

Darling Heights State School

Executive Summary





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1. Introduction

This report is a product of a review carried out by a review team from the Education Improvement Branch (EIB) at **Darling Heights State School** from **24 to 26 August 2021**.

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 implement 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 EIB and reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the EIB [website](#).

1.1 Review team

Sandra Perrett	Internal reviewer, EIB (review chair)
Troy Barath	Peer reviewer
Matthew Glen	External reviewer



1.2 School context

Location:	Wuth Street, Darling Heights	
Education region:	Darling Downs South West Region	
Year levels:	Prep to Year 6	
Enrolment:	617	
Indigenous enrolment percentage:	12.3 per cent	
Students with disability:	Education Adjustment Program (EAP) percentage:	5.7 per cent
	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) percentage:	21.9 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	963	
Year principal appointed:	2004	



1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Principal, three deputy principals, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), 29 teachers, Business Manager (BM), two administration officers, eight teacher aides, two schools officers, parent/student engagement officer, Information Technology (IT) officer, 51 students and 29 parents.

Community and business groups:

- Head of Mental Health Unit at Evolve Therapeutic Services (ETS) – Toowoomba office, HumeRidge Church minister and Schools Plus coach.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- Harristown State High School principal and University of Southern Queensland (USQ) associate professor.

Government and departmental representatives:

- ARD.

1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

Annual Implementation Plan 2021	School Improvement Agenda 2021
Investing for Success 2021	Strategic Plan 2018-2021
Headline Indicators (April 2021 release)	School Data Profile (Semester 1 2021)
OneSchool	School budget overview
Dispositions for Learning	Curriculum planning documents
Intensive English and Culture Classes	School Online Reporting Dashboard (SORD)
Snapshot pedagogical framework	School newsletters and website
School data plan	Student Code of Conduct
School Opinion Survey	Community Hub Case Statement
Inquiry Cycle model	2021 Whole Staff SIA Operational Program
School based curriculum, assessment and reporting plan	Whole School Approach to Differentiated Teaching and Learning (WSADTL)
Akilah's Necklace and school-produced children's books	School differentiation plan, including Tier 2 literacy support delivered through WSADTL



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

The leadership team and staff members are universally focused on the whole child.

Everything that happens within the school is centred on student learning and wellbeing. School leaders and teachers recognise the connection between achievement and wellbeing, and the importance of supporting every child, including providing more support for some students, if required. All staff members are strongly encouraged to develop positive and caring relationships with students and families. This is modelled in every interaction that occurs between leaders and students. All students are 'given love' at this school.

Leaders articulate that people are the unique heart of the school and that 'everybody is empowered, engaged and has agency to explore many paths and grow with knowledge'.

The school embraces and actively fosters collegial engagement through the High Performing Team (HPT) methodology of Pete Stebbins¹. HPT meetings occur weekly, providing an opportunity for leaders and teachers to rigorously discuss their priorities and engage in a weekly personalised check-in. Each team collaboratively completes a monthly 'pulse debrief' and identifies hot topics for attention. Teachers articulate that they value the HPT process.

A number of key strategic documents that provide information on the focus areas of the school are apparent.

The School Improvement Agenda (SIA) is the key document that is updated annually. The 2021 SIA has three key focus areas, including curriculum/teaching practice, leadership/school capacity and students/school/community. Most staff members identify a range of aspects of the SIA and what it means to their work in the classroom. Some staff members identify that the SIA is complex and that there is a lot happening in the school.

The leadership team works closely with teachers to ensure that every student accesses a quality curriculum program.

The school has an explicit, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that outlines what and when teachers should teach, and students should learn. Teachers express appreciation of the time and support to continue to build knowledge of the Australian Curriculum (AC) and units of work. The leadership team identifies the importance of supporting teachers to further develop collective skills and knowledge to provide 'good first teaching' supported by reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment. An expectation that individualised adjustments will be documented to support the teaching of specific skills or knowledge for the full range of students in the class is yet to be included in unit plans.

¹ Stebbins, P. (2018). *High Performance Teams*. <https://www.drpetestebbins.com/>



Teachers and leaders are committed to ongoing improvement of their practice and the continual development of knowledge and skills to improve student learning.

All classroom and specialist teachers are involved in a classroom visitation process, known as 'look fors', once a term with members of the school leadership team. Teachers articulate that they value this process as an important way for them to demonstrate professional growth and competence. Many teachers express a desire to receive additional feedback on their practice and are open to ways to increase these opportunities throughout the school year. A systematic approach to classroom-based professional learning for all teachers, including Watching Others Work (WOW) is yet to be fully developed and embedded within the school culture.

The 'Darling Heights Dispositions for Learning' is a strengths-based model, designed to engage students in their learning.

Teachers are encouraged to focus on the strengths of their class and work towards having the majority of planned learning experiences cater for students' established dispositions and explicitly challenging them in others. Some teachers and students are able to talk about the dispositions and how they are used to motivate, question and challenge themselves and each other. Leaders and some teachers identify a desire to further develop knowledge and application of the dispositions for learning to become a more integral part of planning, teaching and learning across the school.

The leadership team and teachers encourage the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms.

The principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning. Teachers describe the importance of providing focused developmental feedback linked to student goals and success criteria. They are encouraged to recognise student work efforts and encourage them to identify the next steps in their learning. Students express appreciation of the feedback, with most students articulating they adjust their work in response to the teacher's feedback. Setting aspirational learning goals for all students in core curriculum areas and aligning these goals to high quality developmental feedback is an emerging practice in some classrooms.

Parents, community partners, public and private agencies and businesses are involved in the school, providing input and support to its operations.

The parent/student engagement officer coordinates an extensive network of organisations and agencies that interact with the school in formal and informal relationships and partnerships. There are currently over 35 different agencies and social welfare organisations, including public and private sectors, engaging in an array of services and programs that provide for a range of differential needs of parents and families in the school. Support ranges from targeted financial assistance, student scholarships, in-kind donations of equipment, volunteering in the school, counselling, parent and family education, healthy living, English language classes for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) families and many more. There may be more than 80 volunteers in the school in any one week of the school year.



The school appreciates, values and is knowledgeable regarding the numerous cultures that are apparent in their school community.

There are currently 40 countries and cultures forming part of the student body. School leaders identify that approximately 50 per cent of the student body comes from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background. School leaders and staff members are aware of the cultural impacts of different groups on their learning and their ways of working. This knowledge is reflected in the structures established to support students in and out of the classroom, taking into consideration different cultural needs and beliefs. This knowledge is regularly communicated to all staff members and is included as part of the induction program.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

Establish processes that clearly identify the key focus areas, providing greater clarity within the SIA.

Further develop teacher knowledge of the AC, focusing on good first teaching for all students that incorporates the identification and implementation of a range of reasonable adjustments.

Collaboratively reinvigorate school-wide processes to facilitate differentiated coaching, observation, feedback, WOW, and visits to other schools for all staff members.

Enhance the implementation of the dispositions for learning to become a more integral part of the culture of learning across the school.

Enhance school-wide processes to collaboratively develop with students learning goals that reflect the next steps in their learning, utilising quality feedback and 'Bump it up' walls.