School Improvement Unit
Report

Darling Point Special School

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Darling Point Special School from 28 to 30 October 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:	368 Upper Esplanade, Manly
Education region:	Metropolitan
The school opened in:	1958
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12
Current school enrolment:	122
Indigenous enrolments:	Eight per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	100 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	n/a
Year principal appointed:	1994
Number of teachers:	27.4 (full-time equivalent)
Nearby schools:	Manly State School, Wynnum State School, Wynnum State High School, Brisbane Bayside State College, Wynnum West State School, Wondall Heights State School
Significant community partnerships:	Bartons Motors, James Hardy Pty Ltd, Wynnum Manly Seagulls, Institute of Applied Analysis, Help Industries, University College of Copenhagen, Griffith University, Chambers of Commerce
Unique school programs:	Step Up to Employment, Coffee on Point, Chocks, International Interns from Denmark, Japan and Netherlands, Positive Behaviour

	Support, Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care

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 Assistant Regional Director

- a school visit of three days

- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:

  o Principal and deputy principal

  o Members of the school council and Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C)

  o Literacy teacher and master teacher

  o 31 teachers

  o Guidance officer, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech language pathologist

  o Chaplain/youth support worker, social worker and community liaison officer

  o Eight teacher-aides

  o Business Services Manager (BSM) and three administration officers

  o Seven current students and three former students

  o Nine community partners

1.4 Review team

Patricia Thiedeman   Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)

Ray Hack   Internal reviewer, SIU

Josephine Wiley   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 principal drives the use of effective evidence-based pedagogies to inform teaching and learning outcomes for all students.

  The school uses a variety of strategies to bring people with expertise into the school and to ensure they develop skills in existing staff members through co-teaching. Innovative strategies include engaging professionals with specialist knowledge in hydrotherapy and conductive education, collaboration with Copenhagen, Griffith and Macquarie Universities, and partnerships with the Institute of Applied Behaviour Analysis (IABA).

- Parents, staff and community partners commend the school's Positive Behaviour Support approach as highly effective in supporting students and their families.

  The school's well established evidence-based, positive behaviour support model is a student-centred approach with systems and processes to achieve functional, contextual and communicative goals, and to promote safety, relationships and learning.

- The school leadership team utilises a wide range of systemic and school-based data to inform school improvement priorities.

  A range of student achievement data is used to inform program development, class and student groupings, and various interventions. The school has an embedded culture of collecting and representing data in graphs, charts and portfolios. Some teachers are analysing data and using data to inform decisions about teaching and learning. Teachers across the school have varying levels of data literacy.

- The school provides multiple opportunities for staff to engage in professional learning.

  There is a strong commitment from staff to engage in professional learning. School leaders model and participate in professional learning activities alongside teaching staff. There is currently no structured ongoing process to provide teachers with feedback through an agreed observation procedure.

- The school implements creative school-wide solutions using a flexible and student-centred approach.

  School leaders routinely adjust the human resource allocation to match staff to group and individual needs of students while also monitoring staff wellbeing. This includes forming small groups, sharing of students across groups, and staff working with individual students with complex needs. Team leader positions for the four phases of learning; early years, middle, senior and Step Up are in place and valued by teachers and teacher-aides. Some staff commented the school would benefit from more classified and volunteer leadership positions.

- The school's *Step Up to Employment* program enables students to transition to post-school successfully.

  A unique program established by the school for students in years 12 and extension is the Step Up to Employment program. This program supports inclusion of students in the wider community, and individual programing based on the student's goals and aspirations which enable them to transition to post-school successfully.

- The school principal identified the teaching of numeracy in the school is an area for development.

  The school was successful in obtaining a $255 000 Collaboration and Innovation grant to pursue innovative teacher practices through research in mathematics. Discussions with teachers confirmed a priority for the school in 2016 is to improve numeracy instruction and build teacher capacity.

  Teachers enlist the support of the key teacher in literacy who works across the school to build teacher capacity in the teaching of literacy through a balanced approach to literacy development. The school is yet to have an established overarching literacy framework to inform consistent literacy instruction in the school by all teachers.

- The school has an exemplary record of establishing and developing beneficial partnerships with local businesses and community organisations.

  Darling Point Special School is a highly respected community resource within the local community. School leaders make deliberate and strategic use of partnerships with families, local businesses and community organisations to access resources not available within the school for the purpose of improving student outcomes.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Develop the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team to ensure all leaders are engaged in driving improvement in the school improvement priorities.

- Develop teacher skills in data literacy so that all staff can administer assessment items, record findings and analyse student results to adjust their teaching and learning strategies.

- Review the current suite of research-based standardised and diagnostic assessment tools to gather data in communication, literacy and numeracy.

- Investigate strategies to initiate a systematic whole-school approach to the provision of feedback, coaching and mentoring for all teachers and teacher aides.

- Explore opportunities to enhance leadership of the implementation of curriculum, and evaluation of these practices in the school.

- Research, develop and embed an evidence-based approach to the teaching of numeracy across the school.

- Identify and embed a balanced, evidence-based literacy approach to inform the teaching of literacy across the school.