

McDowall 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 **McDowall State School** from **15 to 18 June 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

Greg Brand	Internal reviewer, EIB (review chair)
Michael Josey	Peer reviewer
Damien Hoare	Peer reviewer
Jim Horton	External reviewer



1.2 School context

Location:	Rode Road, McDowall	
Education region:	Metropolitan Region	
Year levels:	Prep to Year 6	
Enrolment:	998	
Indigenous enrolment percentage:	1.8 per cent	
Students with disability:	Education Adjustment Program (EAP) percentage:	1.4 per cent
	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) percentage:	9.7 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	1113	
Year principal appointed:	2007	



1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Principal, three deputy principals, Business Manager, Head of Department – Curriculum (HOD-C), Head of Special Education Services (HOSES), guidance officer, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), 61 teachers, two instrumental music teachers, 17 teacher aides, four administration staff, grounds person, six cleaners, 152 student and 72 parents.

Community and business groups:

- School council chairperson, Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) president, two P&C representatives and the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) Association representative.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- The Avenues Early Learning Centre representative.

Government and departmental representatives:

- State Member for Everton, Councillor for McDowall Ward Brisbane City Council and ARD.

1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

Annual Implementation Plan 2021	Explicit Improvement Agenda 2021
Investing for Success 2021	Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021
OneSchool and SORD	School Data Profile (Semester 2 2020)
Professional learning plan 2021	School budget overview
School data plan and improvement targets	School pedagogical framework
School data plan	School differentiation policy
School Opinion Survey 2019 and 2020	School newsletters and website
School Charter Statement	Student Code of Conduct 2020 - 2023
School Self Reflection Snapshot	Workforce plan 2021
Headline Indicators (October 2020 release)	School based curriculum, assessment and reporting framework
Every student succeeding with a disability – school data reflection 2020	Professional development plan and Leading Learning plans.
Curriculum planning documents – The McDowall Way	School Review Context



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

The school's motto of *'Courtesy, Honesty, Knowledge'* pervades the culture of the school.

The school aims to deliver excellence in education underpinned by a quality curriculum, effective teaching and learning, and strong partnerships between home and the school to achieve the best outcomes for students. School leaders demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement, the success of every student and valuing the professionalism of teachers. The principal is viewed by staff as a strong, dedicated and strategic leader who has significantly influenced the positive reputation the school enjoys in the local community. Parents greatly value the school's high expectations and express an appreciation for the academic focus, complemented by cultural and sporting opportunities on offer. Students express great pride in the school and appreciate the academic focus and specialist programs offered.

Students clearly discuss the school's high expectations and the great pride they have in their school.

A strong ethos of mutual trust is highly apparent across the school. Staff members indicate highlights of the school include the friendliness and positivity of the students they teach, parental support, the focus on student engagement and achievement, and the amount of professional and collegial assistance available. Students throughout the review present as happy and polite, and indicate a keen focus on learning. They identify strongly with the school and wear the uniform with pride. Students express the belief that teachers care for them, provide challenge and support for their learning, and make learning interesting and fun. School leaders, staff members and parents acknowledge an overall high level of student behaviour.

The principal places a strong emphasis on promoting a culture of high expectations and this is reflected in the school's well-regarded reputation in the community.

Staff and parents identify the school will soon experience a period of change, aligned to setting the school's strategic direction for the next four years. A number of parents and staff express they wish to ensure a number of traditions that reflect the fabric of the school are maintained, including the school's focus on high expectations for learning and cultural and sporting programs. Some staff and parents indicate they would appreciate a more collaborative way of working becoming a feature of the school's approach moving forward. Staff and parents acknowledge change will bring new ideas that will value add to the school's already positive reputation. Some parents express a desire for enhanced opportunities to have a voice in school decisions through key stakeholder forums.



The Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA) reflects a focus on reading, writing, numeracy, leading learning pedagogical alignment and extending learning outcomes for all students.

The school's EIA is underpinned by the principles of inquiry, consistency, evidence, consolidation and professionalism. These EIA priority areas are unpacked further in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and are defined by improvements against a wide range of targets. Practices including action research, inquiry-based learning, Bloom's¹ Taxonomy and Gardner's² Multiple Intelligences are key elements of the school's EIA informing professional growth and teaching and learning practices. Staff members' articulation of the key priorities of the school's EIA is varied. Most staff express there are targets for achievement against key aspects of the EIA. They are yet to be clear regarding specific lifts in achievement for their class and cohort. Some staff indicate the school's EIA is too broad and that they require further clarity and a greater understanding of particular aspects of the EIA that informs teaching and learning.

Staff demonstrate a strong desire to work hard for students, the school and community in their response to high expectations for student improvement.

The principal prioritises attracting high calibre professionals to the school. This is reflected in many teachers' broad range of experiences and careers. Some staff indicate the belief that their experiences and capabilities are able to be further explored and utilised more fully to strengthen teaching and learning. Some staff express a desire to network with other schools to share their expertise more broadly. School leaders articulate they would like to be more involved in advancing teaching capability by offering genuine and meaningful assistance to teachers by supporting them in enhancing their practice. Some teachers indicate they would welcome school leaders providing regular observation and feedback. Many longer serving teachers reflect on the benefits they derived from engaging in programs focused on coaching and mentoring to enhance teacher practice.

The school has developed a coherent, sequenced plan for whole-school curriculum delivery, assessment and reporting.

Teachers deeply value the opportunity and celebrate the regular use of their allocated team meeting time to collaborate on units of work, discussing assessment tasks and teaching ideas to support teaching and learning. All staff express a deep desire to 'be at the table' to design the plans for classroom units of work. Great enthusiasm is apparent for engaging in the Australian Curriculum (AC) and being able to negotiate the direction of teaching and learning. School leaders recognise the importance of collaborative planning time with teaching staff to support all teachers in building knowledge and understanding of the AC. This year the school has commenced a new approach to moderation whereby teachers engage in the four phases of before assessment – planning stage, after assessment –

¹ Bloom, T. M. E. (1965). *Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman.

² Gardner, H. E. (2000). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. Hachette.

before grading, after assessment is graded, and during the reporting period through the examination of student portfolios.

A fundamental belief is held by staff that all students will learn and be successful.

Teachers express appreciation of the support provided by members of the Child Needs team to help them support and adjust teaching and learning for students. The Head of Special Education Services (HOSES) works closely with staff to promote the importance of providing an inclusive, nurturing and supportive school environment so all students are able to access the AC, be successful and achieve a sense of belonging. The HOSES outlines that developing a shared understanding of inclusive practices is continuing to evolve, with many teachers articulating an understanding of, and support for, inclusive practices. The HOSES is developing an inclusion education policy and acknowledges there is a need to develop a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all staff in ensuring all students are succeeding and supported in their learning.

The leadership team has a very high set of expectations regarding teacher professionalism and continuous improvement.

There is a clear expectation that staff will conduct themselves in a highly professional manner, solve problems professionally and take full responsibility for their learning and their performance as an instructional teacher. This is reciprocated from staff in their demonstration of a strong desire to work hard for all stakeholders in their response to a supportive leadership team and high expectations for student improvement. Staff have a desire to maximise each student's learning potential as core to their moral purpose. The culture of positive collegial practice that exists in teaching teams enables staff to develop high levels of collaborative behaviours. Staff express high levels of trust working alongside each other.

The school is formally recognised for its Instrumental Music Immersion Programme of Excellence.

377 students are placed in either instrumental band or strings programs from Year 3 to Year 6. The uniqueness of the program involves the cooperative manner in which the instrumental music teacher joins in partnership with the classroom music teacher to co-teach and deliver the regular music programs integrating the string and band instruments, in addition to the regular instrumental music lesson conducted each week. The students in the immersion program join the community through events such as school instrumental music competitions including Fanfare, Queensland Youth Music Awards (QYMA) and Music Fest. Other community events include 'Music in the Park' and special community events involving fetes and school anniversaries. The school additionally takes pride in presenting the excellence of students to the school community with three performance Celebration Concert evenings. This is complemented by a very well subscribed choral and dance program with approximately 200 students attending.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

Ensure a collaborative approach is taken in setting the strategic direction of the school that values traditions, explores new opportunities to improve and meets the aspirations of staff and community members.

Collaboratively review and refine the EIA ensuring all staff develop a deep understanding of the key strategies and practices informing school improvement, teaching and learning and aligned targets for student achievement.

Deepen all staff understanding of the AC through continuous Professional Development (PD), time for collaborative planning and the implementation of the four phases of moderation.

Build all staff capability by establishing agreed processes to regularly share and strengthen pedagogical practice through Watching Others Work (WOW), coaching, mentoring, observation and feedback.

Collaboratively develop a whole-school approach to inclusion and inclusive practices, with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all staff to ensure every student is succeeding.