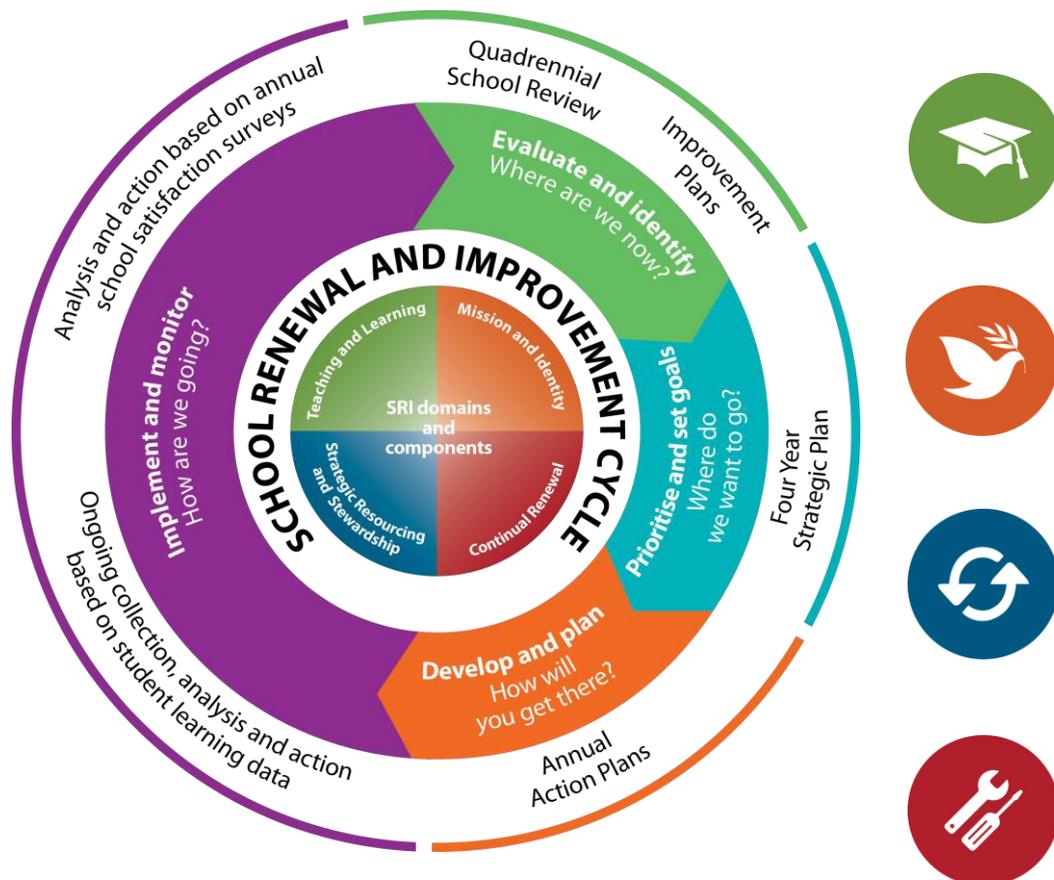




Diocese of Toowoomba Catholic Schools

St Mary's School GOONDIWINDI

TCS Quadrennial school review Full report



25 March 2019

Foreword

Although much has been written about school reform in past decades — national reports, studies, descriptions of findings — insufficient attention has been given to the important relationships among the adults within the school, and to a consideration of how the abundant untapped energy, inventiveness and idealism within the school might be encouraged.

Roland Barth, Harvard Graduate School of Education

The philosophical approach to the review is based on Appreciative Inquiry, a well-established approach used by organisations varying from international corporations to not-for-profit social organisations. Appreciative Inquiry begins with the assumption that there are good things happening in the organisation and identifying these. It then moves to what people see as areas needing attention, improvement or change. The key principle is that these are placed in the context of what the organisation does well, so it moves beyond a problem-solving agenda to an improvement agenda.

Appreciative Inquiry aims to bring ownership to the school. The review panel hears ‘the story’ of the school through its stakeholders, and this informs the key findings and improvement strategies that the review panel has recommended. Exactly how the school addresses the key findings and improvement strategies is left for the school to determine, but it is mandatory for the school to address them over the following four years.

Leaders of continuously improving organisations bring a learning mindset to the work of their staff. They focus on establishing disciplined processes for developing, testing, and improving core work and programs to build capacity. They invest time and energy in enabling staff to embed these processes into day-to-day work and to create an organisational openness to review and change.

Park, S., Hironaka, S., Carver, P. and Nordstrum, L. (2013). Continuous improvement in education, Carnegie Foundation, Stanford.

Methodology

The review was conducted from Tuesday 5th March to Thursday 7th March 2019.

Reviewers

John Coman; Senior Education Leader, Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS), Review Panel Chair
Jim Midgley; Director: Teaching and Learning TCS
Norm Hunter; External Reviewer
Terry Carter; Manager: Teaching and Learning TCS

The review consisted of structured interviews of the following school community members

- The principal and all executive team members
- The Parish Priest
- 29 teaching staff members including learning support
- 19 support staff including Finance Manager, administration staff, teacher aides, specialist support staff such as library aides, IT support, tuckshop convenor
- 17 parents including members of the College Board, P&F and self-nominated parents
- 19 students from years 5-10

School Renewal and Improvement (SRI) domains and components

The reference document for the review was the SRI domains and components from the Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS) School Renewal and Improvement Framework.



Domain 1: Teaching and learning

Component 1.1: Students and their learning

Component 1.2: Curriculum structure and provision

Component 1.3: Pastoral care and student wellbeing



Domain 2: Mission and identity

Component 2.1: Religion curriculum

Component 2.2: Religious life of the school



Domain 3: Continual renewal

Component 3.1: School improvement culture

Component 3.2: Community partnerships



Domain 4: Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1: Staff development and wellbeing

Component 4.2: Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

Prologue

Members of the St Mary's School Goondiwindi community are to be congratulated on the open and honest manner in which they participated in the review. As a result, the review panel members are confident that they have been able to come to know at some depth the excellent work that is being done at the school and provide suggested strategies to further improve learning into the future.

The overwhelming message from the review is about the professionalism and dedication of the staff. It is evident that they are a cohesive and supportive group who have the best interests of the students at heart. They willingly participate in professional learning themselves so as to improve the learning of students. This is further evidenced through the work and impact of the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

A strong culture is present that recognises and values the importance of self-reflection as necessary to bring about improvement in student learning. It is very evident that the staff and executive team bring a disposition of care and understanding of one another and the students to the culture of the school. These attributes are acknowledged by staff, students and parents alike. They often refer to the school as having a community or family ethos which they believe underpins the school culture and is its greatest strength.

The executive team of the school is described as approachable, sensitive and willing to listen to the perspectives of others. The expectations of staff and students are communicated clearly and understood. The staff have significant trust in the Principal as leader and they feel that every staff member matters. As further evidence of this belief, staff members who are not teachers report that they feel included as staff members and that their contributions are valued.

The Positive Education program is consistently referred to by staff, parents and students as being a key strength of St Mary's School. Through the program, St Mary's promotes a safe and nurturing environment that challenges students to strive for continuous self-improvement and to demonstrate that they are resilient in their learning and in their relationships



Domain 1: Teaching and learning

Component 1.1: Students and their learning

Findings

“Every child Matters” is the well-known mantra that is lived at St Mary’s Goondiwindi. The school has a stellar reputation as a high-quality provider of Catholic education. The review panel finds that this reputation is well deserved.

Qualities understood as life skills necessary for success in the twenty-first century, such as getting along, positive mindsets, goal setting, engagement in learning, resilience, mindfulness and emotional intelligence, while difficult to measure, are key ingredients in the St Mary’s formula for success. St Mary’s students and staff demonstrate they have benefited from the focus on Positive Education which incorporates positive psychology and wellbeing. Staff and students use this language and practise these skills, and it is clear that they are becoming embedded in the school culture. An overwhelming sense of positivity exists in the school. It is evident that staff, students and parents all have a positive view of the embedding of these skills as a ‘way of being’ at St Mary’s.

Students speak very highly of their teachers and the quality of relationships between teachers and students. Parents speak highly of the commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm of teachers. 94% of parents are happy with the quality of teaching and learning (School Satisfaction Survey [RADII] data 2018), citing a motivated and high performing staff. Additionally, teachers are very loyal to their colleagues and the executive team. They describe the school as a wonderful place to work and many interviewed by the review panel state that they enjoy coming to work. The review panel frequently heard that *“staff look after each other, they are good at seeking feedback and are very reflective about their practice.”* *“They are open to learning and growing as professionals.”*

On the academic results that can be more easily measured, St Mary’s is also performing well in most areas. With a higher than average Index of Community Socio- Educational Advantage (ICSEA), St Mary’s NAPLAN results far exceed local and regional schools in all NAPLAN year levels, and results are generally equal to schools with similar students (similar ICSEA across Australia). Year 3 in 2018 performed well above state and well above national averages in all NAPLAN domains. In Year 5 and Year 7, most domains were above or at state and National mean scale scores. With 2018 seeing Year 9 participating for the first time in NAPLAN, and being a small cohort, Reading, Grammar and Punctuation were equal to state and national levels. 80 percent of students in Years 1 - 6 reached Toowoomba Catholic schools (TCS) reading targets with 100 percent of Prep students reaching TCS reading targets.

When analysing cohort growth (rate of improvement between NAPLAN years) against national levels and rates of growth, Reading and Spelling recorded lower than average growth and scores in the growth analysis from Year 3 to Year 5. The domain of Writing is classified as low growth-low scores from Year 7 to 9.

With 409 students from Prep to Year 10, the school has 2.2 percent of the student population registered as English as a Second Language (ESL), 1.5 percent as Indigenous and 16 percent assessed as students qualifying for support through additional federal and state funding (Nationally Consistent Collection of Data [NCCD] and Students with Disabilities [SWD] in terms of required educational adjustments).

In 2015 RADII data showed parents’ responses declaring issues existed in the following areas: lack of focus on high potential learners, bad behaviours including bullying, and low academic standards. The current Principal and executive team have had a strategic focus to address these main concerns and the strategies and goals have certainly borne fruit. The 2018 RADII survey revealed parent perceptions had significantly improved in this area and that these factors were no longer issues.

The High Potential Learners' program is well received by parents and the work of the Extension and Enrichment Leader and the support of students in this category is acknowledged as having a positive impact. Teachers appreciate the support received in this area. Some express concern that at this stage it is still 'bolt on' rather than 'built in', and there is still work to do to see it embedded as part of standard differentiation within classroom practice across the school.

Teachers and school officers acknowledge that there has been a gradual change in their methodology for providing extra support for teachers with students with special needs. Teachers are seeing themselves as the person with responsibility for differentiation in planning, and ensuring the educational needs for all students in their class are being met. This means fewer students are withdrawn from class and school officers' work is directed by the classroom teacher. The learning support teachers and teacher librarian see themselves as focusing support on the needs of the teacher in terms of capacity-building around how best to support a child with special needs as well as the general educational programs in class.

Support for students who have not reached targets is also evident. School Officers have attended professional development in Reading Advancement for Targeted Students (RAFTS) which supports the Reading Improvement Strategy (RIS). This is appreciated by school officers who say they feel supported in delivering instructional support to students under the direction of the class teacher, and request further investment in their capacity to support teachers.

The RIS has been a focus throughout 2018 and evidence of high impact reading strategies is observed and described as consistently implemented throughout the primary school. At this stage the reading results in NAPLAN across the school are yet to reflect this investment.

The new secondary school is establishing itself as a genuine school of choice, with 34 students from Year 6 remaining to continue the secondary journey at St Mary's. Secondary staff believe continuing work is needed to ensure leadership structures, roles and responsibilities and resourcing needs are given attention as the secondary school continues to grow.

On the topic of induction, teachers acknowledge that informal induction is being done well with all new staff indicating they have felt welcomed and supported by colleagues and leadership. The formal induction process has been enhanced in 2019, meaning at the start of the year new staff are well informed about formal expectations and requirements around how things work at St Mary's. At this stage, this same level of thoroughness is not experienced by teachers who start mid-year or in relief contract capacity.

The Essential Skills of Classroom Management (ESCM) and voluntary profiling of teachers in this area is occurring across the school. This is emerging as a school-wide expectation and becoming consistent practice across the school. The next step of documenting collection and analysis of data with guidelines and policy to communicate it more widely is yet to occur. This would lead to embedding the practices as an agreed school-wide protocol.

The level of embeddedness and clarity around the pastoral aspect of school life far exceeds the clarity around pedagogy. Perhaps it is the case that the positive psychology aspect of school life, being new and innovative, is at the forefront of minds. Review panel members were volunteered very little information about the underpinnings that support school wide curriculum planning and pedagogical approaches. While there is no doubt this is covered by the Middle Leaders and through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), at this stage it is difficult to pinpoint St Mary's pedagogical underpinnings of teaching, learning and assessing. While there are no significant gaps due to the diligence and work ethic of teaching staff, agreed school-wide understandings and beliefs about learning and teaching were not at the forefront of conversations with the review panel.

Improvement strategies

- Ensure that classroom teachers remain at the centre and take responsibility for meeting the needs of all students in their classes, so that high quality teaching remains as the method for meeting the needs of the majority of students.
- Investigate ways to collect and track data to measure the impact of the work with high potential learners over time, and their engagement in the Extension and Enrichment program.

- Ensure that additional support for students remains a teacher responsibility, and that the executive team can ensure the required additional support for high potential learners, out of phase learners, NCCD and SWD as well as students who don't qualify in any of these categories. Make sure these are supported in class, coordinated and monitored always by the class teacher, with support teachers and school officers focusing on supplying what the class teacher requires to meet their responsibility to differentiate for the needs of the individual learner.
- Continue to support School Officers in the areas of preparedness; deployment; instructional practice and impact.
- Identify the reasons for low growth in reading data from the NAPLAN perspective and consider more frequent Middle Leader engagement with the Reading Improvement Strategy (RIS) coaching cycles, with teachers participating more frequently in the modelling, observation and feedback regarding components of the RIS.
- Regularly review the structure, leadership and staffing of the secondary school so that it seen as an appropriately resourced, rigorous, academic facility.
- Ensure all new staff are formally inducted regardless of the time of year they commence employment at the school.
- Consider why, how and if ESCM is a school-wide expectation, and if it is, include it in the behaviour management policy and procedures and other documents. Consider how the expectations around this approach might be communicated across the community so that ESCM becomes embedded in school culture and practice.
- Ensure that the enthusiasm and the level of acceptance for the Diocesan expectation of the first pillar, "come to know the face of Jesus" is replicated in the second pillar of "academic success and achievement for all students".
- Use the TCS Teaching and Learning Framework as an overarching guide for the further development and sharing of the beliefs that this community has about teaching and learning and how these manifest in school-wide approaches to pedagogy.

Component 1.2: Curriculum structure and provision

Findings

The school has clear expectations around planning, and it is evident that teachers plan thoroughly. The provision of curriculum support and expectations around planning is delivered through four PLCs. These groups, led by Middle Leaders, meet fortnightly and set goals based on strategic intentions. The agenda for these meetings is set by the Middle Leaders and their PLC members, and usually focuses on curriculum and data analysis. The Middle Leaders work closely together, meeting fortnightly as a team. With reference to coherence around how PLCs operate, a number of teachers question the effectiveness of the current groupings of the PLCs, suggesting that more thought needs to be put into how the groups are constituted. Some teachers indicate that they would like a greater say in the agendas of PLC meetings. Some teachers also asked that consideration be given to completely embedding the PLC strategic priorities before moving to the next suite of strategies.

The focus of PLCs in the last few years has been on teacher clarity (high impact effect size) with learning intentions (LI) and success criteria (SC) identified as a narrower focus within teacher clarity. This focus is evidenced by inclusion of LI and SC in planning recorded in the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP). The DLP early years unit plans all contain well-crafted LI and SC. Where they are present in middle years and upper years, they are well crafted. At present there are still gaps in the evidence of their use in planning.

The executive team report that aligning assessment across school years and a focus on formative assessment are occurring. They state that frequent pre and post testing is occurring to allow for triangulation of data. It is not yet evident that assessment tasks across all planning are aligned effectively with learning intentions and success criteria.

The review panel was informed Middle Leaders closely monitor content descriptors and elaborations in units. There is not yet consistency in the use of the DLP across PLCs. At this stage links with the learning activities for students are not evident: teaching and learning activities are usually a brief script of what the teacher would be or is covering. Intentional planning is mixed in most year levels other than the early years and not evident in the DLP for secondary years. The review panel was informed that secondary planning is very thorough and recorded and monitored via the school intranet.

It is apparent that the DLP, the mandated platform for recording planning and assessment, is not yet well understood or used consistently throughout the school.

Improvement strategies

- In the spirit of collaborative professionalism, PLC leaders consider how teachers might be given opportunities to drive or contribute to the agenda for PLCs.
- PLC Middle leaders consider the full cycle of action research, including measuring impact to complete the cycle, before moving to the next strategic agenda.
- Investigate ways in which PLCs might be grouped with a view to gaining greater coherence from Prep to Year 10.
- Continue to develop teachers' understanding and use of LI and SC and the recording of these in planning in the DLP
- Continue to build consistent understanding and practice with all teachers around planning.
- Confirm and articulate the school's position regarding the DLP as the tool for providing transparency and consistency around planning and assessment, given the role that the DLP will play in future system Information Services infrastructure.

Component 1.3: Pastoral care and student wellbeing

Findings

High quality relationships are clearly evident throughout the school community and are observable through positive, empathic and affirming interactions among all stakeholders. There is a deep level of respect for all in the culture of the school, which is articulated clearly and confidently.

The Positive Education program is having a wide and significant impact across the whole school, and is consistently referred to by staff, parents and students as being a key strength of St Mary's School. The program is embedded across the school and all staff and students are aware of the ways of working that emanate from Positive Education. Through the program, St Mary's promotes a safe and nurturing environment that challenges students to strive for continuous self-improvement and to demonstrate that they are resilient in their learning and in their relationships. It also is evident in the way that staff feel supported and confident in their ways of working together as a team for the enhancement of student learning in all areas.

Evidence that the focus on Positive Education is valued and effective is shown through the ongoing requirement to ensure that new staff are formally inducted into the ways of supporting students through the Positive Education program. It is not evident that this is specifically addressed when staff start during the year or when they are part-time.

It is evident that the development of the St Mary's Behaviour Management Process has been a collaborative process that is in line with TCS policy and procedures, and is functional and transparent. At this stage connection in the document to Essential Skills for Classroom Management (ESCM) as the prerequisite to behaviour management are not clear.

There is an appreciation of the improving communication strategies that are being implemented across the school. It is evident that differing methods of communication are preferred by different members of the school community.

The Positive Education Lighthouse Wellbeing Program is included in the school's Annual Action Plan (AAP) with the stated goal being: *"By the end of 2020 we want students and staff to approach life positively, to be resilient, optimistic and see failure as an opportunity for growth."* The targets are around students, staff and parents, increasing their well-being as demonstrated through surveys. The Positive Education program has been successfully embedded in and across the school for some time. The Lighthouse project provides an avenue to expand on the Positive Education program to make the link between improved wellbeing and improved academic achievement for students, and to embed the collection of data into an action research cycle.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to build on the success of the Positive Education focus as a way to build capacity and sustainability in pastoral care and student wellbeing
- Ensure that induction and formation in Positive Education is specifically included in the induction and ongoing formation of staff whether they start at the beginning of the year or during the year and whether they are full-time or part-time, including relief teachers.
- Make clear the connection between the school's Behaviour Management Process and the ESCM as the prerequisite to behaviour management.
- Deliberately plan communication from school leadership to all community members to ensure that information is fully disseminated, and in a timely manner, and that all staff are catered for.
- Strengthen the Lighthouse Project to provide an avenue to expand on the Positive Education program by continuing to make the link between improved wellbeing and improved academic achievement for students.
- Provide greater clarity, share understandings, and disseminate information to ensure all staff, students and parents have a common understanding of the Wellbeing Lighthouse project.



Domain 2: Mission and identity

Component 2.1: Religion curriculum

Findings

The school scope and sequence documentation and supporting unit plans for Religious Education (RE) have been reviewed by the Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE) in 2018. The Religion Curriculum is based on the TCS Religion Curriculum P-10. As required, the Sacred Scriptural texts to be studied in the units are attached to the planning.

The school's RE program makes clear what teachers should teach and students should learn. In the 2018 RADII surveys, 100% of staff responded that the school has a clear RE program with 77% of staff strongly agreeing with this statement.

All teachers were provided in the pupil free days at the start of 2019 with a hard copy of the RE documentation, organised into a folder. Electronic copies of the documentation are available for all staff and accessible off site through the web-based school intranet. This site also acts as a repository of available supporting resources.

Resources are also provided in the school library including booklets specifically prepared to support the RE program.

The scope and sequence for the RE program has been entered into the DLP for Prep to year 8. In 2018 the few Year 9 students at the school studied the Year 8 units so no Year 9 planning was included in the scope and sequence. The Year 9 planning for 2019 has been completed and is ready to be uploaded to the DLP.

In 2017 the school reviewed the ratings given in semester reports to students in English, Mathematics and RE. The findings were that teachers generally gave higher ratings in RE to students than they did in English and Mathematics. Student performance data in RE has not been further reviewed since then.

All teachers have gained Accreditation to Teach in Catholic Schools. All RE teachers in the secondary and all primary teachers have gained Accreditation to Teach RE. This has been enabled through professional development provided by both the school and Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office, including the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP). Staff are very appreciative of this support, which is reflected in the very high ratings given to this in the school satisfaction surveys (RADII) over the last four years.

The 2018 RADII surveys of staff indicate that 92% of staff strongly agree or agree that they have a good understanding of the pedagogy that underpins the teaching of RE. This reflects positively on the support provided to teachers by the APRE and Education Officer (EO): Formation and Identity in this area.

It is not evident that the school has engaged with the question of what a Catholic Curriculum looks like across all curriculum areas and year levels in the school. The school has examined how Catholic Social Teachings can be embedded in all learning areas at the start of 2019.

Improvement strategies

- Ensure that the RE program is sufficiently challenging and rigorous with appropriate assessment and that planning includes learning intentions and success criteria
- Ensure that teachers are collaboratively involved in all aspects of planning the RE curriculum, and in resource development for the program.
- Continue to support the teaching and learning of RE with a wide range of suitable resources and

professional learning opportunities.

- Ensure that Year 9 RE planning is uploaded to the DLP as a priority.
- Consider with the SEL and EO: Formation and Identity how to engage staff with the question of what a Catholic Curriculum looks like across all learning areas and year levels at the school.

Component 2.2: Religious life of the school

Findings

The RADII surveys of 2018 provide the following summary data.

- Staff and parents almost universally responded that:
 - The Catholic Identity of the school is readily identifiable and prioritised
 - The school has a clear religious and spiritual direction
 - That children are encouraged to learn about social and moral issues
 - That staff are provided opportunities to develop their faith
 - The school values are readily recognisable
- Secondary students report that:
 - Prayer and religious celebrations are an important part of the life of the school
 - Opportunities to participate in community service programs are provided to students
 - Catholicism is central to education at St Mary's
 - Students learn about the school's values, history and its founders

The secondary response rates are significantly higher than Diocesan response rates.

- Year 5&6 students are in significantly less agreement than their secondary counterparts on these questions. Their responses are similar to Diocesan averages.

All staff meetings begin with a prayer and reflection prepared by staff members. The process is modeled each year by the APRE at the beginning of the year pupil free days. Similarly, all School Board, P&F meetings and parent information nights begin in prayer. The APRE provides resources for staff to use in classroom prayer to begin the school day.

Very close links to the parish continue to be present in the life of the school. This is evident in the frequent combined school and Parish Masses including:

- Year 6 class participation in Friday Parish Masses
- Monthly weekend Family Masses with very strong attendances. The Parish Priest confirms this.
- Two whole school Masses each term
- The welcome and blessing of new staff that occurs at the Parish Mass at the start of the year.

The Parish Priest is attempting to visit classes more regularly, and he feels welcome in the school.

The school provides many opportunities for community service and outreach including Meals on Wheels to Kaloma residential aged care facility, Masses at Kaloma for the residents, Catholic missions, home visits to aged past students, and the Shrove Tuesday pancake sale supports the Sisters of Mercy.

A combined parish and school calendar is published in hard copy that lists the important liturgical and other events of the year for school and parish. The calendar of events is also available in an on-line digital version and the major events in school, parish and liturgical life are published in the noticeboard section of the school internet.

The APRE provides resources electronically to staff members on the origins, traditions and suggested prayer and teaching resources for every major liturgical event and feast day in the parish/school combined calendar.

In 2019 new signage has been displayed in both the undercover area and the Centenary Centre, with links to the founding orders of the school and its Catholic traditions.

The APRE provides two voluntary opportunities per year for staff to participate in spiritual development opportunities after school. A retreat experience is being planned for 2019 provided by the APRE.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to support the religious life of the school in its breadth and depth as commended above, especially in the close links fostered between parish and school.
- Examine how the use of art, design and space could further contribute visually to the religious identity and culture of the school.



Domain 3: Continual renewal

Component 3.1: School improvement culture

Findings

Staff, students and parents consistently refer to the school as having a community or family ethos. This is typically expressed through words like *care*, *support*, *'always there for you'*, *'watching each other's back'*, *compassion*, *'willingness to accept feedback and reflect'*, and *'generosity of time'*. In their own words, members of the school community offer the view that they believe this is the school's greatest strength, and that it underpins the culture of the school.

A number of staff and parents comment on the ways the Principal and executive team model community values, some linking this to the Catholic and Christian tradition.

The Principal's door is always open – you can go there to ask for help, assistance, or with a concern, and it is taken seriously.
(Classroom teacher)

I often catch the Principal at the church paying a visit. (Parish Priest)

It is clear that the school has generated a highly collegial culture. Staff speak with pride about the way they regularly consult one another about curriculum planning and teaching strategies. They describe this as occurring both formally and informally, building on and contributing to their own and their colleagues' strengths, while assisting fellow teachers who may need support in a particular area.

School Officers see themselves as included in the culture of collegiality. They say they are well briefed by teachers about the work they do with students, and they speak about their relationship with the teachers as respectful and trusting. Many express pride in their work, seeing themselves as working alongside teachers as fellow professionals. Equally, teachers express confidence in the work of the School Officers and see them as significant contributors to student learning.

It is evident that within the culture of collegiality is a school-wide commitment from all staff to taking

responsibility for the learning and behaviour of all students in the school, whether or not they teach those students in their current classes. Students appear to recognise and appreciate this, and have commented on it to members of the review panel.

They know us and they treat us with respect.
(Year 7 student)

As articulated on page 6 “Curriculum structure and provision”, PLCs provide the opportunities for teachers to reflect on and embed improvement strategies.

Teachers express confidence in their ability to teach the subjects they are responsible for, and convey their keenness to continue to engage in professional learning in order to continuously build on their teaching Strategies.

The executive team is always open to suggestions on improvement and is supportive of professional development in the school's priority areas.
(Class teacher)

The school has begun the process of collecting data, both external and internal, with a view to collaboratively analysing them and deciding on implications for planning and teaching strategies in the classroom. The executive team and staff acknowledge that the analysis of data and identifying implications for their classroom practice are in the early stages of development. Most staff state that record-keeping is done well, and that if they seek information about a student, it is usually available.

Teachers express collective commitment to and support for the Reading Improvement Strategy (RIS) and to the Wellbeing Lighthouse Project. The school is linking the principles of Positive Education to its Wellbeing Lighthouse Project. It is not yet evident that the action research, measurement and evidence of impact and publication requirements are being enacted.

There is a shared view across the school that the wellbeing of students and their academic progress are equally important. It is not apparent that all staff make the causal link between the two: that students' wellbeing and their academic achievement are inextricably linked, each mutually reinforcing the other.

Staff express commitment to continuous improvement in their practice and are focused on translating this improvement to the learning and achievement of their students. An example described by a teacher is the introduction of study hall. Homework was seen as an area that needed improvement in the learning habits of a number of students, so dedicated time for teachers to assist those students was created in first break. Those staff who spoke about it see the initiative as having a positive impact on those students' learning.

A number of teachers and parents express approval at recent changes made to the school's awards system. There is a perception that previously there was no apparent rationale for awards to students, but the current approach, in recognising effort and achievement, is now seen as clearer and fairer.

A culture of professional collaboration is evident across the school, formally through the work of PLCs, and informally through the strong collegiality and mutual respect shown by staff for one another.

Staff and the executive team consistently refer to the way they value their colleagues' work, seeing this as a strong element of the school culture. A small number of staff and parents express a tentative concern that with the development of the secondary school, a delineation in status may be creeping in, where secondary staff are perceived as having higher status than primary staff. Those who mention this emphasise that they do not believe it is intentional, but more likely due to the special attention needed to establish this new area in the life of the school. Related to this, some parents and staff have expressed concern that the current focus on the secondary school and its future developments has the potential to detract from the current quality and resourcing of the primary school.

As the secondary school continues to develop, it is apparent that the possibility of the school extending further into Years 11 and 12 in the future has become a topic of significant interest across the school

community. It has been raised with members of the review panel at various times by staff, students and parents. Strong views are expressed by staff and parents in support, and equally strong views are expressed to exert caution. The review panel has engaged with the Principal and executive team in exploring this possibility. It is agreed that this is an admirable aspiration. It is also agreed that the feasibility of financial, physical and human resourcing for the concept is complex, difficult and uncertain.

Students appear confident and thoughtful, suggesting that student voice is an integral element in the culture of the school. Those students consulted by review panel members show deep understanding of the school's approach to teaching and learning and are able to converse about their learning in an informed way. When asked to identify what their 'good' teachers do, the students' responses reflect educational research on what effective pedagogy looks like. They also appear appreciative of the efforts made by staff to contribute to students' learning, academic achievement, and human development.

Improvement strategies

- Begin work on the action research, measurement and evidence of impact and publication requirements with regards to the Lighthouse Project.
- Provide opportunities for building teachers' capacity to analyse student achievement data so they can confidently translate the implications of the data to their classrooms for individuals and groups of students.
- Affirm with staff that student wellbeing and academic achievement are two parts of the one whole, mutually reinforcing each other.
- Ensure that as the secondary component of the school is developed, primary and secondary staff are regarded as having equal status in the life of the school.
- Before giving consideration to further expansion beyond the current secondary offering, prioritise the consolidation and strengthening of the secondary school as it currently stands, so that it becomes a viable, successful and respected component of the school. Once this is established, give deep consideration to issues such as area demographics, financial management, human and physical resourcing, and the economics of financing and sustaining any further expansion.

Component 3.2: Community partnerships

Findings

Many staff are also parents at the school. Some say that this adds an extra dimension to the commitment to collective efficacy that is evident across the school. Those staff who are also parents of students at the school merge both roles when speaking about how they perceive the school, often using words like 'family' and 'community' to describe the culture.

Parents see the school as welcoming, conveying that they see both academic learning and student wellbeing as well-handled. A number of parents who are not teachers express appreciation for the way their child, who is 'different', is catered for in class and accepted and included in the life of the school.

Parent members of the School Board speak highly of the relationship between the Board and the Principal. Words such as 'open', 'informing', and 'trusting' are used to describe his approach. They indicate that while Board members come from different backgrounds, they work well together as a team.

Some confusion about the role and powers of the School Board appears to exist among some parents, who think the Board has similar powers to a board of directors of a company, rather than being an advisory body to the school leadership.

Parents regard the school's communication with them as helpful. Many parents express appreciation of the informal communications, mainly through email, that they receive from some teachers about their children's progress during the term. Often it is just a sentence or two about homework or a way parents can help their child at home with something s/he is struggling with. Some parents with several children at the school suggest that they would appreciate all teachers doing this.

Some parents would like more timely information from teachers about upcoming events such as camps or excursions, as these can require preparation by parents.

Many parents and staff suggest that the school is well-regarded in the wider community. They put this down at least partly to the way the school engages in community involvement. Parents list parish involvement, sporting activities, music events such as eisteddfods and performances, and visits by students to residents in the Kaloma aged care centre. Many refer to the school's role in the town's ANZAC Day commemoration as a significant contribution to the success of the day.

It is clear that the areas of student involvement in the wider community are aimed at strengthening the values and beliefs espoused by the school. The purpose and aims of the school's links with the wider community are clear, and appear understood and appreciated by the community and by students, staff and parents.

Some staff and parents point out that in engaging with the wider community in these activities, students are having learning experiences that they can't have through the formal curriculum at school. A number of these activities involve service to others: an important Christian principle which students appear to understand and appreciate.

Improvement strategies

- Ensure that the role and powers of the School Board are clearly communicated to parents.
- Investigate the possibility of adopting a school-wide approach to teachers informally communicating with parents on students' progress during the term.
- Ensure that upcoming events that require preparation from parents are communicated in a timely manner.



Domain 4: Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1: Staff development and wellbeing

Findings

Staff understand, contribute to and are committed to the values and beliefs of the school culture. The school has effective strategies in place that enhance the wellbeing of staff and students and these are clearly acknowledged by all. The consistent messages heard from staff include: *"Everyone is approachable and kind to each other,"* and *"It is a pleasure to come to work."* This is further validated by students who also respond with comments such as, *"Feels like a good community,"* *"Everybody seems to know everybody,"* and *"Every child matters – just try, the teachers will help you."*

Professional development aligning with the school's stated priorities is available for staff, including faith development. There are opportunities to enhance this through continuing to develop professional goal setting and development.

Induction and orientation programs are provided to staff at the time of appointment with continuing support as necessary. There are identified areas for development in this area to continue the good work already happening.

The engagement of an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Officer has been a universally well-received initiative and this has freed teachers and executive team members from dealing with technical issues and allowed them to focus on their true work. It is not yet evident that an agreed approach for the strategic integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into the school's teaching and learning is in place. The school has banks of computers and iPads available for use within the Library. It is noted that at times opportunities to embed ICT within the curriculum may have been lost due to staff not having ready access to ICT resources in their classrooms. A future focus on the development and acquisition of resourcing reflecting this would enhance this area.

Improvement Strategies

- Enhance the existing professional goal setting and development processes to ensure that there is ongoing monitoring of achievement of goals for staff and regular check-ins on progression.
- Further develop induction and orientation programs to cater for staff who join during the school year. Develop understanding in the staff that induction and orientation is everyone's responsibility and not just that of one person or one section of the school.
- Develop an approach for the strategic integration of ICTs into the curriculum. Use the General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum related to this area as a platform for embedding ICTs into teaching and learning. Ensure that adequate resourcing in this area reflects growing needs.

Component 4.2: Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

Findings

The school uses a range of data gathering tools to identify and respond to student needs. These data are then used to allocate resources to meet the needs of students. One particular example of this is the identification of students to access the school's innovative enrichment program. Student performance data are also being used strategically to ensure that the allocation of teacher aides is providing the most impact. It was reported that, *"Teacher Aide time is utilised well. I get support where I need it, and they are knowledgeable and capable people."*

The school is investigating more effective ways to address the needs of individual learners. It is about to focus on planning for personalised learning, with the goal to ensure teachers receive the necessary professional development to enable them to embed this approach into their planning. There is an acknowledgment that with the successful work with students with particular learning needs, both through the Learning Support program and through the Enhancement and Enrichment program, there is a need to focus on differentiation within the classroom, with teachers developing ways to work inclusively with the variety of students in their classes.

The music, art and sport co-curricular activities are seen as a very welcome and positive addition to student learning and engagement. It is clear that this is all part of "championing students to be their best."

The school's buildings and grounds are frequently praised as being attractive and well-maintained. There is particular appreciation for the work of the groundsman in ensuring the school's appearance is attractive and welcoming. While there is recognition that some classrooms and some play areas are small, it is acknowledged that the best is done with available space.

There is some concern about the effectiveness of the current cleaning program inside the buildings. Staff

acknowledge that the executive team has provided for additional cleaning and there is a common desire to see continued improvements in this area to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for all.

Improvement strategies

- Provide professional development and support for staff to embed the use of planning for personalised learning in their work from Prep to Year 10.
- Plan for ways to achieve evidence-based differentiation within the classroom, engaging teachers in professional learning about how best to differentiate for the students in their classes.
- Improve the quality of the cleaning procedures of rooms and facilities within buildings to ensure that all access a healthy and safe working environment.

Conclusion

The review panel found the review of St Mary's to be an uplifting experience. We are in no doubt that we have been privileged to spend time in a very good school. We hope the improvement strategies in this report will assist the school in its next challenge: moving from being a very good school to being a great school. We wish St Mary's every success as it continues to plan and shape its future.