

# Darling Heights State School

## Executive Summary



School  
Improvement  
Unit



Queensland  
Government



## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
1.1 Review team.....	3
1.2 School context.....	4
1.3 Contributing stakeholders .....	6
1.4 Supporting documentary evidence .....	6
2. Executive summary.....	7
2.1 Key findings .....	7
2.2 Key improvement strategies .....	9



## 1. Introduction

This report is a product of a review carried out by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU) at **Darling Heights State School** from **15 to 17 August 2017**.

The report presents 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 report's executive summary outlines key findings from the review and key improvement strategies that prioritise future directions for improvement.

Schools will publish the executive summary on the school website within two weeks of receiving the report.

The principal will meet with their Assistant Regional Director (ARD) to discuss the review findings and improvement strategies.

For more information regarding the SIU and reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the SIU [website](#).

### 1.1 Review team

Stephen Bobby	Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Ross Kubler	Peer reviewer
Judi Hanke	External reviewer



## 1.2 School context

<b>Location:</b>	Wuth Street, Darling Heights
<b>Education region:</b>	Darling Downs South West Region
<b>Year opened:</b>	1980
<b>Year levels:</b>	Prep to Year 6
<b>Enrolment:</b>	693
<b>Indigenous enrolment percentage:</b>	13 per cent
<b>Students with disability enrolment percentage:</b>	7 per cent
<b>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:</b>	980
<b>Year principal appointed:</b>	2005
<b>Full-time equivalent staff:</b>	49.94
<b>Significant partner schools:</b>	Harristown State High School, Southern Vale Cluster of Schools
<b>Significant community partnerships:</b>	University of Southern Queensland (USQ) – Pre-service Teachers, research partnerships, TYME music festival, performances, Student Mentors, English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) Storytelling and International Teacher visits; METRO Church – Breakfast Club, Student Mentors, resource assistance; Pure Land Learning College Association Inc. – Harmony Tour for school leaders, Professional Development (PD); Regional Sports Officers – sporting programs, Treat Day; Religious Instruction – variety of instruction available to students – Bahai and Christian (non-denominational); Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) – YMCA Darling Heights Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), Discos, Movie Nights, Morning Teas, fundraising; Family and Child Connect – student and family support; Queensland Police Service – Adopt-a-Cop, Rock and Water Program; variety of high schools – transition to high schools, work experience students, swimming, English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) collaboration, Creative Art Therapy; Technical and Further Education (TAFE) – students on Work Placement/Experience; Toowoomba Refugee and Migrant Support (TRAMS) – running Homework Club at school, support with families with refugee backgrounds; EVOLVE – student and family support for students in out-of-home care; MDA Ltd – work with students with refugee backgrounds, EAL/D students who join the school; Drayton Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) – ANZAC Day Parade Guest Speakers, book



	<p>presentations; Alannah &amp; Madeline Foundation – Better Buddies Program; parent help/volunteers – classroom help/reading to students, tuckshop, Homework Club, Craft Group, Principal Parent Forum; City Women - Bella Girls School Program; Denise Kable Campus – student and teacher support, PD; Southern Vale Cluster of Schools – PD, moderation, coaching and feedback; Scripture Union Queensland – School Chaplaincy Programs, Rock and Water Program, Friends for Life, Friends Program; Community Child And Youth Mental Health Service (CCYMHS) – student support and health; Queensland Health – Dental Van; Indigenous Services – Learning Club, Regional Indigenous Team, Indigenous Games Sports Officer; local businesses – supporting STAR of the week with prizes, Sunset Superbowl, Subway, Cruisin’ Cappuccinos, Grand Central Cinemas, Donut King, Skate Haven; Bunnings Warehouse – Woodwork Projects toolboxes, Gardening Projects, plants and worm farms; Toowoomba Regional Council – Leadership opportunities, Mayoral Breakfast, Census Information; Life Education – Van; Mercy Community Services – Fatima Women’s Program, Supporting families with refugee backgrounds; Early Childhood Providers – Transition to Prep (Goodstart Early Learning), Mirambeena Children’s Centre; Refugee and Migrant Settlement Services Support Interagency (RAMSSI); Queensland Program to Assist Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT); Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) – Census; QUOTA - Quota Cops Kids Altogether (QuoCKa) Volunteers and Police Reading with Students</p>
<p><b>Significant school programs:</b></p>	<p>Intensive English Centre English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D), Years 5/6 Program, Special Education Program (SEP), Learning Connections Program, Speech Sounds Pics (SSP) Program, Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI), Attend and Engage, Parent and Community Engagement, White Ribbon Program, Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), Early Years Transition Programs, sporting, musical and cultural programs, Harmony Day celebration, student support programs including Restart, Denise Kable, Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC), Community Circle Forum</p>



### 1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Principal, three deputy principals, explicit teaching coach, EAL/D coordinator, guidance officer, Student/Parent Engagement Officer, teacher librarian, 29 teachers, 12 teacher aides, two cleaners, Business Manager (BM), three administration officers, chaplain, Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) executive, 22 parents, and 44 students.

Community and business groups:

- Goodstart Early Learning Child Care Centre Toowoomba - Spring Street coordinator, A Country Garden Early Childhood Centre coordinator, YMCA Darling Heights OSHC coordinator.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- Principal of Harristown State High School, University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Leadership Institute critical friend.

Government and departmental representatives:

- State Member for Toowoomba South and ARD.

### 1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

School Implementation Plan 2017	DHSS Snapshot 2017
Investing for Success 2017	Strategic Plan 2014-2017
School Opinion Survey	Responsible Behaviour Plan
OneSchool	School budget overview
Key School Improvement Targets 2017	Curriculum planning documents
School pedagogical framework	DHSS Reading Plan - updated 2016
School Assessment Schedule 2017	School newsletters and website
DHSS – Preparation, Planning and Delivery Cycle	School Data Profile (Semester 2, 2017)
DHSS – Action Plan – School Improvement Agenda	Headline Indicators (Semester 2, 2016 release)
School-based curriculum, assessment and reporting framework	Professional Characteristic of Teachers at DHSS



## 2. Executive summary

### 2.1 Key findings

**Community leaders comment that the school is known more broadly in the wider community as the leader in multicultural inclusion and embracing diversity.**

All members of the school community speak with enthusiasm regarding their relationship with the school. The school caters for 328 English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) enrolled students, originating from 41 different countries. The school employs a dedicated Student/ Parent Engagement Officer in a full-time capacity. EAL/D families are supported using multiple pathways. The school is fostering an ongoing relationship with University of Southern Queensland (USQ) academic staff to develop an English language program at the school for EAL/D family members. The school has a clear expectation that all enrolled students, including students with disability and EAL/D students, have support mechanisms that are catered to their individual needs. The school identifies the range of support options available to students and planned support interventions are openly discussed with parents.

**The school leadership team and staff members are committed to improving the learning outcomes for all students.**

All areas are viewed as ongoing priorities for the school. It is apparent the specific focus for improvement in 2017 relates to a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading comprehension strategies and embedding the Explicit Instruction (EI) elements of the pedagogy framework. The principal reports these priorities form the core of what really makes a difference for students at the school. Staff members are dedicated to improving learning outcomes for all students and articulate a genuine belief that all students are able to learn and be successful.

**The school is committed to the embedding of the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) strategy.**

The school introduced PBL in 2008. The tone of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to an ordered learning environment. Many staff members comment that there are variations with regards to common understandings of major and minor behaviours and the appropriate strategies that were established across the whole-school.

**The school leadership team has established an expectation that student goal setting as product of classroom data analysis should be occurring for all students.**

Some teachers have developed individual goals for students. Many teachers acknowledge that goals require further development and refinement. In some classroom these goals are displayed. The manner in which student goals are developed, monitored and reviewed varies across the school. Some students are able to articulate their individual reading or learning goals and associated strategies for improvement.



**The school leadership team has analysed school performance data over a period of time and is aware of school trends, particularly in the priority area of reading.**

Data is utilised to inform school-level decisions regarding programs, resources and intervention programs for identified students. The leadership team articulates the importance of reliable student data as essential to improvement for student learning. The school is currently developing processes to review and interpret data grounded in the work of Sharratt's<sup>1</sup> *Putting Faces on the Data* framework. It is envisaged that this approach will create a common language for staff member discussions to focus on student success. The leadership team and teachers acknowledge that this process is yet to be embedded.

**All teachers are aware of the importance of differentiation to support and extend students academically.**

School leaders encourage teachers to differentiate their teaching to student needs and readiness. Teaching staff members utilise a range of diagnostic assessments to identify where students are at in their learning. Most teachers utilise student data to identify individual difficulties and misunderstandings, and set starting points for learning. They acknowledge that catering for higher performing students is essential in the curriculum planning and this is developing across the school. Students identify that the units of work presented by teachers are engaging and relevant. Some students express a desire for more rigour in the curriculum.

**It is apparent that the leadership team believes an expert teaching team is central to improving student outcomes.**

A coaching, mentoring and feedback framework developed in November 2016 recognises the previous training of teachers as coaches. The majority of staff members appreciate the current modelling, coaching, mentoring and feedback framework and recognise the need to maintain this strong focus on staff capacity building in the future. A statement on what it means to be a professional was developed in May 2017, following extensive consultation with staff members. The statement, entitled 'Professional Characteristics of Teachers at Darling Heights State School' describes 10 attributes of a professional and is prominently displayed around the school.

**The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing through fostering multiple productive community relationships.**

The school offers a weekly Indigenous homework program, supported by staff members from the Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC), Lifeline and USQ. Student attendance is supported through the *Tracks to Success* program coordinated by the school with support from Lifeline. CatholicCare Toowoomba offers English lessons and an exercise program to women from EAL/D families. The school offers a self-esteem program to students via the THRIVE program organised by the METRO Church. REAP Food Rescue is utilised to ensure all families have access to food basics. A weekly service of food delivery is donated to the school and distributed to families in need.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sharratt, L., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Putting faces on the data: What great leaders do!*. Corwin Press.



## 2.2 Key improvement strategies

Collaboratively review the PBL processes and procedures across the whole school to ensure consistency of practice and understanding of positive and reactive strategies.

Develop consistent practice to construct and review individual student learning goals aligned to the Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA).

Enhance staff data literacy skills to continue to build the capacity and confidence of teachers to track student progress, identify next steps for teaching and reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practice.

Ensure that extension of the curriculum is engaging and challenging for high performing students across the school and is fundamental to the curriculum planning process.