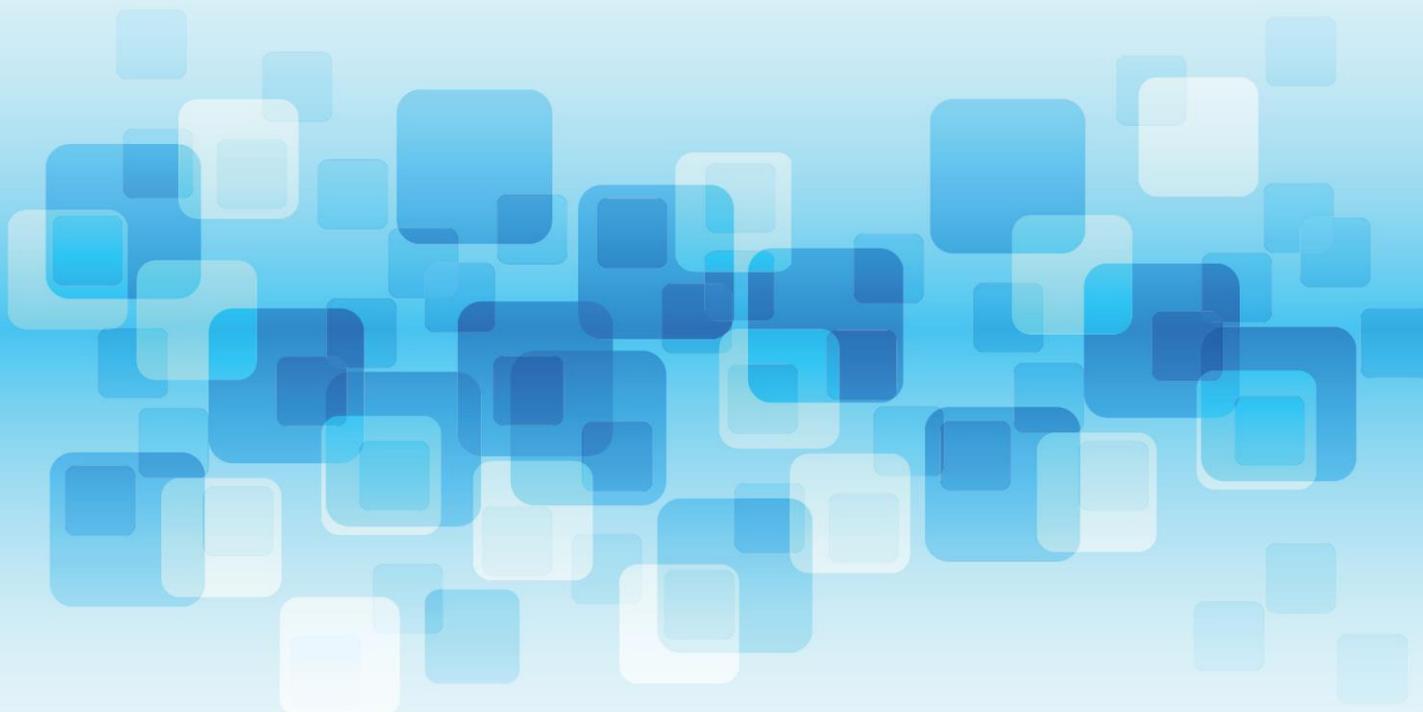# School Improvement Unit
Report

Tully State High School

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Tully State High School from 4 to 6 May 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:	Bruce Highway, Tully
Education region:	Far North Queensland
The school opened in:	1964
Year levels:	Years 7 to 12
Current school enrolment:	634
Indigenous enrolments:	15 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	6 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	943
Year principal appointed:	2011
Number of teachers:	46
Nearby schools:	Feluga State School, Lower Tully State School, St. Clare's Catholic Primary, Tully State School, El Arish State School, Mission Beach State School, Murray Upper State School, Kennedy State School, Cardwell State School.
Significant community partnerships:	Tully Queensland Police Service – Truancy, Mackays Bananas, Tully Rugby League
Unique school programs:	National Rugby League partnership, POSITIVE Education, Orpheus Island, Droughtmaster Stud.

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 three days

- interviews with

    o Principal and two Deputy principals

    o Heads of Department (HODs), Head of Inclusive Practice, Master teacher

    o 26 teachers

    o Business Services Manager (BSM), two admin staff and three teacher-aides

    o Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association president and 12 other parents

    o Five principals of local primary schools

    o Guidance Officer and Youth Support Coordinator

    o Community Education Counsellor and a Community Elder

    o Information and communications technology (ICT) coordinator and ICT technician

    o Facilities officer and one cleaner

    o Editor, *Tully Times* newspaper

    o State Member of Parliament

    o Representatives from AG White Banana Farm and Tully Tigers Football Club

1.4 Review team

Valerie Hadgelias	Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Robert Gilbert	External reviewer
Kate Van Der Meulen	Peer reviewer

2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- The school has a wide-ranging Annual Improvement Plan and the key priorities for the explicit improvement agenda are not clear to staff. This challenges the school's capacity to drive a deeply embedded change agenda in key areas.

  While the improvement plan has been successful in improving practice in the use of data and explicit teaching, other aspects of the agenda have been less successful. Timelines and targets are not widely communicated and understood. Some staff members said they feel overwhelmed by the breadth of the agenda.

- Highly effective data processes have been implemented in recent years and this whole school approach to using a range of student outcomes and other data is showing benefits in staff responses to students' needs.

  The school has undertaken an extensive program to build staff capability around the collection and use of student achievement data, and staff members indicate that data literacy amongst teachers has grown considerably over the past 2 years. All staff indicated they recognised the benefits presented by using the data within the dashboard. A process of 5 week data grabs has been implemented to facilitate the regular collection and analysis of Level of Achievement data.

- Significant recent improvement in school culture has enhanced the positive learning environment of Tully State High School.

  Many members of the school community spoke about a significant shift in the school's culture over the last five years. Respectful, positive and caring relationships are evident between staff and students. The learning climate in the school is responsive to student wellbeing. Parents, teachers and students speak with pride about the school.

- The school has not yet developed a systematic approach to feedback, coaching and mentoring for all staff.

  Walk-throughs are frequently conducted by school leaders. Teachers are open to constructive feedback and welcome the opportunities to have school leaders observe and discuss their work with them. However, there is no systematic whole-school practice of providing formal feedback. Mentoring relationships are formalised for beginning teachers and teachers new to the school, though for the latter group, this seems to be unevenly implemented. For remaining staff, mentoring is often informal and ad hoc.

- Use of data provides a strong base for differentiation but carry through to personalised learning for all students is inconsistent.

  Regular data on the achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students is used in classrooms to make judgements about individual needs. There are some examples of high quality practice in the application of data analysis to the organisation of student learning. However, some staff expressed a lack of confidence in developing differentiated classroom practices. There is a detailed Standard of Practice document on differentiation but it is not widely implemented.

- School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices. The school recognises the need for a strong pedagogical approach appropriate for its context. It is presently undertaking a collaborative, evidence-based review to further develop and refine its teaching and learning framework.

  Explicit Teaching has been widely taken up by staff as the model of pedagogical practice across the school in recent years. A thorough review of the school's pedagogical framework is presently underway beginning with an innovative approach to engaging staff in a survey of teachers' current effective teaching practices.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Collaboratively sharpen and narrow the focus of the school's improvement agenda. Ensure rigorous school-wide implementation of agreed strategies. Allow sufficient time to fully embed these priorities before moving the developmental focus to the next priority area.

- Develop a whole-school approach to the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes a formal program of feedback and classroom based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements for all staff.

- Build the capacity of teachers who lack confidence in their skills to differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of all students. Encourage and support teachers to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify both learning difficulties and opportunities for acceleration and enrichment and to tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.