



School Improvement Unit Report

Darling Point Special School





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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
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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:
 - Principal and deputy principal
 - Members of the school council and Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C)
 - Literacy teacher and master teacher
 - 31 teachers
 - Guidance officer, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech language pathologist
 - Chaplain/youth support worker, social worker and community liaison officer
 - Eight teacher-aides
 - Business Services Manager (BSM) and three administration officers
 - Seven current students and three former students
 - 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 programming 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.



3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The school leaders are united and committed to providing every student with opportunities to achieve successful learning outcomes as evidenced through a comprehensive school improvement agenda. School leadership, including the school council have been innovative and comprehensive in their approach to the review of the strategic plan. The Annual Implementation Plan 2015 sets out a large number key priorities which includes curriculum, pedagogies, life quality and behaviour support, staff quality, resources, strategic improvement, data-based decision making and sustainable facilities and futures.

Evidence gathered from interviews with school staff and community representatives indicated that most people believe literacy, Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and data are the most important school improvement priorities. The school leadership team also described these three priorities as the core of the explicit improvement agenda. Most staff members and parents referred to the school's commitment to putting the needs of students first and individualising support.

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. Roles and responsibilities for current leadership positions need to be further clarified, communicated and evaluated.

Darling Point Special School is an Independent Public School with a long running commitment to governance through a school council. There is evidence of an extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the school's strategic plan.

The improvement agenda has been communicated in various forums including meetings of staff, Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), school and staff newsletters, and website. Parents interviewed are very supportive of the expertise and commitment of school leaders, teachers and teacher-aides. All school community members commented the principal actively drives a collaborative culture of continual improvement.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.



Improvement strategies

Review the improvement agenda to provide a sharp and narrow focus on core learning priorities, including key strategies, accompanying timelines, targets and dedicated resources to drive improvement across the school.

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



3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The principal and school leaders clearly articulate their belief that the collection of data on student outcomes is crucial to successful learning outcomes. They have developed and are explicitly modelling a strong learning culture grounded in evidence-based and data driven practices.

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. A considerable amount of data is collected and includes attendance, behaviour, learning, student destination, medical, satisfaction and staff professional learning needs. The school has an embedded culture of collecting and representing data in graphs, charts and portfolios.

There is limited evidence of a consistent, whole-school plan for the systematic collection and analysis of data. Interviews with school leaders and teachers indicate they have recognised the need to develop strategies for utilising the large volume of evidence to improve student learning. In the data plan, the school refers to the personal responsibility of data users to determine the best strategies for collecting and using data. Evidence suggests that teachers may benefit from more direction and support to identify and collect common data sets which can be used for similar groups of learners.

The literacy teacher leads the collection of diagnostic and formative student achievement data in the area of literacy. Test instruments and reading programs include Oxford Literacy Word Lists and guided readers, Dolch sight words, Bug Club readers, PM Benchmark, and the Workplace English Language and Literacy Skills (WELLS) for senior students.

Evidence suggests that the use of data assessments to identify starting points for teaching and learning is inconsistent. Teachers are collecting data in a variety of ways using numerous formats and recording methods.

Teachers have varying levels of data literacy. Some teachers are analysing data and using the findings to inform decisions about teaching and learning. There is limited evidence of systematic analysis of student outcome data to inform curriculum decision-making or monitoring of distance travelled.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.



Improvement strategies

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

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



3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

The principal and staff of the school demonstrate a firm belief that positive and caring relationships with students, families and community promote a culture of successful learning. Interactions between staff, students and families are caring, positive and inclusive. Parents openly discuss their appreciation of the care and respect students and families receive from all school staff.

Parents value the leadership of the principal and feel she goes above and beyond to enhance the schooling experience for every student. Parents articulate they have an open and honest relationship with the principal and administration team. The school views families as integral members of the school community and partners in student learning.

The school promotes and maintains an environment of high expectations that all students will learn skills that are individualised, functional and future-focused. The school places a high priority on student wellbeing and has processes in place to provide a holistic approach to addressing individual needs. Staff articulate that they feel valued and supported by school leadership and their colleagues to perform their roles to a high standard.

The school has embedded the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model. This is a result of an ongoing and focused relationship with the Institute of Applied Behaviour Analysis (IABA). This has included teaching staff participating in professional learning activities and opportunities involves ongoing consultation, modelling and feedback. The principal has established an innovative partnership with Gary Lavigna which has evolved into him being the school's scholar-in-residence. In this capacity he visits the school, coach's staff, interacts with parents and provides quality assurance for the school's approach.

The school has a set of specific school rules and shared values which include '*We are Honest (Integrity), We are friendly, Caring and Helpful (Mutual Respect), We Stay Safe and Positive (Affirmation), We Do Our Work (Leadership), and We are Responsible (Accountability)*'. Teachers and aides have a shared understanding of the PBS framework and implement a range of evidence-based strategies to promote positive student behaviour and engagement. Interviews with a range of staff indicated there is an inconsistent understanding of the agreed school rules.

In the 2014 and 2015 School Opinion Survey (SOS), 100 per cent of parents considered that Darling Point Special School is a good school, with this year's staff rating for the same measure at 97 per cent. Staff morale in 2015 is 97 per cent.

The current overall rate of student attendance is 86 per cent, with 22.8 per cent attending for less than 85 per cent of the time. This represents an increase in attendance in comparison with 2014 data, when overall attendance was 84.9 per cent and students attending for less than 85 per cent of the school year was 23.4 per cent.



Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Review and implement a consistent approach to the display, recognition and understanding of the agreed school rules.

Identify strategies to share school knowledge and expertise with other special schools to further improve system-wide capability in PBS.



3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The leadership team clearly articulate the expectation that all school staff will accommodate the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. There are systematic strategies for identifying and responding to identified student needs. 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 may include forming small groups and sharing of students across groups and staff working with individual students with complex needs. Decisions are frequently monitored and reviewed, and adjusted accordingly.

The principal and newly appointed business services manager review the alignment of the school priorities and the school improvement agenda.

The school budget aligns local and system priorities. The current bank balance is \$713 703 including \$255 000 for the Collaboration and Innovation grant to pursue innovative teacher practices through research in mathematics.

Great Results Guarantee funds of \$47 484 have been identified to fund literacy and communication initiatives, research literacy and numeracy across the senior phase, and develop practices in work shadowing, case conferencing and coaching to develop teacher competence in numeracy and literacy program delivery.

The school has used discretionary funding to provide additional support to maximise family and community relationships, wellbeing, and the enhancement of outcomes for students and their families. A youth support worker is employed to focus on supporting students and families requiring additional support. A social worker has been engaged to support the wellbeing of students and their families, and a community liaison officer employed to enhance the school profile and develop mutually beneficial partnerships between the school and local businesses.

Physical spaces have been updated and utilised to cater for enrolment growth. The school is well presented and maintained. As space in the school is limited, the school utilises surrounding community areas for play and learning. The parents, staff and community members identify the limited physical development and play spaces as an area for improvement.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.



Improvement strategies

Work with regional personnel to identify possible solutions for the provision of additional physical development and play spaces for the increasing student population.



3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

There is strong evidence that the principal and leadership team see the development of the teaching and support staff into an expert and co-operative teaching team as essential to improving student learning outcomes.

A focus on instructional leadership is evident among the leadership team and other dedicated roles such as team leaders and coaches. School leaders model and participate in staff Professional Learning (PL) activities alongside teaching staff. The school has a large and accessible library of reference books and other resources to support teachers in their PL.

The school provides multiple opportunities for staff to engage in PL and includes whole school, phase and self-selected options. The school regularly investigates evidence-based practice and engages experts to improve staff expertise. There is a strong commitment from staff to engage in these professional learning opportunities. Teacher-aides reported they are encouraged to access internal and external PL activities.

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 IABA.

The program of PL is based around a fortnightly rotation of staff meeting and phase meeting. Teachers identified their learning team and phase leader as their primary source of capability development. Teachers also reported they have opportunities to teach co-operatively with their colleagues. Discussions with school leaders and teachers acknowledged there is currently no structured ongoing process to provide teachers with feedback through an agreed observation procedure.

A focus on literacy PL has led to improved capability in the school priority areas of reading, writing and communication. There is a commitment by most staff to ongoing school and personal improvement. Teachers, teacher-aides and other school-based staff members expressed a strong desire to further enhance their capability.

The school has a professional learning plan for 2015. All teachers are engaged in the developing performance plan process. There is strong evidence that school leaders work to identify and develop the expertise of all staff.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.



Improvement strategies

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



3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The school's integrated Prep to Year 12 curriculum guide is aligned to the Australian Curriculum (AC) in English and mathematics and draws on the evidence-based curriculum resources from the Pre-K Life Skills Curriculum Guide from Puget Sound Educational Service District in Canada. The developmental and functional curriculum guide was adopted by the school community to inform individual curriculum planning for students and to ensure a functional approach to curriculum delivery. Evidence from parents and staff indicate they value this approach to curriculum delivery.

When planning curriculum for individual students, teachers across the school use their professional judgements in consultation with parents and therapists to identify goals and priorities for each student inclusive of individual needs, strengths and interests. Teacher knowledge of the student including learning needs, disability specific information and learning styles informs instructional evidence-based practice in the classroom.

Specific curriculum offerings in the junior phase of learning include assisting students to develop on task and interpersonal behaviour to enable students to engage in a full range of learning programs. Students also participate in communication, literacy and numeracy, perceptual motor programs, hydrotherapy, science, and visual arts.

Students in the middle phase of learning (Years 5 to 9) participate in an individualised curriculum program including English, literacy and numeracy, mathematics, visual arts, and Health and Physical Education (HPE) inclusive of swimming, hydrotherapy, mobility and positioning based on the principles of conductive education. Teachers identified a focus of the middle phase is to prepare students for the transition to the senior school.

Curriculum offerings and programs in the senior phase of learning focus on student specific goals identified through the Senior Education Transition Plan (SETP) and Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) processes. Parents and where possible the student participates in a planning process to develop the SETP. A senior teacher has attended training in the Guide to Individual Learning (GIL) provided by Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) to support the curriculum planning for the QCIA in preparation for implementation in 2016.

The school offers a variety of functionally relevant vocational education programs including certificates in Hospitality, Access to Vocational Pathways and Agri-foods as a focus of the teaching and learning in the senior phase of learning. Students in the senior school operate the school's coffee shop, and participate in work experience programs including Beeralong community garden at Morningside, Bunnings, a machining program cutting timber chocks, a laundry program washing jerseys for the Wynnum Manly Seagulls, and functionally-relevant community-based instruction.



A unique program established by the school for students in Years 12 and 13 is the Step Up to Employment program which is modelled on the Step Up program from the IABA in California. Inclusion in the wider community, individual programming based on the student's goals and aspirations to enable them to transition to post-school successfully are guiding principles. The program is facilitated by a key teacher and based in the Wynnum library and includes a wide range of functional learning opportunities for independence, and work experience. Evidence indicates some students have part-time jobs, function independently in the community and have learnt to drive a car. Parent feedback is very positive and acknowledges the exceptional work of the school in this area.

Teachers report the school has adopted a flexible approach to curriculum planning and documentation with a range of planning tools available. Teachers work within the framework of the AC and the school-based curriculum to inform their individual curriculum plans for their cohort. Teachers identified that they work individually, with peers in their cohort or co-teaching teams to develop plans for instruction and delivery. Some teachers identified the need to improve their knowledge of the AC.

The school's multi-element planning tool supports the teaching and learning strategies for class or program instruction. Teachers report the principal, deputy principal and peers support them with planning and feedback where appropriate.

Co-teaching is an integral part of the curriculum work at school, where specialist teachers and curriculum teachers work together to maximise authentic program delivery for students.

Teachers upload a variety of plans, evidence, and reports to OneSchool.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

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



3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The Darling Point Special School's curriculum plan and program offerings are differentiated to support individual student's strengths, needs and learning outcomes with the aim of ensuring life quality and flexible pathways for students.

The school implements unique school-based programs (Step Up to Employment, hospitality through the 'Coffee on Point' coffee shop, machining program cutting timber chocks, a laundry program washing jerseys for the Seagulls, Sailability) to develop each student's breadth of life experiences, and knowledge and skills to enable them to transition successfully to post-school life.

Student learning expectations are documented on the Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) for each student in Prep to Year 10. The overall curriculum plan for each student comprises documented goals across school-based learning areas, and a goal in English and mathematics linked to the AC. Students are accessing the Different Year Level Curriculum (DYLC) or Highly Individualised Curriculum (HIC). Discussions with teachers and leaders indicate there is a limited understanding of the extended General Capabilities in literacy and numeracy across the school. The ICP is collaboratively developed with parents and carers.

The school's generic multi-element plan assists teachers to differentiate teaching strategies within a program of instruction for an individual student or group of students. The school's multi-element support plan (PBS) differentiates support provisions for an individual student inclusive of ecological management, positive programming, focussed support strategies, direct treatments and non-aversive emergency management.

Conversations with leaders and teachers confirm that some teachers are at different stages in their understanding, use and analysis of assessment data to inform individual student program needs, identify starting points for teaching, and to monitor student progress.

Students in the school are organised into a flexible class grouping structure based on age, social and emotional needs, maturity, achievement levels, and social, emotional and physical development. The number of students per group varies and depends on needs, strengths, age and student mix. The number of personnel with a group depends on the needs of the students.

Students in the senior school program access a timetabling structure similar to a high school and are supported by a home group key teacher. They access learning programs across a number of teachers and teacher aides across the day which is determined by the student's needs and strengths.



Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Develop teachers' understanding of the extended General Capabilities literacy and numeracy.



3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

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

The school's effective, evidence-based Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model is a student-centred approach with systems and processes to achieve functional, contextual and communicative goals, and to promote safety, relationships and learning. PBS utilises functional behaviour analysis and multi-element programming to develop skills so that individual students operate in socially acceptable ways. Parents, staff and community partners commend the school's PBS approach as highly effective in supporting students and their families.

Teachers across the school utilise a broad range of evidence-based pedagogies within their instruction and programming applicable to teaching students with disabilities.

The school has developed a Periodic Service (PSR) review tool utilising quality practice indicators in the areas of curriculum, pedagogies, life quality and behaviour, information sharing, assessment, data recording and analysis, and resources. The tool enables educators to reflect on practice, identify areas for development, and enables self-reflective feedback, and feedback from leaders and peers to inform effective teacher practice. Currently being trialed with beginning teachers, the school leaders articulate current success as a quality, purposeful feedback tool. The school has also trialed a PSR with some teacher-aides. Feedback processes within the school are generally informal and leaders articulate the need to develop agreed structured feedback processes to inform teacher instructional practice and capability development. Teachers identify they would welcome feedback on their practice from peers and leaders.

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. She models instruction to teachers, provides them with specific information, and completes diagnostic assessments to identify emergent and conventional literacy learners and inform teaching strategies and the provision of resources. She is supported by the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) and the school's master teacher who works at the school on a part time basis. Evidence indicates the school does not yet have an established overarching literacy framework to inform consistent literacy instruction in the school by all teachers.

Multi-modal communication is a key priority across the school, as is Auslan for students whom this is their primary method of communication. The SLP has supported teachers to implement a variety of Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) tools including signing, whole-school Chat Now books, visual supports in classrooms, iPad apps and the Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD). She encourages the use of assistive technology to enable students' access to the curriculum. In discussion with staff, evidence suggests that not all staff are cognizant of the impact AAC systems can have in the development of students' communication and language development.



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

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

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.

Support the systematic implementation of key communication resources across the school to support communication and language development in students.



3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

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.

The school has an exemplary record of establishing and developing beneficial partnerships with local businesses, community organisations and individuals to improve opportunities and learning outcomes for Darling Point Special School students. Community members report they are proud of the achievements of the school and it is well known as an innovative and student-centred organisation.

The school council has a prominent role in school governance. The council expressed strong support for the way the principal strategically engages and consults with the wider community to enhance opportunities for all students.

The P&C operates an Outside School Hours Centre (OSHC) which provides after school and vacation care for students from Darling Point and Redlands Special schools as well as their siblings. Parents are very supportive of this service and identified it as a reason for enrolling their child at the school.

Implementation of the '*Step Up To Employment*' program promotes student participation and learning in the community through an off-campus approach to senior schooling. This innovative program has enhanced student outcomes through a rigorous approach to preparing students for post-school life.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, Data Plan, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school improvement targets, professional development program 2015, school website, school newsletters, budget overview, pedagogical framework, staff and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Identify strategies to communicate successful practices in community engagement with other schools.



4. Follow-up timelines

- School to publish the executive summary on their website within two weeks.
- School to meet with Regional Director to discuss review findings and improvement strategies.