



# School Improvement Unit Report

## Alligator Creek State School



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Alligator Creek State School from 15 to 17 June, 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

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Location:</b>   | 50 Grasstree Road, Alligator Creek   |
| <b>Education region:</b>   | Central Queensland   |
| <b>The school opened in:</b>   | 1896   |
| <b>Year levels:</b>  | Prep to Year 6   |
| <b>Current school enrolment:</b>                                     | 326  |
| <b>Indigenous enrolments:</b>  | 11.6 per cent  |
| <b>Students with disability enrolments:</b>                          | 2 per cent   |
| <b>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:</b> | 959  |
| <b>Year principal appointed:</b>                                     | 2015   |
| <b>Number of teachers:</b>   | 13   |
| <b>Nearby schools:</b>   | Sarina State School, Sarina State High School, Koumala State School, Oakenden State School |
| <b>Significant community partnerships:</b>                           |  |
| <b>Unique school programs:</b>                                       |  |



### 1.3 Review methodology

The review was conducted by a team of three reviewers.

The review consisted of:

- a pre-review audit of the school's performance data and other school information
- consultation with the school's Assistant Regional Director
- a school visit of three days
- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:
  - Principal
  - Deputy Principal
  - 14 teachers
  - Support Teacher Literacy and Numeracy (STLaN), Guidance Officer, Master Teacher, Advisory Visiting Teacher Inclusion
  - Business Services Manager (BSM), Administrative Officers
  - Seven teacher aides
  - 18 parents
  - Three Parents and Citizens' (P&C) Association members
  - Sarina State High School Deputy Principal and local child care provider

#### 1.4 Review team

|                  |                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Lesley Vogan     | Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair) |
| Glynnis Gartside | External reviewer                     |
| Majella Frith    | Peer 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

- The school presents as calm and positive and classes are orderly and purposeful.

There is clear evidence of a whole school approach to establishing a set of high expectations for learning, teaching and student wellbeing. Assembly includes explanations of behaviour expectations (*mantras*), the school war cry and positive affirmations of student engagement and learning. Posters reinforcing expectations are displayed in all classrooms and all teachers reinforce the behaviour *mantras*.

- The leadership team is committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes.

There is evidence that staff are committed to delivering strategies for school improvement. They are supportive of the leadership team and the future direction of the school. Staff have articulated concerns about the pace and breadth of change and the time needed to embed effective teaching practices.

- There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders view reliable school data as essential to their effective leadership of the school.

The leadership team has developed a data room in which student learning is displayed. This data room display provides a visual focus for teacher and support team reflection. The data will be used to focus teachers' analysis of student achievement as a starting point for improving outcomes.

- The school uses Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) as the significant resource to deliver the Australian Curriculum.

The school has a new curriculum framework. This framework provides clarity regarding the intended curriculum and the use of existing effective teaching practices. A process to monitor the enacted curriculum across all classes is currently being reviewed and refined along with the implementation of the new curriculum framework.

- The leadership team recognises that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school.

Effective teaching methods, including explicit instruction, are used to maximise learning in all classrooms. Teachers demonstrate a sense of collective responsibility to ensure further improvement of student learning outcomes. There is evidence of high quality teaching practices in classrooms, however, there is not always clear alignment with the school pedagogical framework.



## 2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Ensure that the clearly articulated whole school improvement agenda is narrow and sharp and is accompanied by appropriate and collaboratively determined targets, timelines, appropriate resourcing and professional development for all school personnel.
- Consolidate the implementation of the school curriculum plan by building on teachers' current expertise, developing a shared planning process, providing time for the development of a deep understanding of effective teaching practices and monitoring the enacted curriculum in all classrooms.
- Collaboratively review and refine the school pedagogical framework. Develop a strategic approach to embed the implementation of the framework to ensure consistency of effective teaching practices across the school.
- Build teacher data literacy skills in analysing and interpreting data to identify starting points for teaching and strategies for the continuous improvement of student outcomes.
- Continue to build a culture of high expectations for learning, engagement and wellbeing for students, staff and the school community.



### **3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains**

#### **3.1 An explicit improvement agenda**

##### **Findings**

The leadership team is committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. The school has developed an improvement agenda that includes student learning targets.

The school improvement agenda identified in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) for 2015 includes literacy, numeracy, A-E data and school culture. Timelines for implementation and embedding are still developing.

The principal is widely read on change management theories, educational research and continuously reflects on the most effective way to implement the school priorities.

Explicit targets for improvement in student achievement levels have been set and communicated to parents, staff and the wider school community.

There is evidence that the school staff is committed to delivering strategies for school improvement. They are supportive of the leadership team and the future direction of the school. Staff have articulated concerns about the pace and breadth of change and time needed to embed effective teaching practices.

Parents are aware and supportive of the school improvement agenda.

##### **Supporting data**

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.

##### **Improvement strategies**

Ensure that the clearly articulated whole school improvement agenda is narrow and sharp and is accompanied by appropriate and collaboratively determined targets, timelines, appropriate resourcing and professional development for all school personnel.



## 3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

### Findings

There is evidence that the leadership team views reliable school data as essential to their effective leadership of the school. The leadership team has identified trends in data which indicate that students are not reaching their full potential.

There is a documented plan for the systematic collection of achievement data that teachers are expected to follow.

The leadership team have developed a data room in which student achievement is displayed. This data room display provides a visual focus for teachers and support team reflection. It will also be used to focus teachers' analysis of student achievement.

Teachers are at the beginning stages of analysing and interpreting data to identify starting points for teaching and student goal setting.

The school has implemented *Lexia* reading and *Mathletics* as tools to improve student literacy and numeracy skills and track student progress over short and long periods of time.

The school is planning to re-engage in moderation of student work, starting with writing in Term 3. The leadership team has plans to extend moderation within the school and outside of the school.

School data is presented at some staff and team meetings. Discussions have occurred with staff around achievement and behaviour data. There is some evidence that these analyses have had an impact on teaching practices and school processes.

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data 2014 indicates that the Mean Scale Score (MSS) in reading, writing and grammar and punctuation are above Similar Queensland State Schools (SQSS) and numeracy and spelling are similar to SQSS. The MSS in all Year 5 strands in 2014 is similar to SQSS. Year 3 reading, writing, grammar & punctuation and numeracy Upper Two Bands (U2B) achievements are above SQSS. Year five U2B identifies that four out of the five strands are similar to or above SQSS. The data indicates that the 2012 Year 3 to 2014 Year 5 has not made gains relative to SQSS.

### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.



### **Improvement strategies**

Build teacher data literacy skills in analysing and interpreting data so they can confidently identify starting points for teaching, track, monitor and analyse student learning, reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and make adjustments in a timely manner.

Refine processes for teachers to regularly communicate with each other regarding student achievement data to trigger in depth discussions relating to the effectiveness of teaching practices and the collective responsibility for student improvement.

Build rigorous moderation processes across the school and between similar schools to ensure consistency of teacher judgement.



### 3.3 A culture that promotes learning

#### Findings

The school presents as calm and positive and classes are orderly and purposeful. Students, staff and parents speak well of the school and value its friendly school culture.

The school has a Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students that is currently being revised.

There is clear evidence of a whole school approach to establishing a set of high expectations for learning, teaching and student wellbeing. Assembly includes explanations around behaviour expectations (*mantras*), the school war cry and affirmations of student engagement and learning. Posters reinforcing expectations are displayed in all classrooms and all teachers reinforce the behaviour *mantras*.

Each teacher is responsible for the development of classroom behaviour plans. The school aspires to move students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.

There is a positive, caring relationship between staff and students.

A collegial culture is evident amongst staff who provide professional and personal support for each other through informal interactions and partnerships.

Communication across the school and into the wider community occurs through a variety of media including emails, newsletter and the school website. Communication with staff includes a weekly staff email from the principal and deputy principal.

The principal has acknowledged student attendance is a concern and has strategies in place to track student attendance rates.

There is limited evidence of the fostering of inquiry and innovation in classrooms.

School Opinion Survey data 2014 indicates a decrease in parent satisfaction levels around the management of behaviour in the school. Staff morale data was 70 percent in 2014 and staff satisfaction levels around management of behaviour also indicated a decline in satisfaction. Student data indicates an 87 percent satisfaction level with behaviour management at the school.

Current student attendance is 93.5 percent.

#### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.



### **Improvement strategies**

Build upon the school culture of high expectations for all students in learning, attendance and behaviour.

Continue to develop the use of information and communications technologies to foster innovation, inquiry and creativity.

Maintain a whole school attendance strategy to enhance attendance and student engagement through collaboration with parents and community to refine this process.

Review the school Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students for currency and effectiveness to determine its fit for purpose.

Ensure all staff are aware and skilled in the range of strategies that are incorporated in the plan.



### 3.4 Targeted use of school resources

#### Findings

School resources both human and physical are directed at school priorities and are identified in the budget.

Some targeted use of human resources is evident through the purchase of non-contact time for teacher professional learning. Teacher aides support literacy and numeracy in the classrooms.

Roles and responsibilities of the principal and support team are purposefully reviewed and realigned to support the implementation of the school improvement program.

The school has identified and purchased a number of resources including *Lexia* reading, *Mathletics* and *Back to Front Maths* to support school priorities and facilitate the collection of student achievement data.

School learning spaces are used effectively and technology is accessible to staff and students. The principal promotes the effective utilization of space, resources and movement to ensure ease of access for staff and students.

The school has two computer labs and a variety of mobile devices to assist students with their learning. There are two Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) classes.

The school built environment is inviting, classroom spaces and the grounds are physically attractive, well maintained and designed to maximise student learning. The school's facilities officer is involved in projects to assist the teaching and learning in the school.

There is evidence that teacher aides receive professional development to assist with classroom support and intervention programs aligned with the school improvement agenda.

The school budget is aligned to the school priorities and supports the educational needs of the school. There are some action plans in place for key cost centres. The school's current bank balance is \$283 364.

#### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.



### **Improvement strategies**

Continue to review the roles and responsibilities of school leaders and staff to ensure clarity and cohesion in driving the school improvement agenda.

Strategically monitor the delivery of programs and data collection tools to ensure the effectiveness of key strategies in delivering targeted student outcomes.



### 3.5 An expert teaching team

#### Findings

There is evidence that the leadership team acknowledges that the development of staff into an expert teaching team is central to improving student outcomes and are developing plans to support this.

There is evidence teachers show a willingness to trial new approaches. Some teachers express a need for greater continuity and the time to rigorously evaluate these trials.

Teachers individually video their lessons and reflect on their practice. A tool is used to focus reflection. Teachers can choose to send this to the principal.

Teachers in the school are experts in the fields in which they teach, have high levels of confidence in teaching in those fields and are eager to expand their knowledge. However there is little evidence of a formal structure for capitalising on and sharing this knowledge and expertise.

The master teacher intends to model and coach teachers on the new curriculum framework in Semester 2. The principal will support this by working alongside teachers.

There is evidence that feedback has been provided to staff following observation by members of the leadership team. The principal is building teacher confidence and ability in peer feedback before a more formal process is undertaken.

Teacher performance conversations have occurred in Semester 1, formal recording of plans will take place in Semester 2. Performance development plans for other staff have been completed.

#### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.

#### Improvement strategies

Design a systematic whole school approach to building teacher capacity including high quality professional development, coaching, mentoring, feedback and supervision processes to embed evidence-based teaching and build the consistency of delivery of teaching practices across the school.

Develop a whole school professional learning plan to reflect the school improvement agenda and include this in the developing performance plans for staff.



### 3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

#### Findings

The school has a new curriculum framework that will be implemented in Semester 2. This framework provides clarity regarding the intended curriculum and the use of existing effective teaching practices. The plan includes *Write 2 Read 2 Spell*, a school writing program and a school grammar and punctuation program.

The school has used Curriculum into the Classroom units (C2C) as the significant resource to deliver the Australian Curriculum. In Semester 2 the school will implement the framework that has been developed by Central Queensland region that defines core content (imperatives) for subject areas. This is also supported by the multi-age C2C units.

There is evidence that there has been a process to monitor the enacted curriculum across all classes. This process is currently being refined and reviewed along with the implementation of the curriculum framework.

The school has embedded an explicit instruction model that includes focus, choralling, *We are learning to (WALT)*, *What I am looking for (WILF)*, gradual release model and review and reflect (plough back).

A formal written report is issued for each student at the end of Semesters 1 and 2 and a modified report on student learning is issued in Terms 1 and 3. Parent teacher interviews are offered twice a year in Terms 2 and 3. The school encourages teachers to contact parents fortnightly or as needed by email.

#### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.

#### Improvement strategies

Consolidate the implementation of the school curriculum plan by developing a shared planning process, providing time for the development of a deep understanding of effective teaching practices and monitoring the enacted curriculum in all classrooms.

Ensure the focus remains on priority curriculum areas and the alignment of assessment and reporting.



### 3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

#### Findings

School leaders express commitment to success for all.

Inclusive practices are in place across the school for all verified students. Learning for verified students is supported by an inclusive advisory visiting teacher and a teacher aide.

Negotiated goal setting between teacher and student is evident in some classrooms. The practice of using data to inform student learning goals has been identified as a school priority for 2015 and beyond.

Gifted and talented programs include *Unify*, *booster* and *project 600*, *Readers cup* and robotics.

Teachers are using some approaches to differentiate the curriculum content including levelled groups for literacy and numeracy, targeted teacher-aide support and modified scaffolded work for individuals.

There is recognition by staff that students are at different stages in the learning process and some use of differentiated teaching is apparent. Teachers use periodic pre-testing to identify students' current knowledge, skills and understanding to identify starting points for teaching.

There is evidence of support for students with learning difficulties. However there is no apparent formal process for this identification, remediation and tracking of student progress over time.

Educational Adjustment Plans are in place for students with a disability. The school has developed Individual Curriculum Plans (ICPs) for identified students.

#### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.

#### Improvement strategies

Develop a school-wide approach to differentiation. Build on teacher understanding and skills in differentiated learning for the full range of students especially high-achieving students.

Formalise the process of identifying students requiring differentiated programs and the tracking of their progress over time.



### 3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

#### Findings

The school leadership team keeps abreast of research on effective teaching practices. There is recognition that highly effective teachers are the key to improving student learning. Effective teaching methods, including explicit instruction, are used to maximise learning in all classrooms.

The leadership team recognizes the need for a consistently delivered pedagogy as being critical to improving student outcomes. Changes in the leadership team have resulted in a revision of the published pedagogical framework.

Teachers demonstrate a sense of collective responsibility for ensuring further improvement of student learning. There is evidence of high quality teaching practices in classrooms, however, there is not always a clear alignment with the school pedagogical framework.

A range of artefacts related to particular pedagogies is evident in classrooms. Resources to support the explicit teaching model are displayed in all classrooms.

Students express an understanding of an 'A' standard of achievement and are able to articulate the purpose of exemplars and criteria sheets. Students also expressed a need for further challenging work.

Higher order thinking is not a commonly discussed practice. The school has identified tools including *Blooms Taxonomy* and the framework of *The Art and Science of Teaching* to develop higher order thinking skills that will be an integral part of the school curriculum framework.

#### Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.

#### Improvement strategies

Collaboratively review and refine the school pedagogical framework. Develop a strategic approach to embed the implementation of the framework to ensure consistency of teaching practices across the school.

Consolidate teacher professional knowledge of quality teaching strategies through focused and planned professional learning opportunities.



Monitor the effectiveness of curriculum implementation across the school with an emphasis on higher order thinking.



### **3.9 School and community partnerships**

#### **Findings**

The school has established and developed some beneficial partnerships with local businesses, community organisations and individuals to improve opportunities and learning outcomes for students.

The school has a small but active Parents and Citizens' (P&C) Association whose focus is on supporting the school and improving educational and physical resources. The P&C have established partnerships with many local businesses to support fundraising ventures.

The school is seen as a hub in the community and is held in high regard by parents and the wider community. School celebrations including concerts and fetes are well supported.

The school has built close relationships with local child care centres and kindergartens. The deputy principal has shared early start data over two years with the local pre-Prep providers. These organisations report this as a worthwhile partnership for ensuring successful transition into school.

The school communicates with the wider community through a variety of mechanisms such as email, Facebook, newsletters and school website.

The principal is building partnerships with Oakenden State School and Koumala State School to share and discuss effective practices.

There is evidence of access to activities such as transition programs with Sarina State High School including information sessions and transition days.

The school maintains relationships with a number of community organisations including Sarina Land Care, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Bulk Ports Corporation, Sarina Bendigo Bank, Central Queensland University and Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) Hay Point Services.

#### **Supporting data**

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, NAPLAN data targets 2018, higher order thinking strategy 2015, professional development program 2015, curriculum power point presentation, learning place edStudio, website, school newsletters, school emails to parents and staff, budget overview, pedagogical, assessment & reporting framework, staff, student, parents and leadership team interviews.

#### **Improvement strategies**

Continue to build partnerships to enhance student learning and wellbeing.



#### **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.