Background:
Balaclava SS is an Indigenous Focus and a Low Socio-Economic National Partnership School located in Cairns. The school caters for the learning needs of 315 students, 201 of which are from Indigenous families. Current Principal, Craig Law, was appointed in 2010.

Commendations:
- There has been significant progress made since the previous Teaching and Learning Audit in the domains of An Explicit Improvement Agenda, Discussion and Analysis of Data, A Culture That Promotes Learning, An Expert Teaching Team, Systematic Curriculum Delivery, Differentiated Classroom Learning and Effective Teaching Practices.
- A Head of Student Services position has been created to enact and oversee strategies that minimise the impact of student mobility into and out of the school. The resulting outcomes have included strengthened relationships with families and productive transitions into the school for students.
- The Literacy and Numeracy Coach provides support through mentoring, modelling and coaching.
- The Principal and the Deputy Principal provide verbal and written feedback to teachers about observations of their practices in the classroom. In addition, trained personnel profile teachers classroom management practices against objective criteria and collaboratively project focus areas for future attention. Collective data from profiles are utilised to shape teacher professional learning.
- Teacher aides are highly-valued and partner with teachers in the teaching and learning processes.
- An extended services model has been developed to assist students and families by liaising with a range of agencies including: Smith Family, Crèche and Kindergarten, James Cook University Dentistry, Queensland Health Dentist and the Mt Stuart Cluster Teacher Education Centre of Excellence.

Affirmations:
- The importance of positive and caring relationships to successful learning is recognised, and building mutually respectful relationships is a priority. A strong sense of belonging and pride is evident.
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) has been adopted resulting in significant reduction in interruptions to learning within the classrooms and a more settled playground environment.
- The Deputy Principal meets with teachers each term to examine student progress data.
- A work progress review process has been introduced that defines learning goals for teachers. The plans are reviewed directly with the Principal twice per year.
- A compulsory weekly power hour meeting focuses on the development of teacher skills.
- An attractive physical environment has been created that supports and encourages learning.
- Student success in all areas of schooling is celebrated publicly and frequently.
- An extensive range of strategies are in place to improve the attendance rates for all students.
- Sound amplification units have been installed in all classrooms to accommodate the significant hearing challenges of many of the students.

Recommendations:
- Systematically support teaching staff to gain further consistency in the understanding and application of the tools and practices within the curriculum support documentation. Ensure all staff members are familiar and competent with the documented school expectations.
- Clarify expectations regarding feedback to students including annotations in workbooks. Adopt a methodology for connecting curriculum, explicit teaching, verbal feedback, annotation and goal setting.
- Provide professional development aimed at building staff members’ proficiency with embedding Information Communication Technologies (ICT) into the teaching and learning process.
- Support teachers through established coaching and mentoring arrangements to meet expectations regarding embedding higher order thinking in all lessons.
- Standardise the expectations regarding learning intentions and success criteria for all classrooms.
- Build on the strong collegial and self-reflective culture to have teachers invite colleagues to observe their teaching, discuss their work with them and provide objective feedback.