ring Road and Gregory Hwy, Gindie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education region:</td>
<td>Central Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school opened in:</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year levels:</td>
<td>Prep to Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current school enrolment:</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous enrolments:</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disability enrolments:</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:</td>
<td>1009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year principal appointed:</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers:</td>
<td>2 (full-time equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearby schools:</td>
<td>Emerald State School, Emerald North State School, Denison State School, Springsure State School, St Brigid’s Catholic Primary School, Emerald Christian College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant community partnerships:</td>
<td>Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&amp;C), Minerva Mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique school programs:</td>
<td>School funded Speech Language Pathologist for 2016</td>
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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:
  - Principal
  - Three teachers
  - Three teacher aides
  - Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) executive committee
  - Four parents
  - Local State Member of Parliament

1.4 Review team
John Enright Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Jenny Hart Internal reviewer, SIU

1.5 Reading the report
The executive summary outlines key findings from the review. 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 principal and staff members demonstrate positive and caring relationships to students and work to build mutually respectful relationships across the school community.

The school places a high priority on student wellbeing. Student engagement and staff morale is sustained at a high level and the school tone is happy and optimistic.

- The school has a documented Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA).

The EIA has been effective in focusing, narrowing and sharpening the whole-school attention on core learning priorities of reading of comprehension and writing.

- The school allocates additional teacher time to support students in priority groups as identified through the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and school diagnostic screening processes.

It is unclear how the effectiveness of these programs is being measured or quality assured.

- There is strong evidence that appropriate curriculum is being delivered in classrooms.

The school uses Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) multi-age units as the main resource to implement the Australian Curriculum (AC). The whole-school curriculum plan is not yet fully developed.

- The school places a high priority on ensuring that teaching programs are addressing the learning needs of all students.

Individual learning goals are evident in classrooms and students are aware of their goals. The steps students undertake to achieve or monitor their goals are not yet clearly documented.

- The school is implementing a range of pedagogical practices in reading and specific comprehension and writing strategies and they are aligned to the explicit improvement agenda.

Artefacts to support these programs and strategies are evident in teacher planning and in classrooms. Students can speak to these strategies and how they support learning. The school is yet to document a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading.
• The principal and staff members clearly articulate their belief that reliable data on student outcomes are crucial to the successful implementation of the school improvement agenda.

The school is implementing a plan for the systematic collection of student academic outcomes including diagnostic and classroom assessment.
2.2 Key improvement strategies

• Continue to develop, document and implement an explicit, coherent and sequenced whole-school curriculum plan relevant to the context of Gindie State School.

• Implement ongoing, regular monitoring of the NAPLAN support program to ensure it is achieving its targets of student improvement.

• Ensure that students know and document the learning steps to achieve their goals and can monitor their progress.
3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings
The school has a documented Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA) that clearly articulates targets and timelines expressed in terms of specific improvements in student performance. The improvement agenda is aligned with systemic priorities with focus on reading comprehension and writing.

The EIA has been effective in focusing, narrowing and sharpening the whole-school attention on core learning priorities.

Data is analysed to understand current individual student achievement and how performance has changed over time with an emphasis on the Upper Two Bands (U2B) and those achieving below benchmark.

All staff and most parents are able to articulate the school’s priority learning areas. Knowledge of targets and specific details regarding student improvement are less clear. Students were unclear of the school’s priority focus for their learning.

Staff are committed, united and focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Parents spoke positively about the team effort to improve their children’s learning.

There are clearly articulated strategies for improving levels of student achievement evidenced by the implementation of specific comprehension and writing strategies.

Strategies are in place to improve, monitor and reward student attendance and artefacts are present in the school environment to enhance the commitment to this focus.

There is evidence of the active involvement of all staff members in every student’s learning, resulting in stories of significant student improvement as told by teachers and parents.

Supporting data

Improvement strategies
Communicate and promote the school improvement agenda to all stakeholders.
3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The principal and staff clearly articulate their belief that reliable data on student outcomes are crucial to the successful implementation of the school’s improvement agenda.

The school is implementing a plan for the systematic collection of student academic data including diagnostic and classroom assessment. Student attendance and behaviour data is tracked and monitored and entered on OneSchool. Targets and timelines are evident.

All students have an individual data book which tracks progress towards achieving their learning goal for the term in spelling, number facts, homework and attendance. Individual student goals are also recorded in this book.

A data wall is evident and tracks student progress in reading using PM Benchmarks and PROBE.

Staff routinely use student achievement data in reading and writing to monitor individual progress, identify priority groups and differentiate learning.

Data is regularly analysed at fortnightly school improvement meetings to support teaching and learning. Similar processes are being introduced with mathematics which involves pre and post diagnostic testing. The principal indicates that staff are planning to enter student data on OneSchool.

Short-term data cycles are evident and have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Moderation of student work occurs occasionally with cluster schools. There is little evidence that moderation occurs within the school.

In 2015, four Year 3 students and one Year 5 student participated in the National Assessment Plan – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). As a result, NAPLAN data should be interpreted with caution. Internal individual assessments indicate that student outcomes are meeting or exceeding year level expectations, for most students, in those areas outlined in the school improvement plan.

Supporting data


Improvement strategies

Develop the data literacy skills of all staff. Investigate a central collection point for the analysis of data such as OneSchool.
3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

The principal and staff demonstrate positive and caring relationships to students and work to build mutually respectful relationships across the school community. The school promotes high expectations that every child will learn every day.

Staff members are involved in the community and attend both school and social events organised by the Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C). There is a community focus on improving student enrolment.

The school facilities are well maintained and include an attractive and functional library that is used extensively by students. Both classrooms present as engaging learning environments and each has a bank of computers to support learning.

The parents highly value the visibility and availability of staff particularly before and after school.

The school places a high priority on student wellbeing and a program is taught throughout the school. Positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour is evident. Parents are supportive of the positive way in which staff relate to children and comment that behaviour is well managed.

Classrooms are calm and interruptions to teaching are minimal. Student engagement and staff morale is sustained at a high level. Staff and students have a happy and optimistic demeanour.

The current student attendance rate is 94 per cent. In 2015, 14.3 per cent of students attended for less than 85 per cent of the school year; this is higher than Queensland State Schools. This data needs to be understood in context as two families left the school and did not enrol at another state school for an extended period of time.

The local Member of Parliament states that the school is the centre of the local community. Students and staff have an obvious sense of belonging. Parents play a critical role in the shared decision-making process of the school, are welcomed and all staff, students and parents speak highly of the school.

Supporting data


Improvement strategies

Promote the positive school culture to the wider community to assist in student enrolment.
3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The principal has introduced programs and strategies to identify and address the needs of students in the school and is using available resources to meet these needs. The resources are allocated in line with school priorities following analysis of student data.

Baseline data is established for all Prep students through the use of screeners such as Oral Language in the Early Years (OLEY). Targeted support is provided for identified student needs through the purchase of a speech language pathologist for one day per fortnight.

Teacher aides indicate they would like to access training in the implementation of the school priorities, particularly the comprehension strategies currently being implemented.

The school is allocated $9,144 under Investing for Success (I4S) and purchase extra teacher time to support students in priority groups as identified through NAPLAN and school diagnostic screening processes. It is unclear how the effectiveness of these programs is being measured or quality assured.

A graduate teacher is accessing beginning teacher funds to work with a mentor and to access professional development to support the implementation of the school’s priorities.

The current bank balance is $123,355

Wireless connectivity is an ongoing issue for the school. In 2016 the school has allocated $6,000, in conjunction with $30,000 from the Queensland Government, to upgrade the connectivity to allow approximately 60 devices to be used wireless, allowing for individualised and innovative pedagogy to occur.

Supporting data


Improvement strategies

Provide appropriate professional development to all staff including teacher aides.
3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

The school principal has endeavoured to attract and retain the best possible staff. The teaching principal and second teacher have formed a collegial partnership to share the responsibility of successful learning and wellbeing of all students. Both parties speak positively of their working relationship.

The principal is an active member of the small schools ‘Westies’ cluster and is using this opportunity to build curriculum and pedagogy expertise.

The principal has the support of the regional principal coach and values this relationship and indicates that he would appreciate an enhanced coaching focus on his strategic leadership development.

The graduate teacher is aligned with a mentor from a nearby state school and a formal program of support is being developed. The teacher is appreciative of this support and values opportunities to visit and network with other schools to build pedagogical practice.

There is a documented professional learning plan that states that professional learning must be sustained, job-embedded, interactive, collegial and integrated. The plan aligns performance development planning, whole-school professional development, and coaching and feedback systems with the school improvement agenda. There is a focus on explicit instruction, writing and reading comprehension.

School improvement meetings alternate with staff meetings and focus on the implementation of the improvement agenda, goals and targets. Data is used to support these conversations.

Teacher aides are valued as part of the teaching team and complete performance development plans and attend school and some regional professional learning activities. Teacher aides speak highly of the nature of team work in the school and the professional support they receive.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2016, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, budget overview, school professional development days, performance development plans, staff and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Formalise and document the graduate teacher professional learning plan ensuring adequate release for mentoring and professional learning including curriculum planning.

Source additional coaching or a program to develop the strategic leadership of school leaders.
3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The newly developed curriculum framework meets departmental guidelines. The plan is not yet fully developed to show the curriculum planning processes and the sequence of teaching and learning is unclear.

The school uses Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) multi-age units as the main resource to implement the Australian Curriculum (AC) and ensure horizontal and vertical alignment. Teachers reference the AC and backward map achievement standards to ensure alignment.

There is strong evidence that appropriate curriculum is being delivered in classrooms. Artefacts include teacher planning, student exemplars, criteria sheets and intended lesson learning goals.

School staff members focus attention and energy on teaching the priority curriculum areas as outlined in the school improvement agenda to ensure all students reach or exceed year level expectations.

The school is using its staffing resources to deliver an arts and health and physical education program to ensure a balanced curriculum is provided to students.

Assessment processes are aligned with curriculum. Teachers are using C2C assessment tasks and guides to making judgements. Teachers are using this information as well as diagnostic assessments to understand where students are in their learning and plan the next steps for learning.

The school reports to parents on student progress through face to face interviews in Terms 1 and 3 and written reports in the middle and end of the year. Reports are aligned with the curriculum and provide relevant achievement information. Parents are appreciative of the time and effort and the quality of the feedback they receive about their child’s performance.

Supporting data


Improvement strategies

Continue to develop and document an explicit, coherent, sequenced whole-school curriculum plan which is relevant to the context of Gindie State School.
3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The school places a high priority on ensuring that teaching programs address the learning needs of all students. There is a commonly held belief that all students can be successful learners, given appropriate opportunity and support.

There is evidence that teachers are monitoring the learning progress of all students through assessment, learning goals, bookwork and class displays.

Individual learning goals are evident in classrooms and students are aware of their goals. The steps students need to undertake to achieve or monitor their goals are not clearly articulated.

Intervention programs such as OLEY are in place for students requiring oral language and Read it Again for reading support.

High achieving students participated in IMPACT in 2015 and this program is currently being investigated for implementation in 2016.

Specialist teachers undertake targeted programs for students to lift NAPLAN performance in the U2B and to raise the performance of lower achieving students to reach national minimum standards.

Teachers can articulate the differentiation needs of students and can identify the next steps for learning for individual students.

High performing students move between year levels, across the multi-age classes, to access curriculum content at their learning level.

Structural differentiation occurs for the grouping of students in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. Specific adjustments for learning are yet to be documented with consistency.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, staff, student, parent and leadership team interviews.
Improvement strategies

Ensure students know and document the learning steps to achieve their goals and can monitor their progress.

Develop consistent expected teacher practice in differentiation and the recording of individual adjustments and include in the whole school curriculum plan.

Implement ongoing, regular monitoring of the NAPLAN support program to ensure it is achieving its targets of student improvement.
3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings
The school has a documented pedagogical framework referencing the Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (DOTL) and Explicit Instruction (EI) as the theoretical base of the pedagogical practices in the school.

There is strong evidence of consistent EI in the school with both classrooms displaying the common language and expectations of explicit instruction. All staff and students understand this pedagogy.

The principal spends time in classrooms and provides observation and written feedback to teachers. This feedback is focused on EI. Teachers also complete a reflection after receiving feedback. Teachers appreciate and value the opportunity to receive feedback.

The school is implementing a range of pedagogical practices in reading and specific comprehension and writing strategies. These are aligned to the EIA.

Artefacts to support these programs and strategies are evident in teacher planning and in classrooms. Students know and use these strategies to support their learning.

The school is yet to document a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading.

There is evidence of promoting deep learning and higher order thinking with the identified comprehension based strategies.

Training to support the selected writing and comprehension strategies as outlined in the improvement agenda is planned for all staff members over time.

Student workbooks, portfolios and work samples show evidence that appropriate and timely feedback is given to students. Feedback is yet to be consistently provided to students to show what actions students can take to make further learning progress.

Supporting data

Improvement strategies
Document a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading and make explicit links to the expected pedagogical practice of teachers.

Ensure student feedback makes clear the next steps for learning and is linked to individual learning goals.
3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

The school actively seeks methods to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families who are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their child’s education.

The school has forged a strong partnership with the P&C who are very supportive of the school and undertake a variety of activities to enhance the student learning environment. This includes organising fundraising events and undertaking working bees.

The school, in conjunction with the P&C, is applying for a $100,000 grant from Smart Schools to install a new playground and rubberised soft fall ground cover.

Staff members have made contact with two feeder kindergartens in Emerald and visit in Terms 3 and 4 to promote their Prep program and discuss individual students that may attend Gindie the following year. There are currently five Prep students at the school.

The transition program with Emerald State High School is managed by the secondary school and involves Year 6 students attending open days.

The school has received a small amount of funds from a local mine to enhance classroom facilities. There is limited evidence of ongoing partnerships with local industries.

Parents are highly involved in the school and volunteer in classrooms, assisting with reading, swimming lessons and also organise a cooked lunch for all students once a month.

The staff organise parent workshops on literacy and numeracy and each of the specialist key learning areas.

The principal belongs to the Westies cluster of schools that includes other small schools such as Lockington, Treswell, Orion, Rolleston and Anakie. This cluster meets once a term.

Supporting data


Improvement strategies

Develop relationships with local industry to build supportive partnerships with the school.
4. Follow-up timelines

- School to publish the executive summary on their website within two weeks.
- School to meet with Assistant Regional Director to discuss review findings and improvement strategies.