School Improvement Unit
Report

Blackwater State High School

Executive Summary

Great state. Great opportunity.
And a plan for the future.

Queensland Government
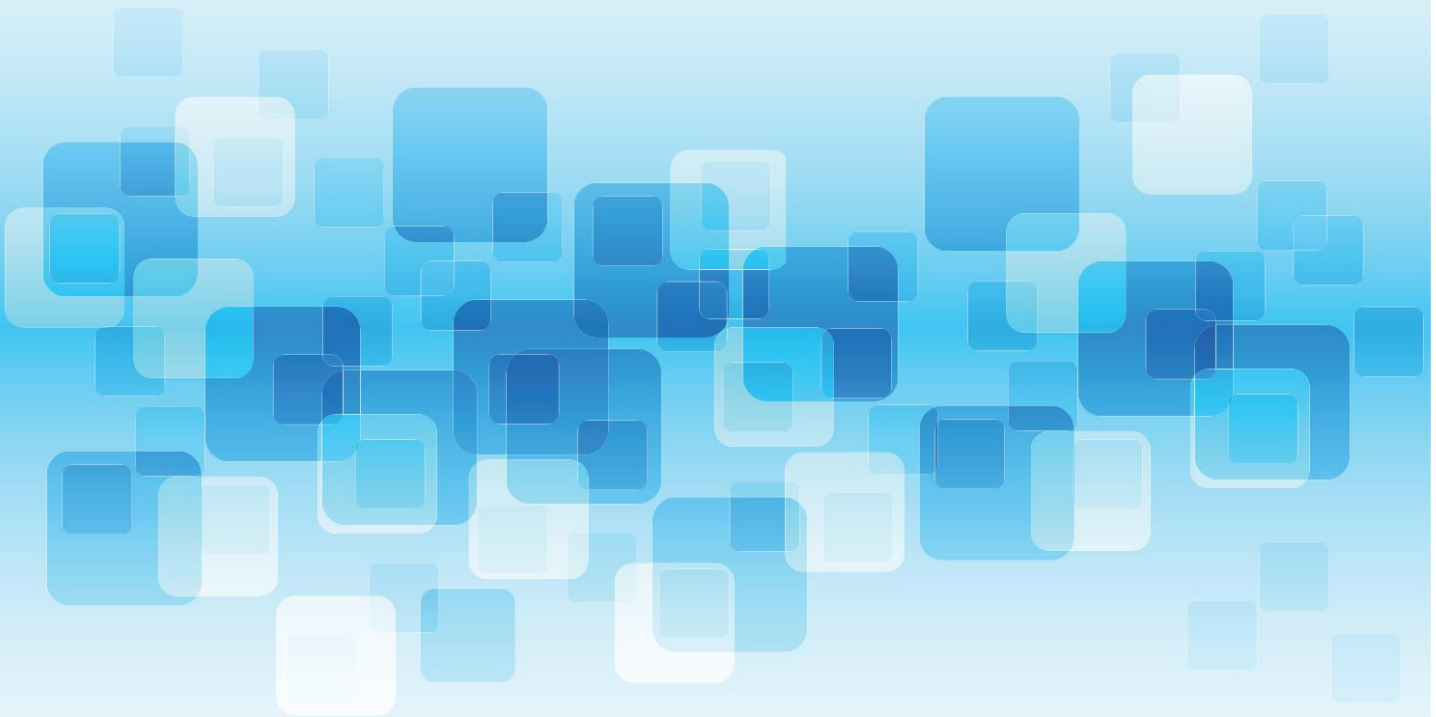
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Blackwater State High School from 30 March to 2 April 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:	Elm Street, Blackwater
Education region:	Central Queensland
The school opened in:	1973
Year levels:	Year 7 to Year 12
Current school enrolment:	353
Indigenous enrolments:	15.5 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	8.5 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	930
Year principal appointed:	2010
Number of teachers:	30
Nearby schools:	Blackwater State School, Blackwater North State School, Duaringa State School, Bluff State School, Dingo State School
Significant community partnerships:	BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), Curaugh Mine, Queensland Mines and Energy Academy, Central Highlands Regional Council, Blackwater Cluster of State Schools, Anglicare
Unique school programs:	Achieve Program Years 7 - 10

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 school's assistant regional director

- a school visit of four days

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

  - Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of Department (HOD) Teaching and Learning, HOD Student Services, HOD Senior Secondary, HOD Junior Secondary, HOD Literacy, Head of Special Education Services (HOSES)

  - Master Teacher, Support Teacher Literacy and Numeracy (STLaN)

  - 20 Teachers

  - Support Staff – Business Services Manager (BSM), one administration assistant, three teacher-aides, community education counsellor, chaplain, school youth health nurse, Youth Connections coordinator, janitor

  - Two parents, including Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) Vice President

  - Principal, Blackwater State School

  - Community youth support coordinator

  - Community links officer BMA

  - Four student leaders

  - 40 students

1.4 Review team

Boyd Jorgensen   Internal Reviewer, SIU (review chair)

Valerie Hadgelias   Internal Reviewer, SIU

Trevor Gordon   External Reviewer

2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- The explicit improvement agenda at Blackwater State High School is focused on improving writing and the quality of teaching.

Teachers clearly acknowledge the importance of improving their teaching and willingly embrace and engage in strategies to improve their teaching capabilities. They are endeavouring to implement the identified writing strategies, but at this early stage their endeavours are not yet being driven by clear and meaningful targets and timelines.

- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) is the research based platform upon which behaviour management has been based.

Since 2010, positive behaviour at Blackwater State High School has been driven by SWPBS. However, as a result of staff turnover, SWPBS is not being implemented as effectively as in the past. There are plans to re-engage through Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L). Student behaviour has emerged this year as a concern for teachers, parents and students.

- There is a high turnover of staff and a significant proportion of teachers are relatively inexperienced.

The relative inexperience of teaching staff can impact upon the effective implementation of school improvement strategies. This is counteracted by a comprehensive and high valued induction program. The beginning teachers bring high levels of enthusiasm, energy, an eagerness to learn and develop their teaching skills and a willingness to try new things to the school.

- The school-wide pedagogical framework, with explicit instruction as the primary mode of instruction, is clearly articulated, documented and implemented.

The implementation is supported by a program of professional development, mentoring, observations, feedback and some modelling and coaching, which is aligned with each teacher's performance and development plan.

- The school leadership team views reliable and timely use of student data as essential to the effective leadership of the school and to improvement in student outcomes.

The school has processes in place to collect, analyse and use a range of student achievement and wellbeing data; and uses the data to inform school-level decisions, interventions and initiatives. A culture of data literacy among teachers is in its early phase. Classroom dashboard is used by teachers to familiarise themselves with their students but there are varying levels of competence in using the data to inform teacher planning.

- A range of partnerships are in place to enhance the learning and wellbeing for students.

  There is a deliberate and strategic use of partnerships with local businesses, universities, government authorities, other schools and community organisations to access resources that will enhance student outcomes and student wellbeing.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Address concerns about some students' behaviour through the embedding of the PBL program and consistency of behaviour management processes throughout the whole staff (leaders, teachers and support staff) in classroom practices and in consequences for unsatisfactory behaviour.

- Ensure that the writing plan, which the school has identified as a key improvement agenda, is rigorously actioned by leaders and teachers and progress is measured against clear, meaningful targets and specific timelines.

- Review and refine key school policies and practices so that they are simple, consistent and accessible and are implemented each year in a systematic and structured way that accounts for the relative inexperience of staff.

- Continue the rollout of the pedagogical framework and strive to achieve consistency of practice. Support staff with professional development and systematic modelling, mentoring, observation, feedback and coaching as needed. Continue to build the alignment with teachers' performance and development plans.

- Build the capacity of staff to use data to identify gaps in student learning and as the starting point for improvement in student learning outcomes. Provide professional development for teachers on how they can address the varied learning needs of students in their day to day teaching.