



School Improvement Unit Report

Babinda State School





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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Babinda State School from May 17 to 19, 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 school determined its own review processes choosing to select its own Panel of Reviewers and the format for the final Report. The school sought to use the Review Report to inform its forward Strategic Plan by identifying progress towards its current priorities and to reflect on the processes that will drive the school improvement agenda 2017 to 2021.

School 1.2 School context

Location:	Babinda State School
Education region:	Far North Queensland
The school opened in:	1914
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12
Current school enrolment:	281
Indigenous enrolments:	73
Students with disability enrolments:	20
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	921
Year principal appointed:	2012
Number of teachers:	27
Nearby schools:	St Rita's Babinda; Miriwinni SS; Gordonvale SHS; MacDonnell Creek SS; Bellenden Kerr SS.
Significant community partnerships:	Taskforce Babinda SS; Babinda Chamber of Commerce; BEAST;
Unique school programs:	Digital Entrepreneurs; Innovations Grant





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 three days
- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives as per attached schedule:

1.4 Review team

Mr Alan Baillie External Reviewer

Mr Tony McGruther External Reviewer

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

School leaders place a very high priority on the ongoing professional learning of all staff and on the development of a school-wide self reflective culture focused on improving classroom teaching.

Staff reported that they find the processes are adding to their professional growth and seek further challenge. This includes classroom-based learning, some mentoring, modelling and coaching arrangements. Some staff report that they would value a more differentiated approach to coaching that addresses their individual needs beyond the provision of feedback. Some staff reflected that they share effective practice informally. There are no formal processes to share successes, effective practice and to solve problems together. There is a strong focus on supporting beginning teachers.

Standardised and diagnostic tools including PM Benchmarks, Sight words, Running Records in the primary years as well as A-E ratings in the secondary years are used to identify learning goals and track student performance.

Data are used throughout the school to identify gaps in student learning to set learning goals and to monitor improvement at the individual student level. The processes for engaging students in setting learning goals is varied and students report varying levels of understanding of what is actually required to improve their achievement. Teachers also indicated that goal setting could have a stronger connection to standards, success criteria and the exemplars.

Teachers have demonstrated an openness to critique by colleagues and lesson observations and modelling are undertaken in a differentiated way.

Teachers are optimistic about others visiting their classrooms. They also welcome coaching opportunities to engage in reflective practices.

High levels of trust are apparent across the school community.

Interactions are focused on the learning and wellbeing of students and on continually improving the school's ability to meet the needs of all students. Parents and families are valued as partners in student learning and this is demonstrated through processes of goal setting and working together to develop intervention strategies.

The principal and other school leaders have given a high priority to understanding and addressing the learning needs of all students in the school.

This is reflected in the implementation of strategies for identifying student needs and the development of solutions for addressing those needs. School records of individual student needs, achievements and progress are maintained centrally and are available to share across year levels. A school wide process has been established for identifying specific student learning needs with a focus on those students who have attendance above 90 per cent and who are not achieving their set goals.



Teachers and school leaders take personal responsibility for improving student learning and wellbeing, working together and learning from each other's practices.

There is evidence of collaborative planning involving individual teachers and the HOD. Some staff expressed a desire to extend the existing strong professional culture to a distributive model that skills and supports further teacher responsibility and leadership.

The school has an improvement priority for the explicit teaching of 21st Century skills. An Innovation grant has been secured to resource this process.

The program will be developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. Staff have expressed the need to ensure that this program provides vertical alignment, rigour and progression as a significant component of the whole school plan for curriculum delivery.

The creation of learning goals for individual students is a steadily developing practice in the school as evidenced by the strong commitment by all staff, parents and students.

These relate to reading, Maths and English in the primary school and all core and elective subjects in secondary school. Learning goals generally relate to levels of achievement with teachers working with students to set goals. Students interviewed confirmed that their learning goals were being achieved. They were less clear on the precise learnings and standards required to improve their level of achievement. Teachers expressed that to some extent they were having difficulty in connecting student learning goals with day to day practices.

All teachers are committed to identifying, understanding and implementing more effective teaching methods, and a high priority is given to evidence based teaching strategies.

The staffing profile of the school, which exhibits a turnover of staff each year and a relatively large number of teachers in their early years of teaching is supported at the school by a set of clear expectations with regard to Explicit Teaching, approaches to the teaching of reading and behaviour management. Staff report they received quality induction and that it has become more systematic, well timed and comprehensive over recent years.

The school leadership team has established a number of partnerships with parents and with community that are driving higher levels of student achievement.

The school enjoys a high reputation in its small community for its responsiveness to students, its welcoming environment and its communication structures. Parents specifically commend the five weekly data cycle and consequent communication as a very effective process for affirming progress and harnessing home support. The local community is highly supportive of the school. A range of partners is clearly evident in the curriculum of the school with the provision of before/after school sports and gym training. Community groups make use of the school's facilities.





2.2 Key improvement strategies

Develop a model of distributive leadership focussing on the ongoing professional learning of all staff to develop a school wide self-reflective culture.

Review and refine processes to assist students to monitor their own learning and to set goals for future learning which are aligned to standards and learning expectations.

Further develop a coaching model that challenges and supports teachers in their pursuit of excellence.

Further develop a school wide understanding and direction for differentiated teaching and learning and support teachers to apply this in their day-to-day practices.

Develop and implement a diverse and flexible curriculum program that is aligned to the Australian Curriculum to prepare students for employment and citizenship in the 21st Century.



3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The School leadership team has developed and is driving an explicit local school improvement agenda. This has a sharp focus on reading, writing and attendance and a futuristic approach to delivering education relevant to the 21st Century. Teachers and other staff are very aware of this agenda and are able to speak about their commitment and actions to achieve improvement. The school improvement agenda has been effective in focusing the whole school's attention on core learnings and areas for improvement.

The school principal and other school leaders are united, committed to and explicit about their core objective – to improve learning outcomes for all students in the school. This is reflected in the use of terminology indicating that “student learning should not be left to chance.”

There is a strong and optimistic commitment by all staff to the school improvement strategy and a clear belief that further improvement is possible. Teachers take responsibility for improving student outcomes and set learning goals with students.

The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve from research and identify high yield teaching and leadership practices.

School leaders are aware of trends in student data over a number of years.

Supporting data

Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, budget overview, professional development plans, school website, school newsletters, staff, student, and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Develop a deeper, collective understanding of goal setting processes and their application to student learning across the school.

Continue to sharpen and further develop a common understanding of what constitutes education for the 21st century and develop measurable milestones for success.

Use the renewal of the strategic plan to reflect on, and confirm the school 's vision and drive the explicit improvement agenda to ensure that all students are improving towards those intentions.





3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The principal and other school leaders clearly articulate their belief that reliable data on student outcomes are crucial to the school's improvement agenda. The school has established and is implementing a systematic plan for the collection of a range of student achievement and wellbeing data. A five week cycle of data collection and analysis is crucial to this plan.

Standardised and diagnostic tools including PM Benchmarks, Sight words as well as A-E ratings are used to track student performance. Data are used throughout the school to identify gaps in student learning to set learning goals and to monitor improvement at the individual student level. The processes for engaging students in setting learning goals is varied and students report varying levels of understanding of what is actually required to improve their achievement. Teachers also indicated that goal setting could have a stronger connection to standards, success criteria and the exemplars.

Teachers manage data input electronically and are provided with, and use, software to analyse, display and communicate data on individual performances and progress. A staff member has been assigned responsibility for collecting, summarising and communicating student outcome data across the school.

Time is set aside for teachers to discuss individual student data for those students who attend school for 90 per cent and above but are not achieving their learning goals. Appropriate interventions supporting student learning are then negotiated in consultation with individual students and their parents.

School leaders pay close attention to data provided to them about the performance of the school, (A to E levels, NAPLAN results and Year 12 results) and identify areas of success and challenge.

The school's NAPLAN results in 2015 exhibit a two year relative gain of over 30 percent above the nation. Achievement in all aspects of NAPLAN have seen improvement in all aspects to above MMS standards. 100 percent of students achieved a QCE/QCIA showing improvement over time. 100 percent of OP eligible students achieved an OP of 1 to 15 in 2015 and 100 percent of students achieved a qualification as an outcome of their schooling.

Supporting data

Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, school data plan, staff, student, parent and leadership team interviews.



Improvement strategies

Expand teacher data literacy skills to provide more sophisticated analysis of data and a consistent approach across the school.

Review the process for goal setting used by teachers so that learning and student improvement is measured against standards and criteria.

Consider ways to further share important data sets across the whole school and sectors of the school to continue identifying successes and opportunities for improvement.



3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

The school ethos is built around high expectations and a commitment to excellence. There is an expectation that every student who has consistent attendance will learn and achieve positive outcomes. School attendance rates show that in 2015, 82 percent attended more than 85 percent of the time. 17 percent of students attend for less than 80 percent of the time. Lateness was noted as a factor in some of these statistics. Staff morale is high and the school has a happy, optimistic feel.

High levels of trust are apparent across the school community. Interactions are focused on the learning and wellbeing of students and on continually improving the school's ability to meet the needs of all students. Parents and families are valued as partners in student learning and this is demonstrated through processes of goal setting and working together to develop intervention strategies.

Teachers have demonstrated an openness to critique by colleagues and lesson observations and modelling are undertaken in a differentiated way. Teachers are optimistic about others visiting their classrooms. They also welcome coaching opportunities to engage in reflective practices.

There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully. The school implements its policies and ensure that disruptive behaviour, bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly. There is a common understanding that the 'three tier model' is to be implemented consistently across the school and is used to manage behavioural issues. Clear communication protocols about behaviour and expectations are evident.

The primary sector of the school also uses You Can Do It program.

There is a dedicated staff member who focuses on supporting students with inappropriate behaviours through a positive and consistent process.

Supporting data

Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, school website, school newsletters, School Opinion Survey, staff, student, parent and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Continue to embed the three tier model so that practices are consistent across the whole school.

Explore a school wide focus and set of processes for intervention with respect to targeted students and attendance trends.



3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The principal and other school leaders have given a high priority to understanding and addressing the learning needs of all students in the school. This is reflected in the implementation of strategies for identifying student needs and the development of solutions for addressing those needs. School records of individual student needs, achievements and progress are maintained centrally and are available to share across year levels. A school wide process has been established for identifying specific student learning needs with a focus on those students who have attendance above 90 per cent and who are not achieving their set goals.

The school deploys staff in ways that make best use of their expertise. The para-professional staff exhibit a high degree of proficiency and express a strong sense of contribution to the school's agenda. This aligns with the priorities identified by the school and the needs of individual students.

The school effectively uses its physical environment and available facilities to maximise student learning and the school budget aligns with local and system priorities.

The current bank balance is \$645,000. The school has secured a \$300,000 Innovation Grant and has \$180 000 invested in core literacy and numeracy outcomes under Investing for Success. The school has developed two key leadership positions, one from flexible school based resources, to lead the agendas in Explicit Teaching and Differentiation (Head of Department – Capability and Innovation and Head of Differentiated Learning).

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, budget overview, school website, school newsletters, staff, student, parent and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Continue to use and refine data analysis processes to extend and maintain agreed student learning opportunities. This should include opportunities to extend the talents and abilities of the range of students within the school community.



3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

Teachers and school leaders take personal responsibility for improving student learning and wellbeing, working together and learning from each other's practices. There is evidence of some collaborative planning involving individual teachers and the HODs. Some staff expressed a desire to extend the existing strong professional culture to a distributive model that skills and supports teacher leadership.

School leaders place a very high priority on the ongoing professional learning of all staff and on the development of a school-wide self reflective culture focused on improving classroom teaching. This includes classroom-based learning, some mentoring, modelling and coaching arrangements. Some staff report that they would value a more consistent approach to coaching that addresses their individual needs beyond the provision of feedback. Some staff also reflect that they share effective practice informally. There are no formal processes to share successes, effective practice and to solve problems together. There is a strong focus on supporting beginning teachers.

Ongoing professional learning has a strong focus on Explicit Teaching as the preferred pedagogy across the whole school. Lesson observations and feedback focus on the development of teaching skills to implement these practices consistently. The school expects all teachers to be highly committed to the continuous improvement of their own teaching and to be focused on the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning.

The school has a professional learning plan and associated budget of \$21 000 focussing on school priorities for 2016.

Developing performance processes are in place for all staff including the para-professional team.

The school has a pedagogical framework based on Explicit Teaching which guides professional practice and the agenda for one on one conversations between leaders and staff.

Supporting data

Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, 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

Develop a model of distributive leadership focussing on the ongoing professional learning of all staff to develop a school wide self-reflective culture.



Further embed the coaching model that challenges and supports teachers in their pursuit of excellence.

Engage staff in the joint analysis of student work and on teaching strategies for improving student learning using professional learning communities as the formal forum for doing so.



3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The school provides a viable curriculum offering from the Preparatory Year to Year Twelve providing the community with a core primary program, core and electives in the junior and senior secondary departments and range of senior pathways in the senior school. Retention patterns evidence community confidence in the curriculum provisions in place.

The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains the focus for discussion. This is conducted through one on one weekly meetings with leaders. Teachers reported that they would value further opportunities to meet across phases of learning and vertical subject areas to analyse achievement, moderate assessment and realign programs to improve achievement against the curriculum intentions of the school.

The school's delivery plan details term and unit plans, identifies pedagogies, assessment tools and tracking tools. The school uses Curriculum into the Classroom as its vehicle for curriculum planning and delivery across the compulsory years.

The school has an improvement priority for the explicit teaching of 21st Century skills. An Innovation grant has been secured to resource this process. The program will be developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. Staff have expressed the need to ensure that this program provides vertical alignment, rigour, progression as significant components of the whole school plan for curriculum delivery.

In 2015 the senior OP eligible students achieved 100% attainment of OP 1 to 15, and 10% attainment of the Queensland Certificate of Education. The role of Senior Subject Coordinator works with the VET Coordinator and the Guidance Officer to customise and guide students through their senior programs. Provisions are in place for student access to other subjects through Distance Education. This is supported by dedicated spaces, pathway planning and one on one mentoring of students.

Digital Entrepreneurs program is in place as an extension program for all students not involved in Tier Three interventions.

Supporting data

Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, differentiation planner, performance development plans, school website, school newsletters, staff, student, and leadership team interviews.



Improvement strategies

Develop and implement a diverse and flexible curriculum program that is aligned to the Australian Curriculum (AC) to prepare students for employment and citizenship in the 21st Century.

Review the vertical alignment of the curriculum for its alignment with the vision of the school with respect to the full range of educational outcomes sought for students including their well being and the cross curricular priorities and general capabilities of the AC.



3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The school leadership team actively promotes the use of differentiated teaching practices. The school has structured its leadership, support systems and data tools to facilitate a high degree of differentiation across the school. A position has been created to lead differentiated practice at the classroom level from Prep to Year twelve. This role is highly acknowledged by staff as successful in facilitating one on one discussions with teachers. Five week data cycles track progress, identify gaps and growth and plan adjustments to daily teaching. Students in the primary school reported that they were very clear about the improvements they needed to make to improve their achievement in reading.

The creation of learning goals for individual students is a steadily refining practice in the school. These relate to reading, Maths and English in the primary school and to all core and elective subjects in the secondary school. Learning goals generally relate to levels of achievement with teachers working with students to set goals. Students interviewed confirmed that their learning goals were being achieved. However they were less clear on the precise learnings and standards required to improve their level of achievement. Teachers expressed that to some extent they were having difficulty in connecting student learning goals with day to day practices.

The school has created a Differentiation Placemat (MAKER Model) that seeks to define and scaffold the differentiation practices in the school. This tool provides a source of clarity about what differentiation looks like when enacted. Leaders at the school recognise that teachers are at different starting points with the model and tailor their one on one meetings to meet teacher needs. Students confirm that they feel well supported by the strong learning culture of the school. They report that teaching is often geared to the middle of the class impacting on their optimal engagement.

Regular data on achievement is harvested to make judgements about individual students starting points and progress. There is strong evidence that the five week cycle impacts on teaching with respect to the first two elements of this four dimensional model, namely content and process.

Supporting data

Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, Differentiation Placemat, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, differentiation planner, staff, student, parent and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Review and refine processes to assist students to monitor their own learning and to set goals for future learning which are aligned to standards and learning expectations.



Utilise the existing expertise and commitment of staff to initiate professional dialogue to deepen understanding of the Maker model with a special focus on the practical application of the model. Extend opportunities for teachers to lead these initiatives.



3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The school leadership have clear, detailed and consistent views about the type of teaching the wish to see in the school. The desired practices are supported through the Heads of Department whose roles are highly valued by staff as a process for demonstration, observation, feedback and critique.

School leaders spend time working with teachers to improve their teaching practices. The school has adopted the Explicit Teaching model as its core pedagogical framework. Observation, feedback and induction have established and sustained this platform to a consistent level and all staff have expressed their belief that Explicit Teaching is the pedagogical framework for the school.

All teachers are committed to identifying, understanding and implementing more effective teaching methods, and a high priority is given to evidence based teaching strategies. The staffing profile of the school, which exhibits a turnover of staff each year and a relatively large number of teachers in their early years of teaching is supported at the school by a set of clear expectations with regard to Explicit Teaching, approaches to the teaching of reading and behaviour management. Staff report they received quality induction and that it has become more systematic, well timed and comprehensive over recent years.

All staff at the school understand that higher levels of student achievement is directly linked to their informed choice of, and proficiency in, agreed teaching practices. Teachers in the early stage of their careers report favourably on the consistent and well supported implementation of Explicit Teaching. More experienced staff, both professional and para professional seek a differentiated approach to their development as teachers where their growth towards high competence in specific teaching strategies or leadership techniques is expertly coached.

Work at the school has begun for students to explore their own capacities as learners and achievers. Data Trackers monitor achievement and growth. Learning goals set with students and parents focus learning in targeted whole school areas of achievement. Students especially in the primary years are highly motivated by their goals which they express in terms of aspired levels of achievement. Senior students seek a more holistic set of goals across their subject choices considering relative balance, closer definition of the precise learning required to achieve improvement. All students interviewed report that they value opportunities for hands on learning experiences and feel that they engage and learn best when this is appropriately provided.

The school has identified three areas of sharp focus for 2016, namely behaviour management, writing and the development of twenty first century skills for which it has won an Innovation grant. The last two are in the early stages of exploration and are yet to impact significantly on daily teaching.



Supporting data

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

Improvement strategies

Create processes, access, routines and staff skills in the sharing of effective practice within the context of Babinda. Address the pursuit of the full vision of the school and the type of teaching required to achieve it.

Identify the strengths of the teaching team, (including para professionals), across a range of teaching and related practices and design processes to build staff driven professional dialogue linking teaching practices with curriculum intent, achievement patterns, more effective teaching strategies and self supporting professional sharing.



3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

The school leadership team has established a number of partnerships with parents and with community that are driving higher levels of student achievement. The school enjoys a high reputation in its small community for its responsiveness to students, its welcoming environment and its communication structures. Parents commend the five weekly data cycle and consequent communication as a very effective process for affirming progress and harnessing home support. They seek further opportunities to familiarise themselves with the teaching approaches of the school in pursuit of aligned home school reinforcement of learning.

The local community is highly supportive of the school. A range of partners are clearly evident in the curriculum provision of the school with the provision of after school sports and gym training. Community groups make use of the school's facilities. An external provider has been engaged to teach a Certificate 3 program as a strategic pathway to QCE attainment for some students. Partnerships also support a sports training program and before and after school sports.

The school's volunteer chaplain provides a range of support structures including Kids Club, camping programs which are delivered through the local church's links with Christian Youth Community (CYC). These provide programs that are accessible by students themselves or through deliberate intervention if required. The Chaplain confirms that there are further opportunities available within the community to target interventions especially where students may be at risk of significant under achievement or disengagement from learning.

The school's Parents and Citizen's Association has recently established an After School Care program. The P and C is highly supportive of the school's leadership and is well informed on the priorities of the school and sees itself in partnership with these priorities.

The Pathways role in the school has established partnerships with the community to provide work related experience. The Chamber of Commerce is a partner of the school in the provision of these opportunities. Community Cash represents a program that provides motivation through recognition of student achievement.

The connections with local feeder schools and secondary schools is focussed on successful transitions. Reports suggest that the opportunity to clarify with parents the curriculum offerings and initiatives of the school is highly valued and represents a further growth opportunity in these partnerships.

Senior secondary students have access to a range of subjects with the school enhanced by links with the Schools of Distance Education. Senior students report that online subjects are more difficult and they seek further support from subject area specialists in addition to their on-campus support teachers.



The school has created a role to manage the schools community engagement. This role has achieved quality transition for students into the Prep year through a relationship with the local Kindergarten and day care providers. Events such as NAIDOC, Under Eights Day, Anzac day, school discos form significant whole of community events that are being strategically well managed and resourced to achieve high levels of retention. The school is a pivotal contributor to the success of community events in Babinda.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school website, school newsletters, staff, student, parent, community and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Investigate the support available for students completing online subjects in the senior school.

Consider how the community can be harnessed and supported by the school's focus on 21st Century skills with a special focus on the active engagement of students.



4. Follow-up timelines

- School to publish the executive summary on their website within two weeks.
- School to meet with Assistant Regional Director/Principal Supervisor to discuss review findings and improvement strategies.
- Action plan to be developed and submitted to SIU and region within six weeks of the completion of the review.