

# 01

## School improvement and reviews in Queensland state schools



## 1.1 Aims and focus of the annual report

Queensland state schools continue to provide a quality education for students around the state. This annual report, the second from the School Improvement Unit (SIU), describes the school improvement practices of the 366 schools reviewed by the SIU in 2016. The reviews examined the effectiveness of school practices, with a focus on the teaching and learning, learning environments and partnerships that make each school unique. Each review report is a distillation of extensive fieldwork, including discussions with principals, teachers, students, parents and community members, as well as the reviewers' application of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) (Australian Council for Educational Research 2012). For an overview of the domains of the NSIT, see Appendix A.

The qualitative data analysed to produce this annual report were primarily collected by reviewers to assist schools to improve student outcomes (for details of research methods, see Appendix B). Using a mixed-methods research approach, these data complement the school performance data collected by the Department of Education and Training (DET) (see Figure 1.1 below). Together they provide evidence of the ongoing school improvement in Queensland state schools, informed by recent research.

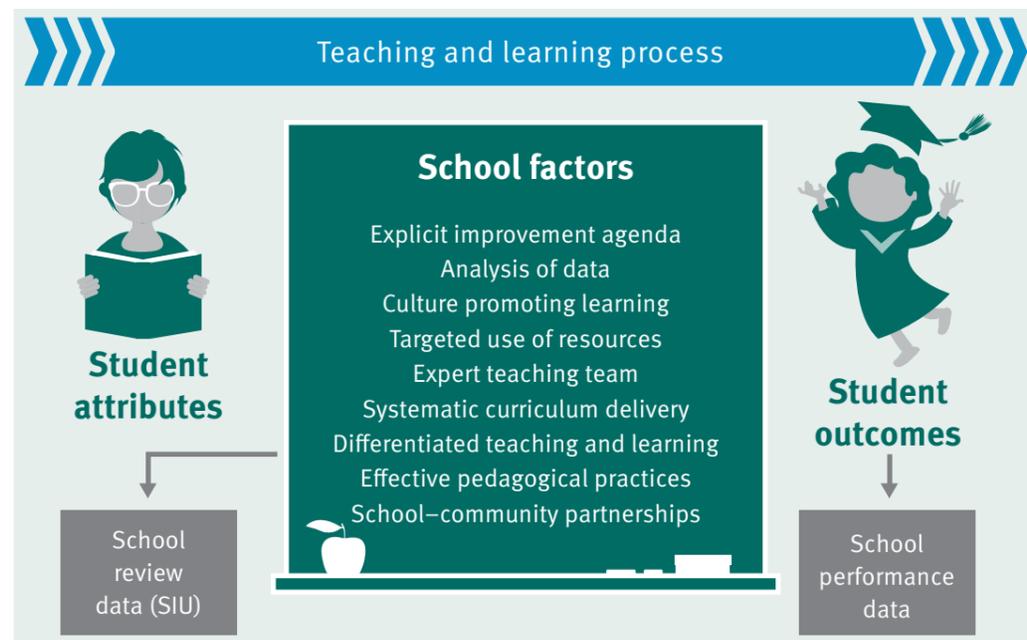


Figure 1.1: Data collection in Queensland state schools

This report builds on the SIU's 2015 annual report, which analysed findings from the first year of reviews. Given that the 2015 and 2016 reviews examined different schools, operating at different times, they are not entirely comparable, but together they contribute to the evolving picture of school improvement in Queensland state schools.

Chapter 1, the introduction to this report, examines the Queensland context and state school system, as well as contemporary research regarding school improvement. It also outlines the current approach to school reviews and major SIU activities undertaken in 2016.

Chapter 2 considers how Queensland state schools perform in relation to the preconditions for learning and learning outcome measures, and considers the school practices associated with

those measures. Significant contributors to student learning, including attendance, behaviour and school community satisfaction, are examined. The learning outcome measures discussed are:

- student achievement in literacy and numeracy, as measured by the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
- Year 12 attainment, as measured by the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) and other certifications
- Closing the Gap education goals.

Chapter 3 examines the 2016 school review data in relation to two significant determinants of school performance: school leadership and teaching quality. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) approach to school leadership is applied and leaders are considered as managers, lead learners, change agents and system players. Teaching quality is then examined in terms of teachers, curriculum, pedagogical practice, learning and learning environments. The specific practices evident in rural and remote schools, special schools, and outdoor and environmental education centres (O&EECs) are also outlined in this chapter.

Chapters 2 and 3 also include illustrative case studies which outline emerging, potentially effective practices within Queensland state schools evident during their 2016 reviews. Practices from a range of SIU school types (see Appendix C) are examined.

Chapter 4 focuses on the journeys of 76 schools which were assigned a priority support review in 2015, received 12 months of support from the SIU and their region, and then exited this process in 2016 (for details about the priority support review process, see Appendix D). The action plan final reports produced by SIU case managers have been analysed, and these new data highlight the improved practices that already are contributing to improved student outcomes in this cohort of schools.

Chapter 5, the final chapter of the report, considers the implications of this analysis for schools, regions and the Queensland system as a whole. It revisits the three levers of school improvement suggested by the *School Improvement Unit 2015 annual report* – planning, data and capacity. Using the findings from the 2016 reviews, the levers are further refined and linked to the features of a school as a learning organisation.

## 1.2 Queensland context

### 1.2.1 Role and main functions of the Department of Education and Training

DET is committed to ensuring that Queenslanders have the education and skills they need to contribute to the economic and social development of the state by delivering world-class education and training services (DET 2016a).

The department's strategic objectives, as stated in its *Strategic plan 2016–20* (DET 2016a), include:

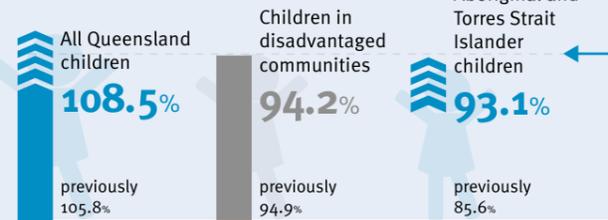
- early years – children engaged in quality early years programs and making positive transitions
- schooling – students engaged in learning, achieving and successfully transitioning to further education, training and work
- training and skilling – Queenslanders skilled to participate successfully in the economy and broader community.

# DET performance report 2016

## EARLY YEARS

### Kindy participation 2016

✓ MORE children in kindy



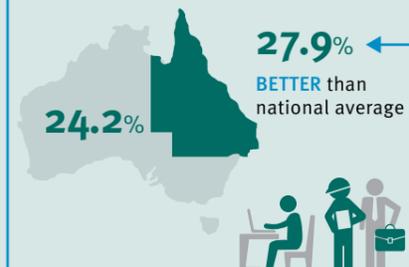
✓ HIGH quality services



## TRAINING AND SKILLING

### Total VET activity

VET participation



(total VET activity – 2016 calendar year)

### Apprentices

16,200 PROJECTED COMMENCEMENTS in 2016–17

In 2016 calendar year

3.0% decline SIMILAR to the national average (2.9%)

### Trainees

22,300 PROJECTED COMMENCEMENTS in 2016–17

13.6% growth COMPARED to 2015–16

(This refers to apprentices and trainees combined)

### Skilling Queenslanders for Work Invested



Target Supporting UP TO 8000 Queenslanders up to 32,000 over four years

Assisted 7213 more Queenslanders in 2016–17

## CORPORATE

### Budget

on track 2016–17



### Staff in frontline

94.6%



### Unplanned absences

4.6%

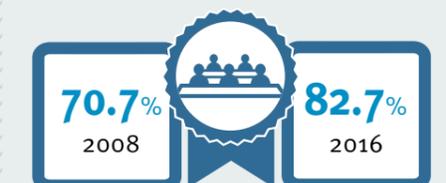


## STATE SCHOOLING

✓ DAY 8 enrolments

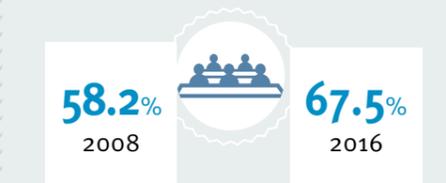
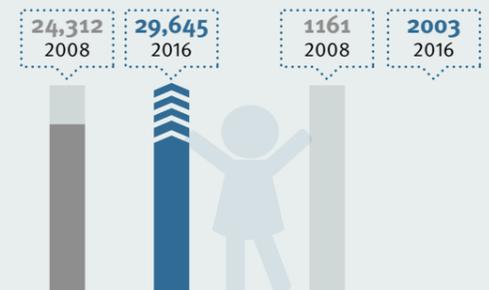


✓ Improved student retention from Years 10 to 12\*



3.2 percentage points ABOVE the NATIONAL state school student average in 2016

✓ MORE students COMPLETING Year 12



OUTPERFORMING the NATIONAL state school Indigenous student average

\*Apparent retention rate – number of Year 12 students enrolled as a % of the number of Year 10 students two years earlier

✓ BEST results ever\*\*

	All students		Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	
	2016	Improvement since 2015 (% points)	2016	Improvement since 2015 (% points)
QCE	95.1%	↑ 0.7	92.6%	↑ 1.8
QCE or QCIA	97.8%	↑ 1.0	97.0%	↑ 1.9
OP 1–15	77.2%	↑ 1.6	62.8%	↑ 8.2
Cert II+	63.0%	↑ 3.3	74.9%	↑ 7.1

✓ CLOSING the GAP\*\*



29.2

2008

% point gap

0.9

2016

\*\* Percentages have been rounded. Discrepancies may occur between the sum of component items and their totals

The Queensland Government’s *Advancing education: an action plan for education in Queensland* (DET 2016b) aims to prepare students to become lifelong learners, global citizens and successful people.

The plan will advance Queensland’s education system so that (DET 2016b, p. 6):

- Queensland’s literacy and numeracy outcomes match higher performing states, including student achievement at the highest levels
- every state school has access to specialist science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teachers
- the participation of vulnerable children in quality kindergarten programs lifts to more than 95 per cent
- more than 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children engage in quality kindergarten programs
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are engaged in their learning and achieve academic success
- every state school offers the Digital Technologies curriculum, including coding and robotics
- all state schools offer languages other than English from Prep, with a focus on Asian languages
- the number of young people in education, training or employment after completing Year 12 exceeds 90 per cent
- the investment of resources and assets is based on need
- staff feel valued, have opportunities to develop their practice and have access to high-quality evidence.

DET provides services across the state. Its central office is located in Brisbane, with early childhood education and care, school education, and training and skills services integrated at a regional level. The regions are:

- Central Queensland
- Darling Downs South West
- Far North Queensland
- Metropolitan
- North Coast
- North Queensland
- South East.

This regional structure enables cohesive service delivery, and strengthens relationships to improve transitions between sectors. Information regarding the location of Queensland state schools and regional offices is available online at:

[www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/maps/](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/maps/).

### 1.2.2 Queensland state schools

The Queensland Government provides state education in accordance with the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*. Every state school student must be provided with an educational program that is appropriate to his/her age, ability, aptitude and development.

Enrolments in Queensland state schools continue to increase. From 2012 to 2016, enrolments grew by more than 33,577 students (or 6.7 per cent). A total of 531,590 full-time students were enrolled in Queensland state schools as at August 2016.

In 2016, 327,827 students (61.7 per cent of total state school enrolments) were enrolled in primary year levels and 203,763 (38.3 per cent) were enrolled in secondary year levels (see Table 1.1 below). The half cohort of Prep Year students (introduced in 2007) is in Year 9 in 2016, resulting in smaller enrolment numbers for this year level.

Primary	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Prep	45 689	46 882	47 191	48 070	47 555
Year 1	44 441	46 094	47 012	47 499	48 410
Year 2	42 567	44 825	46 404	47 561	47 965
Year 3	41 252	43 012	44 962	46 933	48 057
Year 4	39 632	41 581	43 112	45 384	47 153
Year 5	26 409	39 601	41 410	43 259	45 304
Year 6	39 912	26 377	39 435	41 921	43 383
Year 7 primary	41 123	39 516	26 327	-	-
<b>Total primary</b>	<b>321 025</b>	<b>327 888</b>	<b>335 853</b>	<b>320 627</b>	<b>327 827</b>
Secondary	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 7 secondary	-	-	-	35 883	37 939
Year 8	36 322	37 069	36 072	24 835	36 423
Year 9	36 681	36 654	37 291	36 559	25 193
Year 10	37 070	37 443	37 447	38 377	37 226
Year 11	34 159	34 594	34 874	35 313	36 013
Year 12	29 048	29 392	29 883	30 751	30 969
<b>Total secondary</b>	<b>173 280</b>	<b>175 152</b>	<b>175 567</b>	<b>201 718</b>	<b>203 763</b>
Special	3 708	3 904	4 081	-	-
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>498 013</b>	<b>506 944</b>	<b>515 501</b>	<b>522 345</b>	<b>531 590</b>

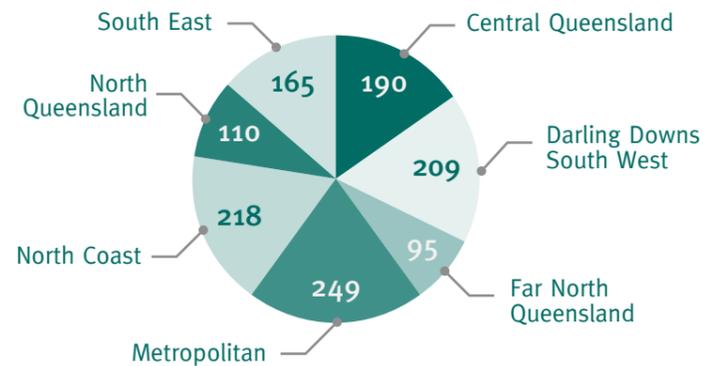
**Table 1.1: Enrolments in primary and secondary year levels, Queensland state schools, 2016**

Source: August Collection 2012–16

Notes:

- Full-time students only.
- From 2015, Year 7 became the first year of high school in Queensland.
- From 2015, students enrolled at state special schools are recorded against their age- or ability-appropriate year level as determined by their school.
- A half cohort of Prep Year students was introduced in 2007 to align with the shift in the compulsory school starting age from 2008. The first full Prep Year cohort commenced in 2008. The introduction of the universally available full-time Prep Year program replaced the part-time preschool program in Queensland.

The Queensland population, unlike many other Australian states, is relatively decentralised. This is reflected in the geographical distribution of Queensland’s 1236 state schools, with 80 per cent of schools operating outside the Metropolitan region (see Figure 1.2 below).



**Figure 1.2: Distribution of state schools across regions, 2016**  
 Source: DET’s Performance, Monitoring and Reporting branch (PMR) school count, 6 January 2016



### 1.3 School improvement

The challenge of school accountability, a consistent theme in the international education literature over the past few decades, is now being regularly contested and more broadly reconceptualised.

Recent research suggests accountability systems and programs may have various effects on school improvement, and on teaching and learning (Altrichter & Kemethofer 2015, Ehren et al. 2015). Traditionally, school accountability has focused on being responsible to government (contractual accountability) and, where there is a choice of institution, to the market (market accountability). In order to support school improvement, schools also need to acknowledge their responsibilities to students, parents and the local community (moral accountability), as well as to colleagues (professional accountability) (Gilbert 2012).

An analysis of school improvement programs being implemented to raise student outcomes across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries revealed common problems, namely: a tendency for improvement initiatives to bypass the classroom level<sup>1</sup>, insufficient support to build capacity at a school level, and underestimation of the context and external factors (OECD 2015). These issues need to be taken into account by policy-makers designing improvement policies.

As in many other countries, all Australian states and territories sought to establish school improvement frameworks, resulting in the development of the NSIT. This approach relies on standards as policy levers and supports system-wide improvement; however, the challenge is to sustain this change over time by building capacity within schools (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE] 2014).

**‘[School] capacity is ... the power to engage in and sustain continuous learning of teachers and the school itself for the purpose of enhancing student learning ... A school with internal capacity would be able to take charge of change because it’s adaptive.’**

(Stoll 2009, pp. 116–7)

Queensland, like all jurisdictions, is striving to meet Council of Australian Governments (COAG) targets. Recent reforms are contributing to improvements in NAPLAN results, and to more Queensland students successfully completing Year 12 with a recognised qualification (DET 2016c).

According to Masters (2016a), to achieve better outcomes for students, schools need to function as learning communities making ongoing improvements and continually learning about how to improve. Many school improvement initiatives fail because they do not change day-to-day school practices (CESE 2014, p. 3), so in their efforts, schools need to focus on both student outcomes and school practices.

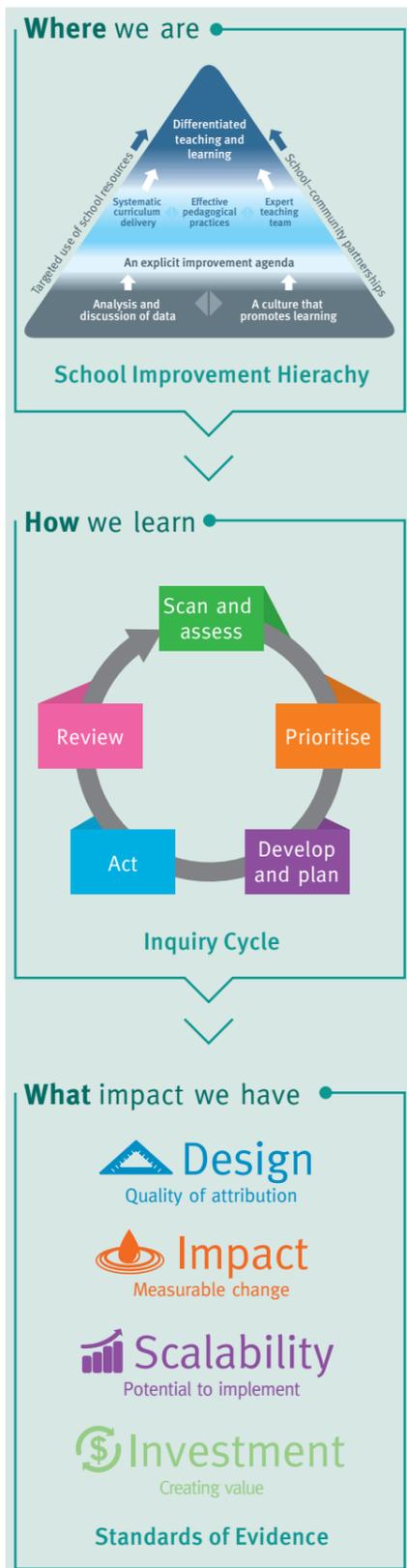


Figure 1.3: School Improvement Model

### 1.3.1 School improvement in Queensland state schools

School and system improvement in state schools is based on the belief that all students of all backgrounds can achieve success on the way to rich and fulfilling life outcomes; this underpins *Every student succeeding: state schools strategy 2016–2020* (DET 2016d).

The year 2016 marked two years of collaboration across the system to develop a research-based change strategy called the School Improvement Model (see Figure 1.3). The School Improvement Model was launched at the 2017 Principals’ Conference.

The School Improvement Model brings together the existing frameworks of the School Improvement Hierarchy and the Standards of Evidence with a learning process known as the Inquiry Cycle. The lens of the School Improvement Hierarchy provides a sharp and narrow focus for schools. Engaging in continuing cycles of inquiry helps staff sustain their improvement journeys. The Standards of Evidence provide a consistent way of assessing evidence, including evidence of impact.

The School Improvement Model is relevant across all levels of our system – classrooms, schools, regions and central office – and can be used to support effective collaboration and networking across educational sites. In this respect, it is part of DET’s ongoing strategic rebalancing of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches to educational leadership, continuing to move from an era of prescription to an era of professional autonomy. The School Improvement Model embodies the recommendations of Masters (2016a) in that it aligns system strategy with the diverse and specific adaptations that educators make to meet individual learning needs and particular situations.

Underpinning the School Improvement Model is a commitment to developing an agreed understanding of evidence of educational impact, as monitored through students’ growth in learning. The model supports teachers and school leaders to continually enhance the quality of their teaching and the quality of their leadership, but only based on what their students produce as evidence of their learning. OneSchool, a software suite designed to support Queensland state schools’ learning, finance and administrative processes, being first deployed in 2007 and followed by a number of major releases, continues to be a major influence on the availability and accessibility of timely, accurate school and system data about student learning.

The next stage of the improvement journey will be defined by attending to what has worked in schools and how to learn from this, while continuing to develop system capacity for sharing and scaling, collaborating and networking.

The first iteration of the Evidence Hub was released in 2016 as an online repository for evidence and research related to school performance. It includes information about how to generate better evidence and evaluate evidence claims using the Standards of Evidence. It also provides advice and guidance for DET staff on the stages of an inquiry process.

### 1.3.2 School reviews in Queensland state schools

The SIU’s school review process plays an important role in helping schools to identify focus areas for improvement that will inform their explicit improvement agenda. The current approach to reviews for Queensland state schools commenced in 2015 and is detailed in the SIU’s *Improving student outcomes through school reviews: a toolkit for principals* (SIU 2017). School reviews are a crucial part of DET’s school improvement agenda, with every state school, including independent public schools, being reviewed at least once every four years. This aligns with the department’s four-year school planning, reviewing and reporting cycle (see Figure 1.4 below).

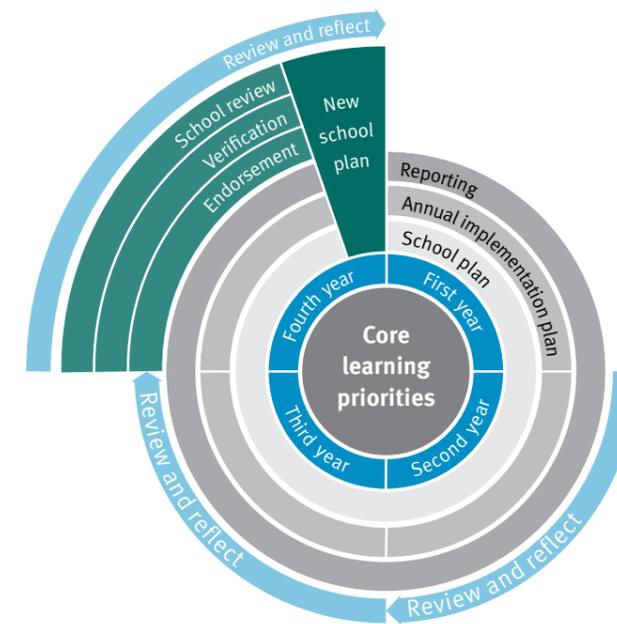


Figure 1.4: School planning, reviewing and reporting cycle

The reviews are administered by the SIU, which reports directly to the Director-General, independent from the delivery arm of schools (State Schools Division). The SIU is led by an executive director who oversees a team of internal reviewers and support staff. The unit draws on the expertise of principal peer reviewers and external reviewers (contractors) as required.

The reviews are an opportunity for development rather than a compliance exercise. Firstly, the intention of the reviews is to ensure support and intervention is matched to the needs and context of schools. Every school is different and each review is tailored accordingly. Secondly, each review provides schools with formative evaluation and constructive feedback to support their improvement. Review reports are diagnostic, rather than prescriptive; they acknowledge the distance travelled by schools and provide suggestions for further improvement. How schools respond is largely the responsibility of school leaders in consultation with staff, parents and their region. School reviews also identify and celebrate successful practice that can be shared for the benefit of all Queensland schools and their communities. Finally, school reviews benefit the system by building the capability of principals through collaboration between review teams and school leaders, training and review opportunities for principals, and the analysis of review reports in order to identify and share school improvement practice.

In 2016, 366 schools and centres (the SIU reviewed nine of 25 O&EECs) were reviewed by the SIU or completed a self-determined review. The 2016 review schools were representative of all Queensland state schools in terms of SIU school type (for details, see Appendix C) and DET region. Figure 1.5 below compares the 2016 review schools with all Queensland state schools in terms of SIU school type, and demonstrates that the subset is largely representative, with any variation in proportion found to be within three percentage points.

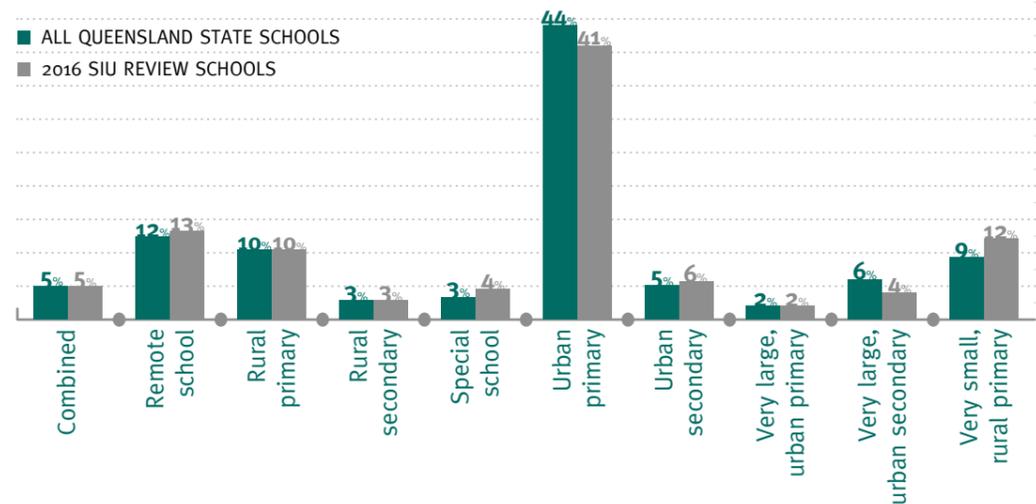


Figure 1.5: Comparison of review schools and all Queensland state schools, by SIU school type, 2016

Source: PMR school count, 6 January 2016

Considering the regional distribution of the 2016 review sample and all Queensland state schools presented in Figure 1.6 (below), greater variation is evident. For instance, North Coast schools are under-represented, with nearly nine per cent fewer North Coast schools being reviewed in 2016 than in the Queensland state schools cohort overall. This variation is due to the nature of the pre-existing quadrennial school review (QSR) timetable inherited by the SIU.

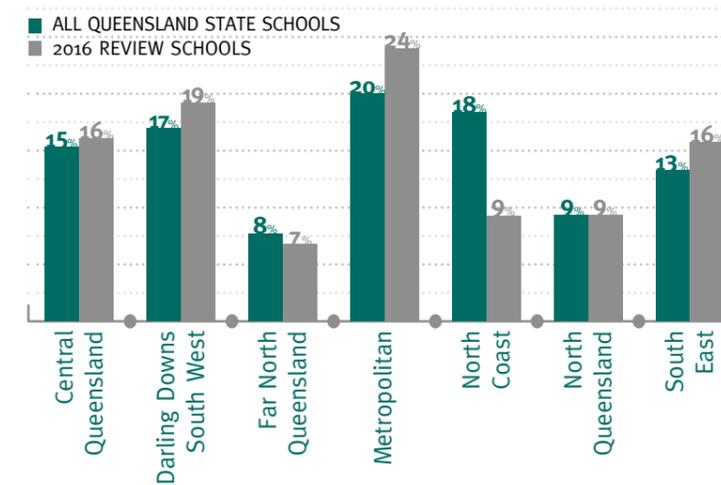


Figure 1.6: Comparison of review schools and all Queensland state schools, by region, 2016

Source: PMR school count, 6 January 2016



The QSR timetable does not represent an even spread of state schools across the four-year cycle. As Table 1.2 below indicates, the SIU reviewed more than 60 per cent of schools and centres in its first two years of operation.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Number of schools reviewed	369	366	292	250	1277

**Table 1.2: Number of school reviews (includes O&EECs) according to QSR timetable, 2015–18**

### Review types

The SIU analyses a standard set of performance data for all Queensland state schools in Term 4. Based on their headline indicators, schools in the fourth year of their school planning, reviewing and reporting cycle are designated for one of the three review types. Other schools that would benefit from a priority support review may also be nominated.

### Headline indicators

Headline indicators are a high-level snapshot of selected school datasets. They provide a common starting point for schools to further investigate other school-based data and evidence, monitor their performance and plan for improved student outcomes.

Headline indicators are developed in consultation with principals, regions and other stakeholders, and are presented in an easy-to-read format.

The department consults regularly with stakeholders about the headline indicators and their use. Currently, headline indicators focus on:

- attendance
- literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN)
- English, maths and science (A to E)
- enrolment trends
- behaviour
- school community satisfaction
- Year 12 attainment and post-school destinations (where applicable).

Each indicator is shaded green, orange or red according to how well the school is tracking against set thresholds and, in the case of literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN), similar Queensland state schools. This allows the department to identify schools that are performing comparably to, or better than, similar schools, and those that may need additional support.

Contextual information, including the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value and financial information, is also presented.

Two reports are made available to principals, assistant regional directors (ARDs) and regional directors each year: an annual report (usually in April) and an updated interim report (usually in October). The SIU uses the updated interim headline indicators, as well as the existing QSR timetable, to help identify and designate schools for review.

The SIU develops a proposed list of schools for review for the following year. Senior officers from the SIU meet with each regional director and other regional staff, including ARDs, to consider the data and to finalise reviews for the following year. Broader contextual issues and school needs are identified through this annual performance assessment (APA) process.

Based on these discussions, schools are designated for one of these review types:

- full school: default, what most schools receive
- priority support: for schools identified as needing additional support
- self-determined: for schools identified as having a trajectory of continuous improvement.

Of the 366 reviews conducted in 2016, 263 were full school reviews, 74 were priority support reviews (including three emergent reviews) and 29 were self-determined reviews. For the distribution by review type and term, see Table 1.3 below.

Review type	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Total
Full school	56	89	86	32	263
Priority support	25	23*	18	8#	74
Self-determined	1	2	11	15	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>366</b>

**Table 1.3: Number of school reviews, by review type and term, 2016**

\* includes one emergent review

# includes two emergent reviews

While schools having a self-determined review are able to arrange their own review, in 2016, 20 of these 29 schools engaged the SIU to conduct their review.

There was a small number of schools for which the review type was redesignated once the review team was at the school. Two schools designated to have a priority support review were redesignated to receive a full school review. Conversely, two schools designated for a full school review were changed to a priority support review, as it was agreed by the school, region and SIU that the school would benefit from additional monitoring and support. These redesignations represent just one per cent of 2016 reviews, which underscores the accuracy of the APA process.

## SCHOOL REVIEWS AT A GLANCE



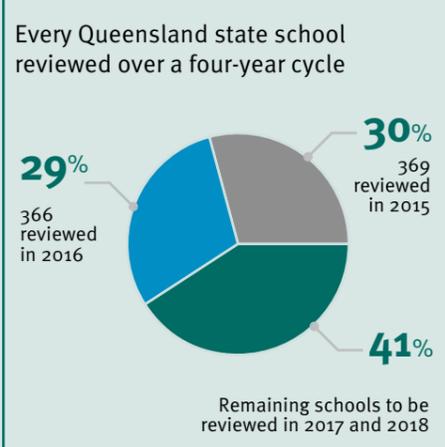
**366 schools and centres** reviewed in 2016



### Reviews per term



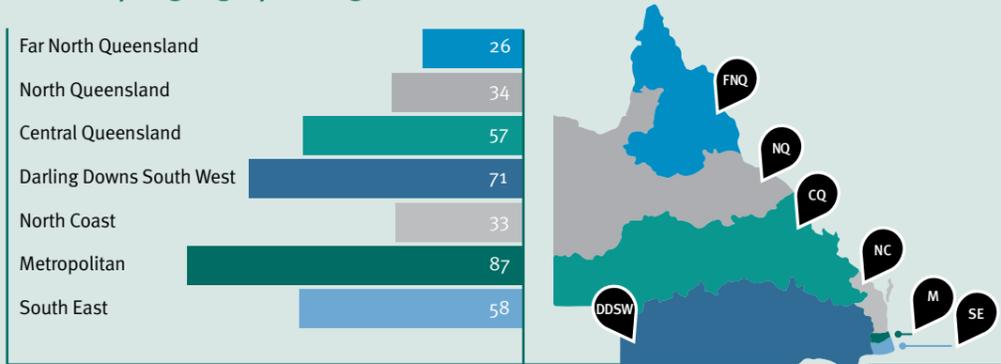
### Review status



### Reviews designated in 2016



### Reviews per geographic region



### Support for schools that had a priority support review

During 2016, the SIU continued to monitor the 166 schools that had a priority support review in 2015 or Terms 1 to 3, 2016. This resulted in a total of 389 check-in visits in 2016 (see Table 1.4 below).

Check-in type	3-month	6-month	9-month	12-month	Total
Number of visits emanating from 2015 reviews	36	75	82	84	277
Number of visits emanating from 2016 reviews	63	39	7	-	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>389</b>

Table 1.4: Number of check-in visits conducted by SIU, 2016

In 2016, SIU support was finalised for the 76 schools that, with regional support, made sufficient positive gains in relation to their action plan over 12 months. Improvements identified in these schools are described in Chapter 4.

### Reviewers

Internal reviewers are experienced state school principals seconded to the SIU for a period, usually a term or semester, to undertake school reviews on behalf of the SIU. They are recruited throughout the year and work across all review types, often acting as review chair. In 2016, 42 principals were seconded to the SIU for a period as internal reviewers. Another four principals were contracted as senior internal reviewers, taking a greater leadership role across the review program, participating in quality assurance of reviews and case-managing schools that had priority support reviews.

All Queensland state school principals are invited to be trained in the NSIT and take the opportunity to act as peer reviewer in a full school review. The value of such professional development is reflected in the oversubscription of principals to opportunities in 2016: for example, in Term 3, 784 nominations were received from 151 individual principals to participate in the 76 opportunities that term. Over 2016, 176 principals acted as peer principal reviewers.

External reviewers are contracted by the SIU from a pre-qualified panel to join review teams. They have a range of backgrounds — they may have been Queensland state school principals, or come from non-state schools, universities, or outside of Queensland. They have strong school improvement experience and bring additional rigour and independence to the process. External reviewers are trained by the SIU and participate in all review types. They may also be contracted by schools to undertake self-determined reviews. Thirty-six suppliers offering 61 individual reviewers were included on the SIU pre-qualified panel of external reviewers in 2016.

For more information about reviewers, the review process and the 12-month support process for priority support reviews, see *Improving student outcomes through school reviews: a toolkit for principals* (SIU 2017) or the informative videos available on the SIU's website at: [www.schoolreviews.eq.edu.au](http://www.schoolreviews.eq.edu.au).

### Capability building

The SIU provides ongoing professional learning opportunities for principals, and seeks to train all principals in the application of the NSIT and the review process over time. By undertaking the training, principals develop a deeper understanding of the review process and how the NSIT can be used to support school improvement. Principals who complete the training can step out of their school and be a principal peer reviewer.

Participating in a review of another school provides a valuable professional learning opportunity to collaboratively analyse another school's context and practice. This in turn encourages principals to reflect on their own leadership and practice. Principals also have the opportunity to learn about school improvement initiatives and developmental trajectories from experienced reviewers from across the state, including external reviewers from outside the Queensland state school system. In addition to training principals, the SIU also provides training in the NSIT for other members of school leadership teams, such as deputies and heads of curriculum.

Principal and associate leader training occurs in the regions, with senior members of the SIU training staff over two days or one day respectively. Table 1.5 below sets out the number of principals and associate leaders trained in each region in 2016.

Region	Principals	Associate leaders
Central Queensland	76	76
Darling Downs South West	37	80
Far North Queensland	13	27
Metropolitan	41	156
North Coast	35	54
North Queensland	19	46
South East	27	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>526</b>

Table 1.5: Number of principals and associate leaders trained, by region, 2016

A range of other staff were also trained by the SIU in 2016:

- 74 teachers attended principal or associate leader training
- 33 regional or central office staff attended principal or associated leader training
- 29 principals attended associate leader training, which provided them with insight into the NSIT but does not qualify them to be peer principal reviewers.

In addition to providing formal training, senior executives of the SIU (in particular the executive director) are regularly invited to speak at forums such as professional development days, professional association councils, regional or school cluster meetings, and to international delegations. In 2016, the SIU made presentations at 14 such forums.

### Cross-sectoral, interjurisdictional and international liaison

The SIU continued to link with other school sectors, as well as other states and territories and internationally:

- The SIU established professional relationships with the Archdiocese of Sydney, Catholic Education Office and the Edmund Rice Education Australia – Flexible Learning Centre Network, providing mutually beneficial training and review opportunities to these education providers.
- DET had the opportunity to share its school improvement journey via the Australasian Accountability Network meeting, held in October 2016 in Wellington, New Zealand. Senior staff from the SIU and the Performance and Strategy branch presented to colleagues from the Australian states and territories, and New Zealand jurisdictions.
- The SIU negotiated the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Council of International Schools (CIS) and DET. The MOU, which became operational in 2017, outlines how the signatories will work cooperatively to coordinate review, evaluation and accreditations processes with Queensland state schools that are accredited by CIS. This includes providing SIU school reviewers with the opportunity to work with the CIS in a joint review process.

At the request of DET International, the SIU also conducted reviews at five offshore schools licensed to provide the Australian/Queensland P–12 curriculum (see Table 1.6 below).

Date	School name	Country
18–21 April	AIS Sharjah	United Arab Emirates
25–26 May	Lihir International Primary School	Papua New Guinea
1–2 June	AIS PNG	Papua New Guinea
24–25 October	Hangzhou Dong Fang School	China
26–27 October	No. 1 Middle School of Suzhou New District	China

Table 1.6: International school reviews, 2016

### Monitoring the work of the SIU

Since its foundation, the SIU has surveyed principals following their review. In 2016, the response rate to the feedback survey from principals whose schools received a review was 81.5 per cent. Of the principals who responded, on average nearly 96 per cent reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with various components of their school review. For a more detailed breakdown of responses, see the results in Table 1.7 below.

Item	% satisfied or very satisfied
Communication about the review process	94.2
Opportunity to engage in the review process	97.9
Conduct of the reviewers during the review process	95.9
Usefulness of the review to the school	94.2

Table 1.7: Principal responses to school review exit survey, 2016

As noted, senior internal reviewers regularly visit review teams at schools in order to monitor the implementation of school reviews. Internal reviewers are regularly provided with individual feedback on their work, while review chairs complete a short survey about the external reviewer they have worked with in order to track their performance in line with contractual obligations. Both internal and external reviewers attend regular moderation sessions to discuss their work and their knowledge of the NSIT, and to maintain shared valid and reliable standards.

In addition to this feedback from schools and reviewers themselves, the SIU is supported by two stakeholder groups that meet each term. The SIU Stakeholder Advisory Group consists of senior executive-level staff from the principal associations, the Queensland Teachers' Union, P&Cs Qld, branches of the State Schools Division, the Queensland Education Leadership Institute and a regional director. The SIU Working Group consists of senior officers from the branches of the State Schools Division, branches of the Policy, Performance and Planning Division, Human Resources, Queensland State School Resourcing, DET International, Internal Audit and an ARD. Both groups continue to help shape and support the strategic direction of DET's school review program and associated communications, research and policy.

In addition to these consultative groups, each semester the SIU holds a feedback forum for principals and another for ARDs. Principals from schools that have recently been reviewed or are currently being supported following a priority support review are invited to attend a session facilitated by an officer from outside of the SIU. ARD sessions are scheduled to coincide with other ARD activities in central office. Feedback from these forums assists in the continuous improvement of the operations, communications and research functions of the SIU.

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**This chapter described the SIU's approach to school reviews. This program has been embraced by schools around the state, with more than half of all Queensland state schools reviewed in 2015 or 2016. The chapter also examined the context in which these reviews were conducted, providing the background for the presentation of findings from the analysis of 2016 school reviews.**

**The following chapters will provide new insights to assist schools in their continued improvement, based on the analysis of school review reports. Chapter 2 provides student outcome statistics, augmented by descriptions of related school practices.**

**'School improvement is achieved not by working on outcomes directly, but by working on the school practices that result in better outcomes.'**

(Masters 2016a, p. 8)