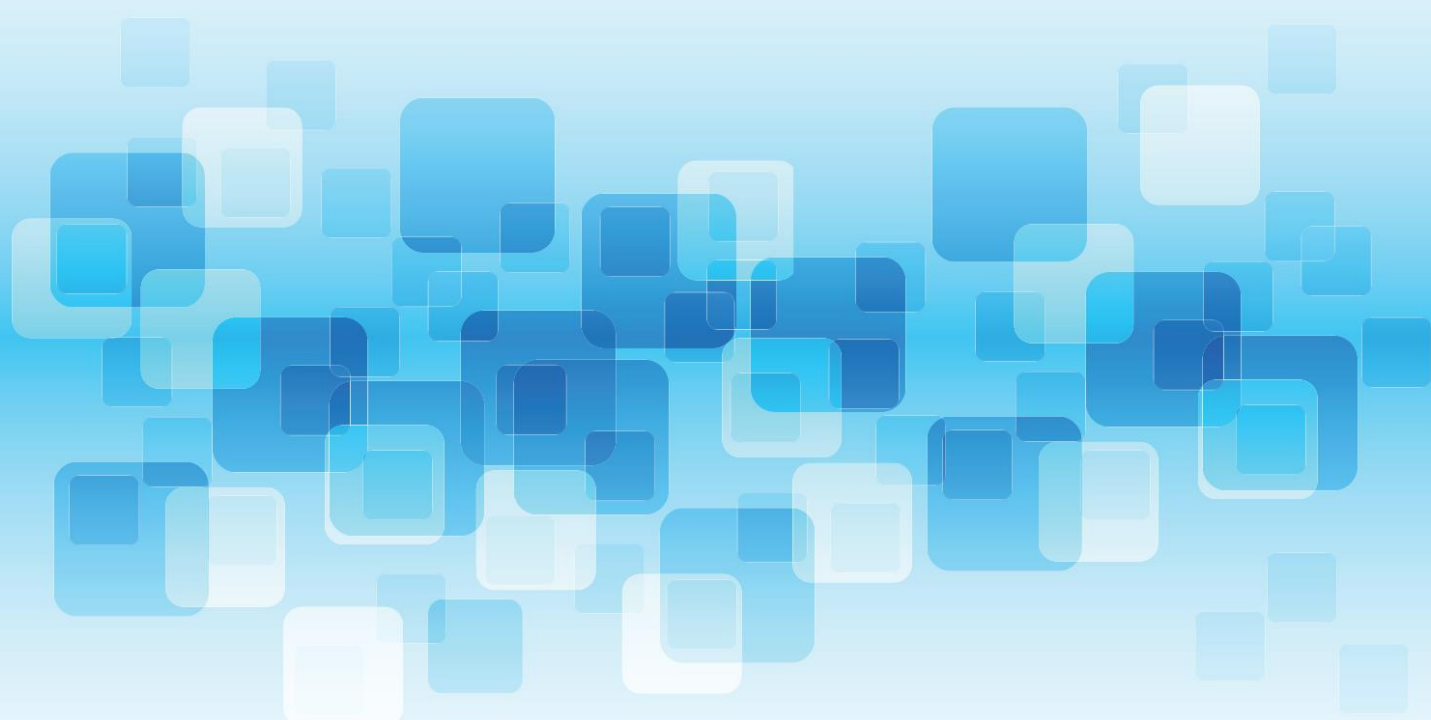




School Improvement Unit Report

Carmila State School





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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Carmila State School from 23 to 24 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:	Carmila West Road, Carmila
Education region:	Central Queensland
The school opened in:	1923
Year levels:	Prep to Year 6
Current school enrolment:	22
Indigenous enrolments:	0 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	0 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	978
Year principal appointed:	2006
Number of teachers:	1.9 classroom teachers
Nearby schools:	Koumala State School, Sarina State High School
Significant community partnerships:	Ambulance Services, Adopt-a-cop
Unique school programs:	Guitar program, Tennis coaching, Playgroup

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
 - Five teaching and non-teaching staff
 - Students
 - Principal of the high school and cluster primary school principal
 - Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association presidents 2014, 2015
 - Three parents
 - Chaplain
 - Corrective reading cluster teacher

1.4 Review team

Michelle D'Netto	Internal Reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Alex Neilson	Peer Reviewer

1.5 Reading the Report

The executive summary outlines key findings of the review of this school. The key improvement strategies prioritise future direction for improvement. The executive summary should be read along with the findings and improvement strategies outlined in the nine domains which provide a strategic view for improvement.



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- The school has a strong school culture of collaboration and care.

The school environment is welcoming, friendly and collaborative. Staff, students and parents have positive relationships and express high expectations for student behaviour and welfare. Staff express high expectations for student learning.

- The school has a clear improvement agenda.

The school's improvement agenda has five key priorities which includes reading, writing, spelling, attendance and parent engagement. These priorities have been articulated to staff and the community. The staff work collaboratively to achieve these priorities. Timelines for improvement are not clearly articulated.

- Supporting student needs and differentiated teaching practice is evident in classrooms.

All staff are committed to student improvement and supporting all student needs. Differentiated practices are evident in everyday classroom organisation and curriculum implementation. Students with specific needs have individual learning plans and all students have learning goals. Whole school documentation of differentiation is yet to be developed.

- The school uses the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) multi-age programs to support the learning of students.

The school has a unit overview organised in two-year cycles for English and maths. These units are adapted but there is no local documentation which reflects the school and the multi-age context from year to year. There is limited alignment between the maths curriculum plans and the Australian Curriculum (AC).

- Collaborative but informal school processes are in place for staff.

The small team of staff work collaboratively. This has reduced the frequency of formal processes such as staff meetings or coaching and feedback. There is limited documentation to support these processes.

- Para-professional staff play a key role in curriculum implementation.

Teacher-aides support the learning of students by working with individuals and groups. Teacher-aides work mainly with Prep students in the areas of reading and numeracy. Teachers support the learning of all students and provide professional development and mentoring for teacher-aides.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Review curriculum documentation with the collaborative assistance of cluster personnel to fully align units of work to the Australian Curriculum, particularly in the area of maths.
- Ensure the balance of teacher and of teacher-aides in the delivery of key teaching areas in the early years.
- Collaboratively action the improvement agenda with the new staff team and develop short term targets and timelines.
- Formalise school processes for meeting, decision making, coaching and mentoring.



3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

School leaders are driving an explicit improvement agenda consisting of five priorities which includes reading, writing and spelling, attendance and community engagement. This has been articulated through the school's 2015 Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and shared with staff and parents.

The staff are united and optimistic with regards to the school improvement agenda and there is evidence of a school-wide commitment to improve learning outcomes for all students in the school.

It is evident the school communicates clearly that it expects all students to learn successfully and has high expectations for student attendance and behaviour.

The school has strategies for improving levels of student achievement. Staff clearly demonstrate an eagerness to learn from local and international research and from other schools.

Reading practices have been successfully embedded especially across the early years. Explicit teaching strategies are consistently implemented across the school.

The staff have a comprehensive understanding of current student achievement levels. Targets for improvement in student achievement levels have been set and data is collected and monitored and used to inform teaching.

Supporting data

School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, whole school curriculum documentation, school assessment and data plan, school pedagogical framework, interviews with staff and parents, classroom observations.

Improvement strategies

Consolidate the priorities of the school improvement agenda and develop short term timelines and targets.

Monitor the progress towards targets and continually evaluate the effectiveness of programs implemented.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The school has developed and is implementing a plan for the systematic collection of a range of student outcome data based on regional targets and timelines. Data collected includes PAT-R, PAT-M, PAT-S, PM Benchmark, PROBE and National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) re-testing.

Informal data conversations occur between the teaching staff on a regular basis. Some data is analysed and used to inform intervention groups and teaching strategies.

Student achievement in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2014 Mean Scale Score (MSS) in Years 3 and 5 is similar to the nation in all strands. Upper Two Bands (U2B) data reflects that Years 3 and 5 are similar or above the nation. The school is performing above its decile value and shown significant improvement from 2008 to 2014 relative to similar Queensland state schools in most strands. It should be noted that cohorts are small.

There is some inconsistency between student achievement results in NAPLAN and student's level of achievement in school reporting data.

All teaching staff have access to data, however, all data is not entered on to OneSchool.

Some staff identify as having proficient data literacy. Professional development has been offered to develop and enhance staff skills in analysing and interpreting data.

There is some evidence that data is used to develop a culture of self-reflection and feedback.

Attendance data is tracked and pro-active strategies are in place to address attendance issues.

Supporting data

School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, assessment and data collection plan, school data spreadsheets, OneSchool, interviews with staff, school professional development plan, staff performance plans.

Improvement strategies

Consideration should be given to triangulation of data and moderation to improve the consistency of judgement.

Develop systems for all staff to access student learning data and monitor student progress.

Continue to develop staff capacity to access data and use data to make informed decisions.



3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, student and parents interact.

Parents, staff, students and community members speak highly of the school, reporting that the school is a happy learning place. The principal and leadership team have worked with families and community to increase their involvement in the school.

Students of all age groups play together and all staff and community members report that there is a caring and nurturing learning environment at the school.

A communication booklet between parents and the school is sent home daily. Stickers and stamps are used as incentives.

Students are given a timetable of the day's lessons. This ensures students are aware of the teaching and learning that is to occur throughout the day.

Student's independent workbooks contain written feedback. Both praise and recommendations are recorded and student-teacher conferences occur when issues are detected.

Attendance is a strong focus for 2015 and a target of 95 per cent has been set for the end of the year. Staff make contact with parents of students with low attendance. At the time of the review the attendance figures were recorded at 96.9 per cent.

The School Opinion Survey data reflects the high levels of satisfaction with the school.

Supporting data

School Opinion Survey, OneSchool attendance data, staff, students, parent and community member interviews, school artefacts, Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students, school newsletter and website.

Improvement strategies

Continue to engage all members of the school and wider community in increasing regular school attendance.

Promote a school culture that focuses on high expectations that all students will learn successfully.

Focus on engaging students in their learning by celebrating individual and school-wide successes.

3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The allocation of resources is applied to meet the learning and wellbeing of students. The 2015 Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), budget and Great Results Guarantee (GRG) funds are aligned to improving outcomes for students. The budget balance which includes targeted funds for GRG and the Reap cluster is at \$102,919.

GRG funds have been allocated for additional teacher-aide time. Teacher-aides support the early year's program, particularly in the teaching of reading and number in Prep. Teacher-aides are collaborative partners in student learning.

Timetabling and use of staff have been considered and used to deliver a variety of support programs to the students. Friday is the focus day for the delivery of intervention and support programs.

Personnel such as the chaplain, guidance office and the administrative officer are also used to support student learning and welfare.

Wellbeing programs such as *FRIENDS for Life* are offered and a staff member is trained in the delivery of this program. In the absence of specialist teachers, staff expertise is used in the areas of physical education and music.

The school has a one-to-one ratio of computers. The Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association donate three computers each year to the school. Interactive whiteboards are central to every day teaching. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) are used to access online programs such as *Reading Eggs*, *Mathletics*, *Unify* and *Booster* writing. The budget indicates provisional funds for asset replacement.

The school effectively uses its physical environment and spaces to maximise student learning. A vegetable garden provides an outdoor learning space for the students.

Guitar and tennis lessons are offered through a user-pay system and this has been acknowledged by students and parents.

Supporting data

Budget overview report, interviews with staff, playground and classroom observations, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Great Results Guarantee.

Improvement strategies

Ensure the balance of teacher and of teacher-aides in the delivery of key teaching areas in the early years.

Strengthen the alignment of the professional development of staff and the school priorities, and ensure adequate fiscal support.



3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

Staff have a strong sense of shared responsibility for the welfare and learning of all students. There is a strong culture of collaboration and teamwork.

The principal and teaching staff have strong networks. There are plans for cluster moderation and shared professional development in place for the remainder of the year. There are opportunities for modelling professional learning. Staff discussions are informal and on a needs basis. These discussions are not recorded and formalised.

Teacher turnover is acknowledged. Informal induction processes are in place and this includes regular discussions and mentoring. Collegial mentoring, rather than coaching is the preferred process in this context.

Some formal processes to observe teaching and provide feedback using an observation and feedback tool are planned.

An expert, shared by the cluster of schools, works closely with teachers and teacher-aides in the delivery of the accelerated program called *Corrective Reading*.

All staff have professional learning plans and developing performance plans that align to the school priorities.

Supporting data

Interviews with staff, whole school professional learning plans, developing performance plan, budget overview report, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Great Results Guarantee.

Improvement strategies

Develop formal processes for all staff to meet on a regular basis and maintain records of these meetings.

Implement coaching and feedback for staff using agreed processes and align these processes to the improvement agenda and pedagogical framework.

3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The school has developed and implemented a curriculum unit overview for literacy and numeracy that is linked to Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C). The school has endeavoured to ensure the Australian Curriculum (AC) is embedded in teaching programs. C2C assessment is used and the lessons are adapted to suit the needs of students.

All teachers adapt C2C units to suit their multi-age setting. Some staff stated that they find the units too demanding for a multi-age classroom.

NAPLAN readiness is a major focus and the data gained is used for further planning to address areas of need.

The school's curriculum implements a two year rotation of units for English in the multi-aged classrooms.

There is a focus on priority literacy learning to ensure all students are proficient in basic literacy. Programs and teaching practices in place to promote literacy include *Support a Writer*, *C2C spelling*, *Sheena Cameron's*, *Teaching Comprehension Strategies*¹, *Reading Eggs*, *Jolly Phonics*, guided reading, phonics warm-ups, book talk and the creation of reading goals.

Guided reading is timetabled for four times a week. Teacher-aides support the delivery of the program especially in the teaching of Prep students. All students also participate in *Corrective Reading*.

A program for writing moderation with cluster schools has been devised but is yet to be implemented.

Science units are based on *Primary Connections: Linking science with literacy* and there is a three-year rotation for these units.

Civics and citizenship (AC) is to be implemented this year.

Supporting data

Staff and student interviews, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, curriculum framework, school unit overviews.

¹ Cameron, Sheena 2009, *Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies: A Practical Classroom Guide*, Pearson, New Zealand.



Improvement strategies

Align school programs adapted from C2C against the Australian Curriculum to ensure that the curriculum is comprehensively covered in the multi-age setting.

Enact the writing moderation program with cluster schools.

Monitor the effectiveness of literacy programs based on student achievement data.

3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The school ensures that teachers and staff identify student needs and cater for these individual needs. Teaching practices across the school reflect a belief that all students can learn. Staff continually endeavour to provide the right opportunities and necessary support to provide ideal learning conditions for all students.

Teachers work at understanding where students are in their learning. Some data is used to make decisions about starting points for student learning and appropriate grouping structures. Accelerated learning opportunities are provided for high achieving students.

Teachers encourage students to monitor their own learning and goals are developed with the students and monitored every five weeks. All students have individual goals for English, maths and social outcomes.

Tasks are differentiated within the multi-age classrooms. Assessment delivery is also differentiated in accordance with students' needs. Although seen in practice, there was no school-wide differentiation plan cited.

Programs to support the welfare of students are offered and run by the Chaplain and staff. The guidance officer and external agencies support the needs of students when required.

Parents are encouraged to be partners in student learning. Teachers work with parents to ensure the best possible outcomes for students. Individual Curriculum Plans (ICPs) and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are developed for student success.

Technology is also used to extend student learning and develop independent learners.

There was some evidence of higher-order thinking skills and strategies being used and taught.

Students say that their work is challenging.

Supporting data

Interviews with staff, parents and students, classroom observations, school curriculum documents, student bookwork, School Data Profile.

Improvement strategies

Embed the general capabilities with a focus on higher-order thinking strategies across the curriculum.

Fully embed the use of data as a tracking mechanism for student improvement and differentiation.

3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The school recognises that highly effective teaching is the key to student success. The school has a pedagogical framework based on the regional model and aspects of Archer and Hughes² and the work of John Fleming.

Evidence-based teaching strategies are prevalent. The principal is providing on-site training for new teachers in explicit instruction. Explicit instruction is practised in all classrooms.

The principal has received feedback and coaching from peers in explicit teaching and the school was visited by a pedagogical coach once a term in 2014 and advised in best practice.

Informal feedback is offered regularly, with teachers discussing teaching practices and curriculum implementation.

Direct instruction, as part of the *Corrective Reading* strategy is taught up to three times a week.

Goals setting is a part of classroom practice.

There is some evidence of the development of extension programs for potentially high achieving students, for example the Year 5 *Booster* program and Gifted and Talented Plan. The school's approach to teaching higher-order thinking skills is yet to be fully developed.

Supporting data

Curriculum planning documents, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, interviews with staff, classroom artefacts, School Data Profile, school website.

Improvement strategies

Commence formal coaching and feedback sessions for teachers.

Review the school's pedagogical framework to ensure the continued fit for purpose and the ownership of this document by all staff.

Build teacher capacity and capability of explicit teaching by providing professional development sessions.

² Archer, AL and Hughes, CA 2011, *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*, Guilford Press, New York, USA.



3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

The school seeks ways to enhance student learning and welfare by partnering with parents and community.

The staff and various community members collaboratively maintain the grounds of the school.

Local adopt-a-cop and ambulance officers visit the school frequently. They provide information about their roles in the community and students with practical life skills.

Instrumental music is provided for students through a local musician who visits the school once a week. The majority of students attend these lessons.

The principal has initiated a pre-Prep playgroup that will commence early in Term 2. This initiative will connect potential parents with school-based programs and opportunities.

The principal works closely with the P&C to provide opportunities to support the teaching and learning that occurs at the school.

Strong partnerships exist with the local school cluster. Through the collaboration of these schools, a liaison officer for the *Corrective Reading* initiative has been established and successfully implemented.

The school has a formal parent and community strategy documented.

Supporting data

Interviews with staff and community members, school website, newsletter, School Opinion Survey, School Data Profile.

Improvement strategies

Continue to develop and implement programs and partnerships that utilise the expertise of the school community to engage in their children's learning and improve student achievement and wellbeing.

Maintain and promote pre-Prep engagement program and opportunities.

Consider strategies to engage the community in opportunities to celebrate successes in student achievement.



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.