School Improvement Unit
Report

Mount Cotton State School
Executive Summary
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Mount Cotton State School from 9 to 13 June 2016. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>1246 Mount Cotton Road, Mount Cotton</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education region:</td>
<td>South East Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school opened in:</td>
<td>1876</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year levels:</td>
<td>Prep to Year 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current school enrolment:</td>
<td>626</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous enrolments:</td>
<td>1 per cent</td>
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<td>Students with disability enrolments:</td>
<td>4 per cent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:</td>
<td>1039</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year principal appointed:</td>
<td>2015 (acting), 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of teachers:</td>
<td>33 (full-time equivalent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nearby schools:</td>
<td>Carbrook State School, Redland Bay State School, Victoria Point State School, Victoria Point State High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant community partnerships:</td>
<td>Safest Committee, School Chaplain, Cotton Club Playgroup, Mount Cotton Village Child Care Centre, Redland Bayside Cluster, Apple Towards Transformation Project, Adopt-a-Cop</td>
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<td>Significant school programs:</td>
<td>Team IQ, Professional Learning Teams, Lorikeet Learning Centre including Early Literacy Foundations and Support-a-Talker, Altitude program, Peer Support program, Great Mates, Learning Your Way – 1:1 iPad program, Springboard program, Cottonhoppers skipping team.</td>
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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 school’s Assistant Regional Director
- a school visit of three days
- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:
  - Principal
  - Deputy principal
  - Head of Curriculum (HOC) / instructional coach
  - Specialist teachers – Health and Physical Education (HPE), teacher-librarian, music, Special Education Program (SEP) teachers, intervention teacher
  - Altitude extension coach
  - 26 classroom teachers
  - Eight teacher aides
  - Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C) executive
  - Tuckshop convenor
  - 20 parents
  - 85 students
  - School chaplain
  - Principal local high school
  - Adopt-a-Cop
  - Director, Helping Hands Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)
  - Cotton Club playgroup leader
  - Apple Towards Transformation learning consultant
1.4 Review team

Garry Lacey  Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Kate Bentley  Peer reviewer
Matthew Glen  External reviewer
2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- The school promotes and maintains an engaging environment reflective of its high expectations that all students will learn successfully.

The school has placed a strong emphasis on quality teaching and learning and in the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn in their own ways and at their own pace. Classrooms are attractive and stimulating learning places with students engaged in productive learning experiences in calm and mutually respectful environments. Parents are encouraged to be part of the social and academic learning of the school.

- A strong collegial culture exists amongst the school staff and there is clear evidence of positive relational trust between staff and the school leadership team.

The school places a high priority on student and staff wellbeing and has processes in place to address individual needs. The school has placed a strong emphasis on quality teaching and learning and the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn. ‘Team IQ’ engages year level teams in identifying a specific area of literacy or numeracy for targeted teaching. This strategy is achieving significant improvements in student learning outcomes in these focus areas of the curriculum.

- The school has a documented professional learning plan which focusses on developing staff skills in areas relating to systemic and school priorities, and personal development.

It is evident that there is an exceptionally high level of enthusiasm from staff to improve their skills to impact positively on student learning outcomes. Professional Development Plans (PDPs) have been developed for all teachers and support staff in consultation with the leadership team. The school leadership team also recognises the importance of distributed leadership across the school and accesses staff who have specific skills to drive the school improvement agenda.

- The school is implementing a plan for the systematic collection of a range of student outcome data and classroom assessments.

The school data plan contains a comprehensive outline of assessment tools, targets and timelines applicable to all year levels. Teachers record individual student data in OneSchool and many refer to their class dashboard to monitor student progress over time. Teachers are encouraged to analyse classroom data and can provide evidence of how they modify teaching programs to respond to identified student learning needs.
• There is commitment from staff for the implementation of all elements of the school's improvement agenda.

Most staff are able to clearly articulate the school’s priorities. Teachers can demonstrate how they are implementing them to build their capacity for improving student learning outcomes. Teachers are committed to developing their repertoire of teaching practice to ensure their planning reflects the expectations relating to the improvement agenda. Monitoring processes are yet to be implemented by the leadership team to ensure agreed practices relating to the improvement agenda are occurring in all classrooms.

• The school offers peer coaching, mentoring and modelling opportunities for self-nominated staff.

The school also offers instructional coaching for some teachers by the Head of Curriculum (HOC). The school recognises coaching and mentoring, and formal observation and feedback should be extended to include all teachers.

• The school has developed curriculum support documentation which details the guaranteed and viable curriculum for each year level.

This enables teachers to be clear about what they are to teach in the year levels in which they work. The HOC reviews this documentation to ensure the agreed content descriptions are covered. Teachers report that they would value the allocation of time together, with the support of the HOC, to collaboratively plan the implementation of the curriculum.

• The school has a pedagogical framework ‘The Mount Cotton Method’.

It is evident that some elements of this pedagogical framework are embedded in practice across the school while other elements are still emerging. The leadership team has identified a need to more closely monitor the implementation of the framework to better align with the school’s pedagogical expectations beginning with the curriculum planning phase.
2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Monitor the implementation of all elements of the Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA) to ensure that agreed strategies are being implemented with consistency across the school.

- Use the expertise of the leadership team to develop a formal classroom observation and feedback culture involving all teachers to provide support and advice on classroom practice in the priority areas and in areas for individual development.

- Provide regular opportunities for all teachers to be involved in peer coaching and mentoring processes within and beyond the school.

- Provide opportunities for the teachers to collaboratively plan and review curriculum units, with the support of the HOC and their colleagues, to ensure there is a consistency of curriculum planning, assessment and moderation across all year levels.

- Further engage teachers with the various elements of the school’s pedagogical framework to ensure it is embedded in curriculum planning and teacher practice.