School Improvement Unit
Report

Kentville State School
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Kentville State School from 21 to 22 April 2016. It provides an evaluation of the school’s performance against the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool. It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to consider in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The review and report were completed by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU). For more information about the SIU and the new reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the Department of Education and Training (DET) website.

1.2 School context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Turpin Road, Kentville</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education region:</td>
<td>Darling Downs South West Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school opened in:</td>
<td>1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year levels:</td>
<td>Prep to Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current school enrolment:</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous enrolments:</td>
<td>35 per cent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students with disability enrolments:</td>
<td>8.8 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:</td>
<td>860</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year principal appointed:</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers:</td>
<td>2.62 (full-time equivalent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant community partnerships:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique school programs:</td>
<td>After school NAPLAN tutorial afternoons</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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 classroom and specialist teachers
  - 17 students
  - One administration officer and four teacher aides
  - Support Teacher Literacy and Numeracy (STLaN)
  - Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)
  - Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C) president
  - 12 parents

1.4 Review team

Andrew Helton  Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Richard Nash  Internal reviewer, SIU

1.5 Reading the report

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

2.1 Key findings

- The school believes that every student is capable of successful learning.

  The school works to maintain a learning environment that promotes intellectual rigour. Student and staff wellbeing are a high priority. There are processes in place to provide both academic and non-academic support to address individual needs.

- The school promotes and maintains an attractive and stimulating physical environment, reflective of its high expectations that all students will learn successfully.

  All students and staff members have a sense of belonging. All parents are welcome and all staff, students and parents speak highly of the school.

- The principal and staff members place a high priority regarding the understanding of students' learning needs in multi-age classes.

  Human, financial and physical resources are allocated to address these learning needs. The allocation of staff members is given careful consideration in relation to the achievement of maximum benefit for students' learning. This applies equally to permanent and visiting staff members. The skills and experience of each individual is considered, when deploying staff members to advantage learning outcomes for individual students and groups of students.

- The school has built a school-wide, professional team of capable teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom.

  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 principal builds networks that support professional development for staff members. The local small schools work together to develop understandings of assessment and pedagogical practices. This provides opportunities for the professional growth of staff members.

- Parents, students and staff members speak positively of the individual attention students receive, the work of staff members and the support provided to families.

  The school has established partnerships with families, schools and local community organisations with the purpose of improving the opportunities for students. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their students’ education. The P&C is supportive of, and committed to, improving opportunities and outcomes for all students.
• The principal and staff members identify the core priorities of the school are to improve student-learning outcomes and provide a high level of pastoral care.

A cohesive, positive and caring staff fulfils this commitment on a daily basis.

The school has developed a comprehensive school improvement agenda based on the strategic plan of the past four years. This agenda reflects the Annual Implementation Plan 2016. Within the broad plan, the school identifies oral literacy as the focus for explicit improvement.

• The principal assigns a priority to the recruitment, retention and development of the teachers available.

There is a deliberate policy of promoting staff, who are consistent with their approach to the school ethos and to positive relationships with students and parents. This strategy requires staff members to undertake a variety of professional roles within the school.

• The school uses data to inform school-level decisions, identify starting points for improvement, inform intervention strategies and track the performances of students from priority groups.

All teaching staff members have access to a wide range of student achievement and wellbeing data and use it to analyse and study individual and cohort progress. Classroom teachers use individual data sheets to track student-learning outcomes across a range of curriculum areas, in order to summarise weekly teaching adjustments. Staff members identify the need to strengthen skills in this area.

• The school recognises that highly effective teaching is the key to the improvement of student learning throughout the school.

The teaching staff takes a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms, to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. The school’s pedagogical framework lists a range of pedagogical approaches.
2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Review and refine the school's strategic planning processes to ensure that a clearly articulated Explicit Improvement Agenda is narrow and sharp and is accompanied by timelines, targets and appropriate resourcing.

- Seek professional development opportunities from other areas to support the development of staff members' skills who undertake multiple professional roles.

- Build teacher capacity to extend the range of data analysis skills to inform teaching practice.

- Collaboratively review and update the school's pedagogical framework to reflect the current approaches used within classrooms.
3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The principal and staff members identify the core priorities of the school are to improve student-learning outcomes and provide a high level of pastoral care. Cohesive, positive and caring staff members fulfil this commitment on a daily basis.

The school has developed a comprehensive school improvement agenda based on the strategic plan of the past four years. This agenda is reflected in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) 2016.

Within the broad plan, the school identifies oral literacy as the focus for the Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA). Staff members and members of the Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C) are aware of elements within the EIA.

The school demonstrates that it understands current student achievement levels, and how these achievement levels change over time. Strategies are implemented to track student progress: including students facing disadvantage, Students with Disability (SWD), students from non-English speaking backgrounds, Indigenous students and those from low-socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds.

Policies for student attendance and behaviour are communicated and the school expects all students to learn successfully.

Staff members use regular assemblies, internal and external signage, verbal reminders and articles in regular newsletters, to remind all school community members of their high expectations.

Weekly topics provide strategies for improvement to student wellbeing and behaviour. Students are reminded regarding the explicit issues and are provided with examples of how they can manage their effort and behaviour, in accordance with the selected theme.

Targets for improved student achievement levels are documented and can be articulated by senior students.

Achievement progress is mapped against the student’s individual data sheet. Some parents are not yet clear regarding their students’ targets for improvement.

The teaching team comprises of classroom teachers and teacher aides who are united in their commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning within the school. They identify a barrier to success as being the transient nature of families and the low SES of the community. They successfully work together to instil pride in the community and engage parents and students in school improvement.
Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2013-2016, Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, budget overview, OneSchool, school website, school newsletters, staff newsletters, differentiation placemat, individual advancement plans, school opinion survey, staff, student and community interviews.

Improvement strategies

Review and refine the school’s strategic planning processes to ensure that a clearly articulated EIA is narrow and sharp and is accompanied by timelines, targets and appropriate resourcing.

Clearly communicate the EIA to all school staff members and parents.

Ensure that student learning goals are aligned to the school improvement agenda and are known by parents.
3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

There is clear evidence that the principal views reliable and relevant data as essential to school leadership and to the school’s improvement agenda.

The school has developed and implemented a plan for the systematic collection of a range of student outcome data, including both assessment tools and quality classroom assessments for literacy and numeracy.

The school uses data to inform school-level decisions, identify starting points for improvement, inform intervention strategies and track the performances of students from priority groups. Classroom teachers use individual data sheets to track student learning outcomes across a range of curriculum areas to summarise weekly teaching adjustments.

All teaching staff members have access to a wide range of student achievement and wellbeing data and use it to analyse and study individual and cohort progress. Staff members identify the need to strengthen skills in this area.

The school employs data to monitor progress over time. A range of assessment tools to monitor student progress includes: Benchmark Assessment by Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C.\(^1\) Words Their Way\(^2\), PAT–R and PAT–M.

Professional development expands staff members’ skills in the analysis and interpretation of data. Teachers indicate a need to strengthen their professional development in using OneSchool applications.

Time is set aside each week for staff discussions regarding achievement data and strategies for the continuous improvement of student outcomes.

National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data indicates that in 2015, the school performed statistically below Similar Queensland State Schools (SQSS) in terms of the percentage of students achieving in the Upper Two Bands (U2B) in Year 3, in all areas except writing. In relation to the percentage of students achieving in the U2B, students in Year 5 performed statistically above SQSS in the areas of reading, spelling and grammar and punctuation.

In relative gain (2013-2015), the school performed above SQSS in writing, grammar, and punctuation, and below SQSS in numeracy.


Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, budget overview, OneSchool, school website, school newsletters, staff newsletters, differentiation placemat, individual advancement plans, school opinion survey, staff and student interviews.

Improvement strategies

Build teachers’ capacity to extend the range of data analysis skills to inform teaching practice.

Review and extend the data collection plan to include all curriculum learning areas.

Utilise regional resources to assist teachers to develop their understanding of OneSchool applications such as the class dashboard tool.
3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

The school believes that every student is capable of successful learning and endeavours to maintain a learning environment that promotes intellectual rigour. The provision of after school tutoring in NAPLAN and other curriculum areas supports this goal.

Student wellbeing and achievement are at the centre of the positive and caring relationships within the school community. Staff members consider these relationships essential to the effective learning occurring within the school.

There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among staff members. Interactions between staff, students, parents and families are caring, polite and inclusive.

Students and staff members can clearly articulate the strategies and processes used within the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) framework. Ranges of both tangible and verbal incentives are used within the school to promote successful behavioural expectations. These are reinforced at end of week assemblies and during class activities.

The school promotes and maintains an attractive and stimulating physical environment, reflective of its high expectations that all students will learn successfully. The development of facilities over the past 12 months includes a refurbished office area that allows for meetings with parents and community members.

All students and staff members have a sense of belonging. All parents are welcome and all staff, students and parents speak highly of the school. A number of families choose to attend this school.

The school places a high priority on student and staff wellbeing and has processes to provide both academic and non-academic support to address individual needs.

The school’s student attendance level was 93.4 per cent in 2015. All year levels show attendance levels above 85 per cent. 5.9 per cent of students attended school in 2015 for less than 85 per cent of the school year.

School Opinion Survey (SOS) data for 2015 indicates a high level of satisfaction from students, staff and parents. All indicators were rated as above those for like primary schools.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, school website, school newsletters, staff newsletters, school opinion survey, staff, student and community interviews.

Improvement strategies

Continue the development and embedding of PB4L standards.
3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The principal and staff members place a high priority in regards to understanding the learning needs of students in multi-age classes. Human, financial and physical resources are allocated to address these learning needs. Processes to monitor outcomes from these strategies are established. Staff members and parents indicate a high level of satisfaction concerning the provision of resources at the school.

Resources are allocated through budgetary processes with a focus on human resources to support student learning. The current bank balance is $68,979. Investing for Success (I4S) funds for 2016 are $20,400 and are allocated to employ additional part-time Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) services, teacher aide hours and a part-time classroom teacher.

Careful consideration is given to the allocation of staff members to achieve maximum benefit for student’s learning. This applies equally to permanent and visiting staff members. The skills and experience of each individual is considered when deploying staff members to advantage learning outcomes for individual students and groups of students.

The school uses a finance hub based in another location to support the purchasing, revenue and expenditure processes.

The school provides a targeted case management approach during fortnightly student services’ meetings, to ensure that information regarding new enrolments is collected to determine the level of additional support that may be required. The approach includes careful collection, recording and sharing of data between the previous school, classroom teacher, principal, support staff members and parents, to collegially develop any required support strategy.

Systematic processes for the collection of student learning data to identify areas of student learning needs are in place. The school has developed systems for the monitoring of student progress. Staff members discuss current and future resourcing implications for students during regular staff meetings.

The physical environment and facilities provide spacious classrooms and outside learning areas that allow for whole class, small group and individual work spaces. Physical resources, including those to meet the needs of identified students with a disability, promote the safe and engaging learning environment of the school.

The school is strategically developing the grounds and facilities to enhance student learning outcomes. Members of the school community work to attract grants from community organisations and utilise a range of sustainable practices.

There is a range of digital devices for student use, including classroom desktop computers, interactive whiteboards, laptops and iPads. The principal demonstrates a high level of skill in ensuring these digital support devices are utilised successfully for learning.
The P&C provides significant funding to supplement school resources. Recent funding of $5000 from the P&C contributed to the provision of learning materials and a subsidy for uniforms for students.

The school has policies to guarantee that resources are available to ensure learning opportunities are equitable for all students. The school utilises a capped fee program that supports the purchase of required annual student stationery and material needs.

The school uses a paid text message service to communicate with school community members, which enables the purposeful monitoring of attendance, school events' updates and the distribution of affirming messages regarding student behaviour.

**Supporting data**

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, budget overview, OneSchool, school newsletters, staff newsletters, staff, student and community interviews.

**Improvement strategies**

Monitor the school's programs and initiatives to ensure the effectiveness of targeted strategies in driving improved student achievement.

Maintain the strategic purchasing processes ensuring maximum benefit of financial resources.

Continue to identify and utilise sustainable environmental practices relative to the local context.
3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

The school has built a school-wide, professional team of capable teaching staff, including staff members who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom.

Effective procedures encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.

The principal leads and models professional learning. Teaching staff members utilise *Essential Skills for Classroom Management* by Christine Richmond\(^3\) (ESCM) and *Classroom Profiling* to develop reflective teaching practices.

The principal prioritises the recruitment, retention and development of the best possible teachers available. There is a policy of promoting staff, who are consistent with their approach to the school ethos, and to positive relationships with students and parents. This strategy requires staff members to undertake a variety of professional roles within the school.

Teaching staff have high levels of confidence regarding their teaching. They focus on the development of pedagogy and continual improvement of their current teaching practices. Teachers valued the input from the 2015 regional pedagogical coach to improve these teaching practices. They indicate the continuance of similar support would enhance their teaching and learning.

The school expects all teachers to be highly committed to the continuous improvement of their teaching practice. Their use of online discussion lists, the Learning Place and other cluster initiatives assists in their improvement of student learning.

The principal develops networks that support professional development for staff members. To develop understanding of assessment and pedagogical practices, the small local schools work together. This provides opportunities for the professional growth of staff members.

The school has a professional learning plan and associated budget to support local and system priorities.

The principal ensures that opportunities are created for teachers to work and plan together, and to learn from each other’s practices within the district. The use of written feedback and coaching is a developing practice.

\(^3\) Richmond, C. *Essential Skills for Classroom Management*. education.qld.gov.au
Supporting data


Improvement strategies

Seek professional development opportunities from other areas to support the development of staff members’ skills as they undertake multiple professional roles.

Identify human resources to support pedagogical improvement within the classroom.
3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The school has an explicit, coherent and sequenced whole-school curriculum plan for its multi-age classes. This plan makes it clear what teachers should teach and when students should learn. The curriculum plan is developed, in consultation with other cluster schools and includes yearly overviews. It is developed and reviewed annually by the school’s curriculum coordinator. The overviews are shared and discussed with classroom teachers at regular staff meetings.

The Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) resource delivers the Australian Curriculum (AC) in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, arts, civics and citizenship, technology and health.

Teaching staff use AC content descriptors to track the curriculum implementation in subject areas. The curriculum coordinator quality assures the alignment of the three-year cycle of classroom unit plans. The alignment between the full range of the mandated AC and the curriculum plan are not yet clear.

The school has a structured, scheduled curriculum plan. This is to outline the Mathematics and English assessment tasks and diagnostic tools for classroom use, to enhance student-learning outcomes and inform teaching practices. The plan is linked with the regional benchmarks. An assessment schedule for other key learning areas is yet to be fully developed.

Classroom teachers use a wide variety of resources to support their teaching and assessment practices. Mathematics textbooks support classroom-teaching activities.

Staff members provide optional afterschool tutorial support to assist students in readiness for the annual NAPLAN assessment tools. Students and families welcome these sessions, which provide students with one-on-one assistance to understand the structure of this formal assessment.

The school conducts organised educational excursions each term. These trips support the classroom curriculum activities and provide opportunities life skills for students who may otherwise not have these experiences.

Systematic moderation processes occur at regular times throughout the year. External moderation involving a number of cluster schools occurs twice a year. Other moderation opportunities happen on an informal basis with a neighbouring school. The school cluster has developed a documented approach to moderation.

Selected staff members deliver the MultiLit Making up Lost Time in Literacy program. This intervention program provides targeted and structured lessons to increase students’ literacy skills.

Each semester report cards are issued and formal parent teacher interviews are scheduled for Terms 1 and 3. Parents indicate that informal discussions occur regularly.
with teaching staff. Parents report a high level of appreciation for classroom teachers’ willingness to discuss their students’ learning progress, and provide strategies to support learning at home.

**Supporting data**

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, Investing for Success 2016, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, professional learning plan 2016, pedagogical framework, curriculum, assessment and reporting framework, OneSchool, school newsletters, staff newsletters, differentiation placemat, individual advancement plans, school opinion survey, staff and student interviews.

**Improvement strategies**

Review and update the school assessment schedule to include all key learning areas.

Review the whole-school curriculum plan to ensure the skills, knowledges and understandings from all units are addressed.
3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

All students are grouped in multi-age classes. Staff members believe that all students are at a different stage in their learning and require individual levels of instruction.

Systematic school processes including data collection, identification of students for intervention and program adjustments, support students in the setting and monitoring of individual learning goals, and protocols for communicating with parents.

Data to support differentiation practices is stored electronically and compares student achievement outcomes with NAPLAN, A-E report cards and diagnostic assessment information. Data is colour-coded to allow efficient interpretation by classroom teachers.

The school has designed and implemented Individual Curriculum Plans (ICP) for those students requiring a high level of support according to departmental policies. Individual learning plans are created for other students requiring additional support.

Classroom teachers use a range of programs aligned to the improvement agenda of oral literacy to support individual students. These programs include Structured Tier Two Robust Instruction of Vocabulary Experiences (STRIVE), Oral Language Early Years (OLEY) program, Light Education Ministries (LEM) phonics program and Read It Again. Staff members monitor student progress to ensure improved learning outcomes and identify starting points for the teaching of required concepts.

Flexible classroom arrangements and learning areas support a range of instructional modes including whole class, small group and individual activities. Parent volunteers provide additional assistance for small group activities.

The Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) provides classroom teachers and teacher aides with detailed support plans for students to strengthen language skills. The SLP provides guided model lessons to demonstrate the correct application of the program.

The Special Education Program (SEP) teacher is closely involved in the teaching and monitoring of identified students. SEP students have targeted lessons to build individual skill levels and understandings and are integrated into the whole class for follow up activities.

The school engages with parents to set learning goals for students and provide guidance for parents who may require assistance in accessing allied health support. The process of developing individual learning goals is a growing practice across the school.

Supporting data

Improvement strategies

Document school-wide expectations and common practices for developing student-learning goals aligned to the school’s improvement agenda.
3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The school recognises that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. The school’s pedagogical framework lists a range of pedagogical approaches.

The teaching staff adopts a strong leadership role, which encourages the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods from Archer and Hughes' *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching* (EI), including We are learning to (WALT), What I’m looking for (WILF) and This is because (TIB) to maximise student learning.

In 2015, a regional pedagogy coach provided feedback and effective pedagogical practices within the framework of EI.

The principal provides teachers with ongoing feedback regarding their classroom practices. The curriculum coordinator uses structured opportunities to provide feedback regarding planning.

Students report that they are engaged, challenged, feel safe to take risks and are supported to learn. Teaching staff provide feedback to enable students to understand what actions are required to strengthen their learning, and the provision of feedback is appropriate for the student’s abilities.

The principal has established and communicated clear expectations concerning the use of effective teaching strategies throughout the school.

Through attendance at cluster and regional meetings and maintaining online community memberships, the school remains up-to-date regarding effective evidence-based teaching practices.

Teachers actively seek professional development regarding their pedagogical practice and improved understanding of the EI model.

Supporting data


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Improvement strategies

Collaboratively review and update the school’s pedagogical framework to reflect the current approaches used within classrooms.
3.9 School-community partnerships

Findings

The school has established partnerships with families, school and local community organisations. The purpose is to improve opportunities for students and to improve the school’s internal and external environments.

The establishment of a nature reserve called the Koala Café involved a range of local, state and private schools, as well as environmental groups such as Volunteers Australia. This outdoor learning area offers a safe environment for local wildlife and provides environmental education study opportunities.

The school has strong links with its nearby schools and is involved in the wider cluster of schools. This relationship is used to enhance quality student learning outcomes by encouraging shared planning and collaboratively developed resources.

The region recognises that the principal is a leader who actively mentors new or beginning principals.

Parents, students and staff members speak positively of the individual attention students receive, the work of staff members and the support to families. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children’s education.

The school provides a range of pastoral care strategies to support student engagement and learning. These strategies include a daily breakfast club and chaplaincy services.

The P&C is supportive of, and committed to, improving opportunities and outcomes for all students. The P&C conducts fundraising events involving local businesses throughout the year to subsidise school resources, uniform costs and student activities. The P&C conducts a weekly Tuckshop.

Local government representatives and community members are involved in school-based celebrations such as leadership ceremonies and ANZAC Day.

The school conducts a transition to Prep program in Semester 2 of the preceding year of enrolment. This program happens on a weekly basis to allow prospective students and their parents to attend during school time. During this time, staff members provide information to new parents and work with future students to gauge possible learning needs.

Some activities to support the transition of students to secondary schooling are available. The school relays information to families regarding the orientation days of the two local high schools. Students with a disability participate in additional transition opportunities where the chaplain and Support Teacher Literacy and Numeracy (STLaN) accompany them to orientation days.
Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2016, school website, school newsletters, school opinion survey, staff, student and community interviews.

Improvement strategies

Engage with local high schools to extend the transition to secondary schools opportunities for students.

Review the school’s community partnerships to ensure that they are having their intended impact on improving student outcomes.

Continue to develop professional working relationships with surrounding schools.
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.