BACKGROUND

Vale View State School is a multi-age school situated in a rural environment 10km south of Toowoomba. Currently, there are 85 students and four full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. Multi-age classes in place are Prep/1, Years 1/2, Years 3/4 and Years 5/6. The student population consists of four students identified as being from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural group and 11 students are supported by the Special Education Teacher (SET). The Principal, Mark Hooson was appointed in 2013. Reviews are conducted in schools in a four year cycle and Vale View State School was invited to conduct a self-determined review as the school has been identified as high performing. This review had a specific review focus as identified below.

SPECIFIC REVIEW FOCUS

1. What is the decision making process at Vale View State School when providing varying levels and types of intervention?

2. What consistent systems are in place at Vale View SS to cater for students having difficulty in learning, and for students who need extension?

3. How effective are these systems?

REVIEW TEAM

David Saxton, Principal Glenvale State School
Ben Kidd, Principal Newtown State School
Margaret Ferguson, Leadership Coach Calypso Coaching
REVIEW PROCESS

The reviewers, either together or singly, conducted structured conversations with:

- Leadership team (Principal, Teacher, STLaN). The team delivered a brief presentation outlining policy, background and current practice.
- All Staff. First meeting in morning where Review team members introduced themselves and explained the background and planned process. Second meeting in afternoon to provide a summary of findings.
- Each teacher individually
- All teacher-aides in a group
- The school’s Administrative Officer
- The Support Teacher LaN/Special Education Teacher
- A group of Years 5 and 6 students
- A group of Years 3 and 4 students
- An invited small group of parents
- The Principal, One progress check-in, and a debrief at the end of the day.
- The reviewers also engaged in informal conversation with parents in the car park as they delivered their children to school.

FINDINGS RELATED TO SPECIFIC FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus question 1 - decision making process

- The Vale View State School Intervention Policy has been developed in 2015, and provides a synopsis, a statement of roles and responsibilities, intervention programs in place, the assessment schedule, a flowchart of the referral process, checklists and a referral form.
- The process is clearly represented in the flowchart diagram, and the statement of roles and responsibilities is comprehensive. The synopsis provides a clear statement of purpose and rationale.
- There is no statement of expectation, in the Policy flow chart, of in-class intervention which a teacher may provide to students prior to embarking on the referral process.
- Parents indicated that they felt they were an integral part of any decision about intervention for their children.
- The Student Support Committee considers all requests for referral, and is designed to give integrity to the decision-making process.
- All teachers and teacher aides demonstrate a focus on, and concern for each child and his or her needs, and contribute to the decision making process in the school.

Focus question 2 - consistent systems

- All staff members interviewed articulated a common belief that it was their responsibility to identify and address the needs of all the students in their classes.
- The Principal views reliable and timely student data as essential.
- The use of student achievement data is a vital component in determining referral requests.
- There is evidence of some pre and post test data being used.
- There is little consistency in the data tools that teachers use.
- There is little evidence of sharing data, information, strategies and concerns between teachers.
- A system for referral for additional support is clearly described in the Intervention Policy.
- There are minor differences between the sequence of steps in the process shown in the Policy Flow Chart and what happens in practice.
- The Principal has initiated regular data meetings with each teacher, to examine and interrogate student data, and plan forward.
Focus question 3 - effectiveness of systems

- The system for referral for additional support has been established recently, is known and understood by teachers, and is still relatively new.
- Many students are provided with effective differentiated support at Vale View.
- Parents work in a close partnership with the school to access specialised intervention for their children.
- Students interviewed indicated that they believed they received any support they needed, and were confident in asking for assistance from any staff.
- There is little evidence of vertical alignment between classes.
- Parents expressed some concern about their children within special needs, transitioning to the next class, and are empowered to raise those concerns, and suggest some solutions to the Principal.
- Teachers collect, record and use data to inform teaching. There is a lack of cohesion, consistency and sharing in the way data is collected and used.

OTHER RELEVANT FINDINGS

- The STLaN has responsibility for several intervention programs, and students are withdrawn from class to participate in these.
- There is extensive evidence of shared leadership and shared accountability.
- Parents are enthusiastic and specific in their praise for the school, its staff, and its provisions for their children.
- Students expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the school, the staff and their learning opportunities.

POINTS FOR CELEBRATION

1. The positive culture and tone evident in the school is a credit to the Principal, staff, students and parents.
2. The focus on, and accountability for, each student as an individual person, is contributing to the positive and powerful partnerships between school and parents, and to improving student achievement.
3. There is a high level of commitment from each staff member to doing ‘what it takes’ to support students and their families.
4. School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness.
5. The specialised group intervention programs are having a positive impact on the academic and social and emotional development of students.
6. Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact.
7. Programs to meet individual learning needs are prioritised where possible in the budget.

POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Working together to create a ‘Vale View way’ will assist moving toward a more consistent and aligned approach across classes.
2. Increase in the frequency of data conversations throughout the school and undertaking whole staff data meetings will contribute to a more unified approach to data keeping and using data to inform learning.
3. Some minor review and adjustment to the Intervention Policy - particularly the point of parent involvement, and the role of teachers - will enable a closer reflection of practice.
4. Increasing the frequency of the Student Support Meetings to at least once a month, will aid in supporting and regularly reviewing effectiveness of student intervention.
5. A concerted effort to create vertical alignment, consistent and cohesive data practices and authentic professional sharing among teachers, will move toward creating a seamless transition for students through their schooling at Vale View.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The positive tone and strong commitment to student welfare and learning evident throughout the school is a credit to all members of the school community.
2. A deliberate and considered approach to catering for all student needs has been initiated and worked upon, and continues to develop.
3. Attention to creating a seamless flow of learning through increased vertical integration throughout the classes will be necessary to achieve the excellent results the school aspires to.