

Appendix A *National School Improvement Tool* domains

1. **An explicit improvement agenda:** The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice, and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.
2. **Analysis and discussion of data:** A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.
3. **A culture that promotes learning:** The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders, and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.
4. **Targeted use of school resources:** The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.
5. **An expert teaching team:** The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.
6. **Systematic curriculum delivery:** The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum, and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.
7. **Differentiated teaching and learning:** The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

8. **Effective pedagogical practices:** The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods — including Explicit Instruction — to maximise student learning.
9. **School–community partnerships:** The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children’s education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school’s partnerships.

Extract from: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) 2012, *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT), ACER, Melbourne.

Appendix B *Research methods*

The School Improvement Unit (SIU) 2016 annual report is based on an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data are centrally held data regarding all Queensland schools or all Queensland state schools, focused on major student outcome performance measures. These system data, along with interpretation provided by the department’s Performance Monitoring and Reporting branch, informed the analysis in Chapter 2 of this report.

Initial lines of investigation resulting from quantitative data were validated through further analysis using qualitative data from school review reports. This facilitated an in-depth examination of student performance areas, and identification of what Queensland schools do to address them. This report also uses quantitative departmental data, including 2016 School Opinion Survey data, and data on principal turnover and school budgets. The population of review schools used for these datasets may be slightly different from the one used for the major dataset (school review reports). This may be due to:

- the outdoor and environmental education centres not being included in departmental data
- several campuses of one school counted once in departmental data, but considered as individual schools in the analysis of data from school reviews
- a small number of self-determined and emergent reviews that were not included in the analysis of school review data due to the unique format of their review reports.

Finally, Chapters 4 and 5 present quantitative data (school counts) calculated in relation to themes that have been inductively derived from the final reports of schools that had priority support reviews.

Most data used in this report to describe improvement practices in Queensland state schools were extracted from 2016 school review reports, as well as final reports that emanated from priority support reviews. The school case studies, used to illustrate themes discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, were based on data collected through semi-structured interviews (during school visits, or via phone or email). Case studies linked to Chapter 4 used Department of Education and Training (DET) system data, as well as data from school review reports and final reports.

The review reports, on average around 6000 words in length, combine system data holdings about a school and the results of fieldwork conducted by a review team. They include data from documentation, observations, and interviews and discussions with school leaders, staff, parents, students and other school community members. This process was characterised by methodological triangulation (variety of methods to gather data), as well as investigator triangulation (multiple investigators within a review team).

Data from school review reports were analysed using software for qualitative research (NVivo 10). Coding, the initial stage of data analysis, involved the close examination of each clause, sentence or paragraph in the review reports, in order to identify the most appropriate concept to describe the meaning within the datum. In order to convert the data theoretically (Strauss & Corbin 1998), three questions based on Punch (2013, p. 184) were asked throughout the open coding process:

- What is this datum an example of?
- What does this datum stand for or represent?
- What category or property of a category does this datum indicate?

In this way, the data were fractured into usable units of information. The codes assigned were best representative of each piece of information (Bryant & Charmaz 2010; Creswell 2003).

To ensure the reliability of coding, random data were coded by independent researchers at the beginning of the process, and later at different points in time, with results discussed to achieve agreement and consistency in coding.

The coding process was a single stage application of the coding framework to the text of the school review reports. The findings in each of the nine domains of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) became the main qualitative dataset. The key improvement strategies formulated for schools by review teams were coded separately to allow quantification and to enable advice on the prevalence of particular areas suggested for improvement. The executive summaries of reports were discarded to avoid data duplication.

The genesis of the coding framework (see Table B.1 below) was both inductive and deductive. Firstly, the level one codes of leadership, learning, teaching, learning environments and partnerships were inductively drawn from salient literature in school improvement, specifically the work of Masters (2012). Secondly, sub-level codes were developed inductively from the school review reports. Data were coded against the initially developed coding framework, and new codes were created during the coding process if necessary. The framework evolved as coding progressed, and it was also influenced by ongoing consultation with experienced education professionals.

Clear definitions for codes were established and continually refined to assist in the reliability of the coding process. Definitions for level one codes were derived directly from the literature, while further code level definitions are a combination of those in the literature and the NSIT, often supported with data examples for clarity.

Coded data were further analysed to identify themes and patterns that could be associated with specific school practices. The reliability of findings was assured by independent researchers analysing different datasets to check if the findings could be replicated consistently. The findings were also checked by reviewers to ensure validity.

While the data analysis process was both rigorous and efficient, the data have been collected primarily for the purpose of supporting improvement in individual school communities, and not for the purpose of this report. The implications of this are discussed below.

The data collected by the review teams were not collected using standardised, structured interview protocols (that is, a schedule of standard questions and prompts that have been tested through piloting). A more organic approach allowed the reviewers to build rapport with the interviewees, seek more feedback on pertinent issues (including complex and sensitive issues), and validate data during the collection by returning to the same topic via numerous data sources. The final school review report is the result of teamwork, with oversight provided by the review chair. Reports are also subject to a quality assurance process undertaken by the SIU. This process brings additional consistency, validity and reliability to the school review reports, but introduces another level of interpretation.

The data used in this report are only a snapshot of school practices identified in some schools at a point-in-time over the year (different for each school depending on the review schedule). These data may not reflect the full spectrum of phenomena related to school improvement. As schools are complex and dynamic institutions, the validity of some early findings may decrease over time, and the comparisons between schools (even those representing similar contexts) may not be meaningful.

Due to the large volume of data collected and the complexity of schools and contexts, this report provides mostly high-level insights. The need for more in-depth, contextualised analysis has been partially addressed by showcasing selected school practices as illustrative examples and case studies throughout the report.

Despite their limitations, the review reports and cognate reports provide rich evidence of current practice, which can inform the policy and practice of DET central office and regional offices, and support the continuous improvement and learning in Queensland schools.



Level one	Level two	Level three	Level four	Level five
Leadership	Key improvement strategies			
	Leading people	Human resources (HR) leadership – characteristics, attraction, retention		
		HR staff – attraction and retention		
		HR staff – characteristics	HR (Department of Education and Training)	Teacher aide support in classroom
			HR other	
		Leading learning	Modelling teaching	
		Professional development	Induction and beginning teacher support	
			Teacher aide professional development	
		Professional learning collaboration		
	School funding and budgets			
	School culture	Formal interactions		
		Sense of belonging		
		Student attendance		
		Student behaviour		
		Student diversity		
		Student engagement		
		School culture – other		
		Wellbeing	Staff wellbeing	
		Student wellbeing		
		Other wellbeing		
	Data management	Data processes	Collecting	
			Analysing and utilising	
			Sharing	Data to parents
			Data to students	
			Data to teachers and other staff	
		Storing	Databases	
			Other	
Data literacy				
Data type		Department of Education and Training		
		National and international		
	School-only data			
The explicit improvement agenda	Awareness of the explicit improvement agenda			
	Dissemination of the explicit improvement agenda			
	Priorities/strategies within the explicit improvement agenda			

Table B.1 (continued)

Level one	Level two	Level three	Level four	Level five
Learning	Challenging learning experiences			
	High-achieving learning			
	High expectations of students			
	Inclusive strategies			
	Individualised learning (differentiation)			
	Student empowerment	Feedback to students		
		Student learning goals		
Teaching	Pedagogy	Data-informed teaching		
		Feedback on teaching performance		
		Implementation of pedagogy		
		Teaching other		
	Curriculum	Locally relevant curriculum		
		Assessment	Moderation school cluster	
			Moderation within school	
		Professional development in curriculum		
		Curriculum planning and implementation	Implementation of mandated curriculum	
			Collaborative curriculum practices	
	Year 12 outcomes			
Learning environments	Extracurricular programs and activities			
	Infrastructure and facilities			
	Learning resources			
	Special education units (SEUs)			
	Reasonable adjustments			
Partnerships	Businesses			
	Community organisations			
	Cultural communities and/or groups			
	Early years education centres			
	Government agencies			
	Individual community members/groups			
	Other organisations			
	Other schools	School clusters		
	Parents and citizens' associations (P&Cs) and school councils			
	Parents and families			
Tertiary organisations				

Table B.1: Coding framework for school review reports, SIU, 2016

Appendix C School Improvement Unit school types

Type	Explanation
Urban primary	Any primary school in North Coast, Metropolitan, South East regions, plus Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions if Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial, but excluding those with 1000 or more student enrolments
Very large, urban primary	Any primary school with 1000 or more student enrolments in North Coast, Metropolitan, South East regions, plus Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions if Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial
Rural primary	Any primary school in Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions, except where Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial, but excluding schools with 50 or fewer students
Very small, rural primary	Any primary school with 50 or fewer students, in Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions, except where Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial
Urban secondary	Any secondary school in North Coast, Metropolitan, South East regions, plus Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions if Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial, but excluding those with 1000 or more student enrolments
Very large, urban secondary	Any secondary school with 1000 or more student enrolments in North Coast, Metropolitan, South East regions, plus Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions if Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial

Type	Explanation
Rural secondary	Any secondary school in Darling Downs South West, Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland regions, except where Education Queensland zone is metro or provincial
Combined	Any combined primary/secondary school, except when remote, plus schools of distance education
Remote	Any school, except special schools and outdoor and environmental education centres, defined as remote under Education Queensland zones definition, regardless of sector or student enrolment number
Special	Any special school, regardless of location or student enrolment number
Outdoor and environmental education centres	Any outdoor and environmental education centre, regardless of location or student enrolment number
Specific purpose	Barrett Adolescent Centre Special School, Lady Cilento Children's Hospital School and Woody Point Special School

Appendix D Next steps for principals after a priority support review

Within two weeks of receiving review report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish executive summary (or full report) to school website. • Share key findings and recommended improvement strategies with staff and the school community.
Before the three-month check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop draft action plan with assistant regional director (ARD) or principal supervisor. • Email draft action plan to your School Improvement Unit (SIU) case manager for feedback at least two weeks before the first check-in. • Case manager available for further advice or support as needed.
Three-month check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with case manager, ARD and school leadership team to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the development and implementation of the action plan – regional support available to the school – the evidence that will be used to evaluate progress at the next check-in – the three possible outcomes after the 12-month review. • Case manager emails feedback to the principal and ARD after the visit. • Principal finalises action plan and emails signed version to the case manager within two weeks after the visit.
Six-month check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case manager meets with the ARD and school leadership team to discuss previous feedback and latest progress. • Case manager meets with staff, students and other members of the school community to gauge school's progress against the action plan. • Case manager, ARD and school leadership team discuss the next steps and expectations for the next check-in. • Case manager emails feedback to principal and ARD after the visit.

Nine-month check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case manager meets with the ARD and school leadership team to discuss previous feedback and latest progress. • Case manager meets with staff, students and other members of the school community to seek further evidence of school's progress against the action plan. • Case manager provides feedback on the progress of the improvement strategies ahead of the 12-month visit. The timetable and process for the visit are also discussed. • Case manager emails feedback to principal and ARD after the visit.
12-month review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case manager and another reviewer evaluate how effectively the school has implemented the action plan improvement strategies. • Evidence considered includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – findings from previous check-ins – information collected at the 12-month review – latest school datasets, including headline indicators – regional support.
12-month review recommendation and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the 12-month review, the SIU makes one of the following determinations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School has successfully implemented agreed actions. No further SIU support required. 2. School is making gains, but would benefit from additional regional support and monitoring. 3. School requires additional SIU support and monitoring. A second priority support review to be scheduled. • An exit meeting with the ARD and leadership team is held to outline the evidence for the decision. • A review report detailing the recommendation and rationale is emailed to the principal and ARD approximately two weeks after the review.

List of initialisms and acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research	ILP	individual learning plan	SDA	school disciplinary absence
AIME	Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience	LOTE	languages other than English	SDS	Service Delivery Statement
AIP	annual implementation plan	MOU	memorandum of understanding	SIU	School Improvement Unit
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	MSS	mean scale score	SOS	School Opinion Survey
APA	annual performance assessment	NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee	STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
ARD	assistant regional director	NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy	STLaN	support teacher – literacy and numeracy
BSM	business services manager	NMS	national minimum standard	TAFE	Technical and Further Education
C2C	Curriculum into the Classroom	NSIT	<i>National School Improvement Tool</i>	U2B	upper two bands
CIS	Council of International Schools	O&EEC	outdoor and environmental education centre	VET	vocational education and training
COAG	Council of Australian Governments	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	WTW	Words Their Way
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	OP	Overall Position		
DET	Department of Education and Training	P&C	parents and citizens' association		
DoTL	Dimensions of Teaching and Learning	PAT-M	Progressive Achievement Tests in Mathematics		
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language or Dialect	PAT-R	Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading		
ESCM	Essential Skills for Classroom Management	PBL	Positive Behaviour for Learning		
FTE	full-time equivalent	PEA-AC	principal education advisor – Australian Curriculum		
GEM	gifted education mentor	PLC	professional learning community		
GRR	Gradual Release of Responsibility	PLT	professional learning team		
GTMJ	guides to making judgments	PMR	Performance, Monitoring and Reporting branch		
HOC	head of curriculum	PROBE	Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour and Evaluation of Comprehension		
HOD	head of department	QCAA	Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority		
HOSES	head of special education services	QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education		
HR	human resources	QCIA	Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement		
I4S	Investing for Success	QSR	quadrennial school review		
IAS	Individual Achievement Scale	QUT	Queensland University of Technology		
IBD	International Baccalaureate Diploma	RBP4S	Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students		
ICP	individual curriculum plan				
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage				
ICT	information and communication technology				

Endnotes

01 School improvement and reviews in Queensland state schools

- 1 Classroom is also identified as the ‘last frontier of school improvement’ by Fullan, Hill and Crévola (2006).

02 School improvement outcomes across Queensland state schools

- 2 In 2015, Year 7 transitioned to secondary school. Prior to 2015, Year 8 was the first year of secondary schooling.
- 3 Categories relate to Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Area classifications (Australian Bureau of Statistics n.d.).
- 4 It is noted that same day notification is being introduced in all state schools in 2017.
- 5 Principals set high standards and expectations for behaviour. They use a range of consequences and behaviour support strategies after consideration of individual student circumstances. It is not possible to draw a direct correlation between SDAs and the number of behavioural problems experienced in schools.
- 6 NAPLAN performance is reported using three different measures:
 - mean scale score — reflects the average score of all students for a test area in each year level
 - national minimum standard — nationally set standards against which the results of NAPLAN tests are compared. For each year level, a minimum standard is defined and located on the common underlying scale. Band 2 is the minimum standard for Year 3; Band 4 is the minimum standard for Year 5; Band 5 is the minimum standard for Year 7; and Band 6 is the minimum standard for Year 9
 - upper two bands — the NAPLAN scale is divided into bands, with six reported at each year level. This measure reports the proportion of students in the top two bands.
- 7 Writing has been excluded from Closing the Gap reporting due to the time series break (although it was reported for several years from 2011).

03 School improvement practice across Queensland state schools

- 8 These and other data from the 2016 SOS used in this chapter were derived from the 354 schools reviewed by the SIU in 2016 that participated in the SOS. The numbers present the aggregation of positive responses: ‘Somewhat agree’, ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly agree’. Data from some schools were not available (NA) or withheld (DW) due to a low level of respondents, or where responses to an item were the same. This included 14 schools in parent SOS, 25 schools in student SOS, 0–1 schools in all staff SOS and 31–33 schools in teaching staff SOS. These numbers were excluded from the total number of schools for which calculations were made. In addition:
 - percentages are rounded to one decimal point in reports, so discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals
 - staff includes responses from principals, where items were identical on both the staff SOS and the principal SOS

- staff refers to both teaching and non-teaching staff
- teaching staff includes class teachers; deputy principals; guidance officers; heads of department and heads of special education services; itinerant and visiting teachers; principals; resource teachers, reading recovery teachers and tutors and learning support teachers; teachers in charge and staff in other teaching roles
- ‘NA’, ‘DW’ and ‘0%’ are all displayed as zero.

- 9 Although not named in review reports, local consultative committees are the established method used by schools to ensure meaningful staff consultation about workplace issues.
- 10 Purposeful learning or research carried out at the same time as the activity is undertaken.
- 11 Groups of three established for collaborative learning.
- 12 Due to the nature of the review process, data were not collected primarily for research purposes using a standardised tool, and therefore they need to be interpreted with caution. Provided percentages refer to the key partnerships identified in schools during the review, and may not reflect the actual scale and variety of all existing partnerships.
- 13 Classroom profiling is a coaching method to improve classroom practices for managing student behaviour. It helps teachers develop, build and enhance positive relationships and create learning-focused classrooms.
- 14 Due to the nature of the review process, data were not collected primarily for research purposes using a standardised tool, and therefore they need to be interpreted with caution. Provided percentages refer to the key pedagogies identified in schools during the review, and may not reflect the actual scale and variety of all pedagogies used by review schools.
- 15 The IMPACT Centre is part of the Brisbane School of Distance Education.
- 16 One school which fits the definition and was reviewed in 2016 is not reflected in the findings for rural and remote schools due to the unique format of the review report (result of the emergent review), which could not be coded using the existing coding structure.

05 Next steps

- 17 The term ‘capacity’ was used in the previous annual report (SIU 2016), but in order to reflect the maturing of the concept and to promote terminology consistent with State Schools Division, ‘capability’ is used when referring to the skills/abilities of people. ‘Capacity’ will still be used when referring to schools.
- 18 Curriculum and pedagogy were also identified among the top five areas for improvement; however, according to the School Improvement Hierarchy, before addressing these areas, other domains such as planning and data use need to be improved.

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Publication and contact details

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School Improvement Unit 2016 Annual Report

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Contact details:

School Improvement Unit
Office of the Director-General
Department of Education and Training

Level 8, Education House PO Box 15033
30 Mary Street City East Qld 4002
Brisbane Qld 4000

Ph: 07 3035 2217
Email: SIUMB@dete.qld.gov.au
www.schoolreviews.eq.edu.au

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Mail address

Department of Education and Training
PO Box 15033
City East Qld 4002

Street address

30 Mary Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

General enquiries

13 QGOV (13 74 68)