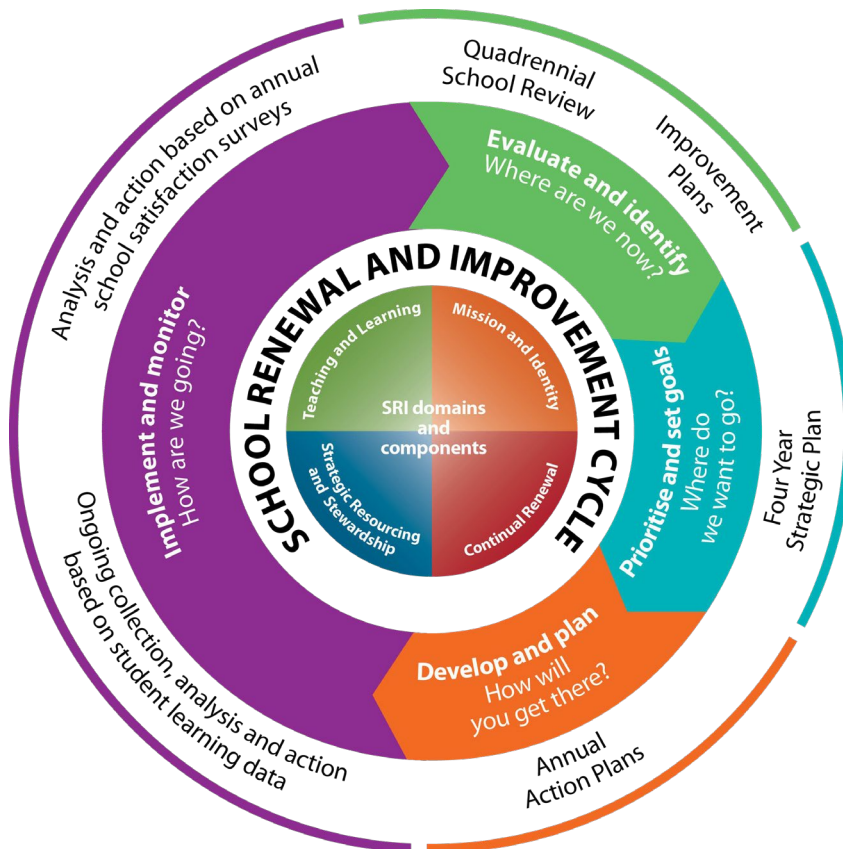**Diocese of Toowoomba**
Catholic Schools

TCS Quadrennial school review - full report

St Joseph's College Toowoomba

04 - 06 June 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 team hears 'the story' of the School through its stakeholders, and this informs the key findings and improvement strategies that the review team 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 4-6 June 2019

Reviewers

Dr Pat Coughlan, TCSO Executive Director
Jim Midgley, TCSO Director Teaching and Learning, Panel Chair
Norm Hunter, Education Consultant, Brisbane
Peter Cuskelly, Principal, Our Lady of the Southern Cross College, Dalby
Terry Carter, TCSO Manager Teaching and Learning
Michael Newman, TCSO Acting Senior Education Leader, Cluster 3

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

- All members of the College Leadership Team
- All Middle Leaders
- 73 teaching staff
- 19 School Officers and Administration staff
- 22 parents including 5 board members and 3 P&F representatives
- 28 students from year 7 to year 12

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

The review panel agrees that they have spent three days in a vibrant College community that has recently commenced a significant improvement agenda. The panel observed the development of a culture of compassion, respect, endeavor and dignity, linked to the Edmund Rice ethos and Catholic tradition.

The leadership team, staff, students and parents have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their voice through this process. They conducted themselves professionally with a clear focus on what is going well, and what could be improved. Some explicitly welcomed the review, noting the potential danger of complacency, and cautioned about judgements on the effectiveness of the College based only on self-assessment and self-judgements. It is apparent to the review panel that the College has begun to look outwards, to compare themselves with other schools, to learn from others, and to share their own strengths with the education community.

It is clear that there is a change agenda taking place that is impacting on the community in multiple ways. The panel notes that there is strong consensus among teachers and parents that change is needed, and that the leadership team has the talent, creativity and expertise to lead this journey of continual improvement.

There is much that the College community rates highly and holds close to their hearts, and the reviewers have tried to identify these areas and affirm them. In balance with this, the fundamental purpose of the review is school improvement, and a number of areas with the potential for improvement have been identified.

In terms of what is rated highly and seen as important in the College, the dominant theme is pastoral care. Long serving members of staff and parents with a long association with the College state that this is what the College has always been known for: its inclusive culture and commitment to meeting the needs of each student.

All representatives across the College community identify academic excellence as the main area of focus in the improvement agenda. This requires deep reflection on aspects of school wide pedagogy and the evidence- based, high impact strategies that make a difference. The leadership team has chosen building collective teacher efficacy and relational trust as the foundation for the improvement process.

The College's improvement agenda takes into account that the educational landscape in Australia is constantly changing, along with the needs of society and the role of schooling in preparing students for this world. The change agenda is broad-reaching and multifaceted, and staff agree that all of the proposed changes will have benefits if effectively implemented. At the same time, many staff convey that the major area in the College needing attention and improvement is the coherence, clarification, prioritising and pacing of the change agenda as it is currently being enacted.

A second area identified by many staff, students and parents as needing attention and improvement is behaviour management, which is seen by many to need greater consistency in implementation. Other themes to emerge and expanded upon in this report are clarity of vision and direction; data analysis resulting in targets and goal setting for students; performance and development policy, and procedures for staff.

The review panel agrees that collective efficacy and relational trust are the keys as the community responds to the findings and improvement strategies of the report through the development of the four-year strategic plan.

Domain 1 Teaching and learning

Component 1.1 Students and their learning

Findings

Explicit Improvement Agenda

The College has been reflecting, redefining and reinvigorating its ethos and school wide approaches in order to remain relevant and successful. With this context in mind, numerous aspects of school life are under review and new strategies are at various stages of implementation. The panel commends processes such as the exploration of 'what we want our graduates to be at the end of a St Joseph's education' and the subsequent strategies to leverage these aspirations. It is apparent that staff are at various stages of making the connections between these conversations and the proposed potential changes.

St Joseph's is celebrated internally as a school that welcomes diversity and caters well for the inclusion of students with special needs. The new student services team is highly-regarded and adjustments are made to teaching practices and assessments by teachers to ensure access to the curriculum and success in learning. A less formal structure exists for high potential learners, with extension catered for more in external curricular activities than differentiated learning experiences in the classroom.

It is clear that the College maintains a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant and inclusive. The new leadership team has commenced pursuing a culture that promotes intellectual rigour. There has been a change of expectations in this regard and there are many new initiatives that are now competing for space. It is apparent that this is causing difficulty in achieving united understandings and school-wide pedagogical practices across the staff, particularly in how these initiatives are likely to raise academic achievement.

Analysis and discussion of data

Teachers articulate that data analysis is a recent focus and is seen predominantly as the responsibility of the middle leaders and leadership team. Data analysis, areas of growth and goal setting are explicit and mainly focused on students with special needs and adjustments. Data analysis of whole school performance and the performance of groups and individuals are in the early stages yet to be embedded.

The College has an ICSEA of 1034, one of the highest in the Toowoomba diocese. Numeracy and reading are slightly lower than state and national means, revealing low score and low growth between years seven and nine. The writing domain reveals low score, high growth. The spelling, grammar and punctuation domains reveal high score and high growth, all above both state and national means. The College sits mid to low in like school (similar ICSEA) comparisons.

It is apparent that there have been efforts to monitor academic trends through NAPLAN and internal school performance data. Various departments collate formative and summative student results and monitor the progress of cohorts. At this stage it is not evident that school wide consistency of expectations exists to set explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement based on the data collected. Individual goal setting for students with explicit strategies for improvement can not be communicated by students for all subject areas. Senior students comment on the English subject changes and in particular the effective use of the learning management system (CANVAS) in a small number of subjects.

2018 Year 12 achievement resulted in 21% of Overall Position (OP) eligible students achieving an OP between 1-5. This achieves a commendable placing of 125/424 independent and Catholic schools in Queensland. 78% of OP eligible students achieved an OP between 1-15, with St Joseph's placed at 78/424 independent and Catholic schools in Queensland. On the tracking and academic management indicator (TAMI) that records secondary schools across a number of indicators such as tertiary offers, QCE, OP 1-15, and qualifications achieved, St Joseph's is placed at 282/424 independent and Catholic schools in Queensland.

Learning culture

The leadership team acknowledges that new procedures are challenging long held mindsets through the consultation process. The panel recognises that conditions for nurturing collective efficacy require gate keeping as well as agreed determination and goal setting, and that this takes time. Currently there is a widespread view among staff that the coherence and pacing of the changes are in need of urgent attention. Staff particularly refer to the pace of the change agenda and the need for prioritising changes over a period of time like a term or a semester or year, so they are not all impacting at the same time.

According to the leadership team, 'Visible Learning in a culture of thinking' as a school wide pedagogical framework is underway. At this time it is apparent that this is not yet fully adopted by all staff. Students are not identifying 'culture of thinking' strategies around teacher clarity as visible to them, or impacting on their learning in all classes.

Many students convey that the CANVAS learning management system is extremely advantageous for their learning, and they comment on the efficiency and clarity of teachers who use this tool effectively. Many students have conveyed to the review panel that they would like to see widespread use of CANVAS across their classes. One year 11 student states: 'Some teachers choose to use it and are on board, while other teachers are stubborn in their ways'. The students state that there are particular teachers who have invested in the learning management system (LMS) and support their learning by uploading lessons and resources on CANVAS in advance of the lesson so that prior access to content can be accessed for organised students.

Some students point out a perceived inequity in subjects where one teacher uses CANVAS to provide detailed feedback while simultaneously, a different cohort in the same subject misses out on what they see as quality, accessible feedback. Some students go on to explain that in a particular senior subject, students can have the same resources open as the teacher, and can consolidate learning individually, keep pace with the teacher or move ahead according to their understanding. These resources are then available to revise at a later date, along with a wide variety of additional resources, the assessment tasks, and criteria sheets.

Students from a particular class state that this class is by far the easiest class to learn in and do their best in. They attribute this to how that teacher uses CANVAS, saying it is well structured, and 'the teacher is effective, direct, no nonsense, professional and supportive as well as expecting all of us to work hard – and we all do as it's easy to work hard for her'. On viewing feedback on a draft supplied by this teacher to one of the students, it is clear that she is guiding students toward improved achievement through effective feedback.

A number of students indicate that being able to submit assessment via the Turnitin plugin is highly beneficial to them, and that the feedback that is supplied from some teachers is outstanding. Students were effusive in their praise for specific teachers who use this tool and especially the quality of feedback from teachers who use this resource effectively.

A number of students describe issues associated with the College's digital platform. In the students' words:

- Problem solving – no ability to immediately digitally log jobs; has to be done at lunch; lots of lost class time.
- No standard structure in CANVAS; some easy to follow, some less so.
- Teacher digital capability is variable; not many are experts.
- 3 platforms – Canvas, OneNote and nothing.
- Students are learning how to use tech on the run; no actual teaching regarding how best to use the devices.
- The batteries go flat most days and they aren't allowed chargers in rooms (but they take them anyway). Would be great if they could charge in locker during breaks.
- Many kids just play games through either Weebly or Flash. These can't be blocked apparently. For 10-20% of students their learning is worse due to ineffective use of technology.
- While students can play games, they can't access YouTube, so have to wait until they get home and then proceed with assessments.
- Some teachers take it too far and don't let kids use pen and paper.
- Tech pens are easily broken; wish they could have the same model as staff.

Improvement strategies

- Ensure that the St Joseph's change process and accompanying scaffolding holds together in an agreed, coherent way, and can be seen to hold together across all the current initiatives.

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the improvement strategies and that these are prioritised and scheduled in the new strategic plan.

- Continue to develop a school-wide pedagogical direction within the framework of 'Visible Learning in a culture of thinking'.

- Strengthen the process and understanding of data collection and analysis to inform teaching and learning practices, including the setting and monitoring of targets and learning goals for students.

- Expand the responsibility of data collection and analysis from the middle leaders and leadership team to a collective responsibility of the whole staff.

- Continue to develop and improve the use of CANVAS more widely across the whole school to enhance the quality and consistency of student learning.

- Provide tool-specific training in skills for teachers and students in the use of digital technology.

- Review the technology and platform requirements for functionality, reliability and sustainability to allow for consistent use.

Component 1.2 Curriculum structure and provision

Findings

Systematic curriculum delivery

There is a widely held view that the College's combination of wide-ranging offerings in curriculum and career pathways combined with a genuine desire for student wellbeing, coalesce into students being well-prepared and confident young adults.

The plan for curriculum delivery is regularly reviewed and modified to accommodate students' learning needs across the year levels. The school provides a core curriculum, incorporating skills of literacy and numeracy with learning experiences that are accessible, engaging and challenging for all students, including those with additional needs. Students have access to a wide range of co-curricular opportunities including camps and retreats, music, performing arts, sport, immersion experiences and overseas trips.

Reporting procedures are regular, aligned with the curriculum and designed to provide information about students' achievement and progress over time.

Staff are familiar with and work within the school's curriculum structures. Middle Leaders work with staff to ensure that assessment processes are aligned with the curriculum and are designed to clarify learning intentions.

Professional Learning Community

As a school which has begun a journey towards 'Visible Learning through a culture of thinking, the focus is increasing on teacher clarity with learning intentions (LI) and success criteria (SC) being implemented across the College.

Unit and assessment writing is generally led by the Heads of Department and in some departments teachers are involved in that writing. Currently there are some teachers who effectively engage in planning for personalised learning and in assessment writing, and other teachers who use the units that are already created.

At the time of the review a cross-curricular STEAM learning project is under way, with humanities,

Manual Arts and IT staff working together to create an 'Augmented Sandbox' which shows effects of flooding in 3D.

The Inclusive Support Services team at TCSO report that there is infrequent contact with the school and that other than for EALD accountability support, few requests for support come from the College.

School context

The curriculum is developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum for Years 7 – 10. The Senior curriculum for Years 11 and 12 offers over 40 Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) subjects, based on Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) syllabuses.
The Senior curriculum also offers twenty-five General and twelve Applied Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) subjects, six certificate courses, Vocational Education Training (VET), as well as providing opportunities for students to undertake School-Based Apprenticeships or traineeships.

All curriculum offerings are detailed in handbooks which are accessible on the College's website.

Improvement strategies

- Ensure that engagement with 'Visible Learning in a culture of thinking' continues to provide the over-arching approach to school improvement with its research-informed and evidence-based focus on improving student learning

- Continue to build consistent understanding and practice with all teachers in the use of learning intentions and success criteria to maximise impact on learning.

- Expand the above practice to include students in the development of success criteria to further engage students in their learning.

- Maintain the focus on building consistent understanding and practice with all teachers around planning for personalised learning.

- Strengthen the learning and development of teachers in the design of assessment items.

Component 1.3 Pastoral care and student wellbeing

Findings

Student social and emotional wellbeing

> *Through our pastoral care and teaching and learning processes we aim to have an environment where students and staff feel successful and supported, so that we can provide good quality learning experiences* (Member of College leadership team).

It is clear that there is a whole school approach to creating a safe and supportive learning community. The panel consistently heard from students, parents and staff about the exceptional ways that the College provides pastoral care for students.

It is clear that the school has created an environment that focuses on the dignity of the human person by identifying, promptly responding to, and supporting the individual needs of students.

> *St Joseph's has a holistic, responsive and proactive approach to meeting needs of academic, social and emotional needs of students and staff.* (Staff member)*.*

A number of staff and students suggest that there is potential for a stronger place for student voice in contributing to the life of the College.

Effectiveness of systems and structures

Many students state that they experience inclusivity and connection through participation, engagement and ownership, in the House system, within the classroom and in the broader school community. The students speak very highly about the vertical structure of the Pastoral Care (PC) groups, particularly with the mix of age groups. They say they greatly value the one-hour PC timeslot and would like to keep it on a fortnightly basis.

> *"My PC is like a second family to me: caring and respectful" (Year 9 student)*

School Officers with maintenance responsibilities suggest adults do not always see potential safety issues that students see. They suggest that workplace health and safety matters could be enhanced if students were given responsibility to report potential hazards they have observed to a designated maintenance person.

Teachers state that they see many advantages in pastoral care with older students meeting with younger students in PC groups. At the same time some suggest that there are particular topics for PC groups which are age specific and not suitable to the vertical structure with such a variance in age groups.

Relationships

The panel acknowledges a widespread and demonstrable pride in the staff regarding their approach to student wellbeing, and students and parents express their appreciation of this. Details around specific data that may measure student well-being are not available and it is suggested that this should become a system priority.

There is a widespread view among staff, students and parents that student wellbeing needs greater support in the College's approach to behaviour management. It is apparent that there is a formal policy and process. At the same time there is a clear message that there is a need for consistency in its application by all staff regarding expectations for student behavior and consequences for unacceptable behaviour.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to strengthen the effective focus on wellbeing and pastoral care that is evident throughout the school.

- Maintain and strengthen the House System while finding ways to address specific year level and age appropriate issues.

- Develop, document and implement an evidence-based, whole-school approach to behaviour management so that each student, parent/carer and staff member is clear about acceptable behaviours and consequences for unacceptable behaviours.

- Ensure that the whole-school behavior management plan is implemented in an agreed, consistent manner by all staff.

- Investigate ways that data on student wellbeing can be systematically generated in order to assist staff to have greater understanding and knowledge about their students.

- Investigate possible structures that can give students a greater opportunity for their voice to contribute to the life of the College.

- Establish a system for students to take responsibility for reporting potential workplace health and safety matters.

Domain 2 Mission and identity

Component 2.1 Religion curriculum

Findings

Systematic curriculum delivery

Religious Education programs in all years are well-designed, based on the Brisbane Religious Education Guidelines. Features of Religious Education programs include scope and sequence, content, general capabilities, philosophy, focus, structure, academic rigour, assessment and reporting modes. Staff say there is sufficient flexibility to cater for the diverse needs of students.

The Religious Education program is currently being revised to include wider world connections, asking challenging questions like 'Can you have an Australian spirituality without Indigenous spirituality?' Programs and resourcing are user-friendly for those teachers who may not be RE-trained but who are at times asked to take an RE Class about specialised topics such as hermeneutics or bioethics.

Planning in RE is collaborative and flexible, enabling backward mapping with colleagues from the assessment topics. An example is a Year 10 team of teachers who have begun discussing the rewriting of the Year 10 RE Program, incorporating minor and major design thinking questions throughout.

Professional development opportunities in Religious Education are appreciated by staff and well attended. Individual staff attend content, planning, pedagogy, and assessment specific in-servicing offered by the Dialogue Australian Network. Opportunities are also provided in accreditation to teach Religious Education in a Catholic school. Expectations around professional development time commitment are accepted by staff.

School Context

The Principal has identified improved academic learning and achievement as a focus of intent for the College, including in Religious Education.

Many parents in the Radii survey indicate that they place little value on religious education and especially Religious Education classes. Attempts are being made to make RE classes more hands-on, relevant, and engaging using 'design thinking'. An example is students completing an assignment on implementing prayer in the school where outcomes include mobile phone beeps as you go past chapel (time to pray), prayers available on an app, and prayers inside a fortune cookie at the tuckshop. Students are appreciating the extra engagement and the use of IT in this work. Staff are asking the leadership team to explain to parents the fundamental role of Religious Education in a Catholic school, and to encourage, if not insist, that parents support the College and the teachers in ensuring that Religious Education classes are entered into fully and positively by all students.

RE classes from Years 9-12 are seen by a number of teachers as difficult. Many staff state that it is widely recognised that these are the hardest classes to teach in the school. The lessons are

intended to cater for the diversity of learners, and attempts are currently being made to make classes more interactive and relevant to students, enabling more student engagement. Many teachers suggest that a more comprehensive and consistent behavior management policy would assist in ensuring standards are maintained in these classes.

Current movement towards integrating Catholic Social Teachings more widely into areas of the curriculum to ensure the Catholic lens permeates teaching and learning at the College.

There is interest in contacting past-students to ask them about their sense of the spiritual in their lives after they have left the College. They could be asked questions like What is your sense of 'Serve him in others' today? It has been suggested this could be shared with the present St Joseph's students.

A wide range of resourcing for Religious Education classes is provided, which now includes design thinking projects and related resources required by students.

Component 2.2   Religious life of the school

Findings

Religious Identity and Culture

> *Religion permeates everything at St Joseph's College.* (A staff member)

Some difference in opinion was expressed to the review panel about how strongly students are linking their religious learnings with their own lives. Many say that the College is living the values of the Edmund Rice tradition and charism: welcoming community, positive relationships, acceptance and tolerance, and that the religious charism of the College is 'up there with the strongest areas of the school'. A number of other staff suggest there is more to do in this area.

According to staff and students, the College liturgies are meaningful and enriching, and the sense of the sacred, quiet, and engagement is evident in the liturgies. Many students say they enjoy this involvement and that it is the norm for students to participate. The Year 11/12 Liturgy Group is described by some students as particularly engaging. Students set a theme each year which is enacted throughout the year's liturgies, an example being 'Campfire of the heart'.

> *The themes of the liturgies become who we are and how we act around here.*
> (Staff member)

The school's physical 'Catholic' surrounds and resources contribute positively to the religious identity and culture of the College. This includes a student interactive website illustrating the signs of the 'spirit' of SJC. The College Chapel provides a sacred space for students to use as required.

Evangelisation and Formation

It is apparent that the leadership team recognises the need to develop opportunities for staff to share their spirituality, and the idea of 'spirituality in the pub' is mentioned as one way of encouraging this.

Members of the leadership team and a number of staff refer to a lack of confidence among many teachers relating to their faith formation, and suggest that it is an area needing significant attention, as many staff are not 'churched' and immersed in Catholic knowledge and traditions, leading to diffidence in sharing their faith and knowledge with the students. Those expressing concern say it is important that teachers not be afraid to enter the religious conversation, and that faith formation of staff needs to be strongly supported so it can flow through to students.

> *As a new member of staff I feel a bit lost, not immersed in the culture and I don't understand the ethos. I don't see what we are on about and I'm not sure how to get involved*. (Staff member)

It was suggested to the review panel that staff need to feel comfortable to share their faith and knowledge with the students, and that one way to strengthen faith formation is through the Assistant Principal Mission continuing to explore ways of 'walking' with members of staff in their faith journey and education. It has also been suggested that staff need to contribute to retreats and share their faith and reflections in RE classes for them to have credibility in the eyes of the students.

Despite the Radii responses referred to earlier, some parents interviewed clearly see the religious life of the school as important in their children.

> *The religion in the school teaches my daughter about being a better person – learning about Christian values – especially, being considerate of others who are less fortunate. It's about balance and being an all-rounder.* (Parent)

> *The Principal's attitude towards the students is amazing. My daughter is accepted for who she is and encouraged to grow.* (Parent)

Many students interviewed struggle to articulate what St Joseph's is really about: What it stands for; What is its charism? What the motto is. They appear clear on other elements in the culture of the College, less so on the religious side.

Prayer and Worship

Many positive comments about the prayer, liturgies and rituals facilitated by the Assistant Principal Mission have been conveyed to the review panel, and it is apparent that the College leadership team prioritises significant spiritual events throughout the year.

Recently, the School Captain was received into the Catholic Church through Baptism and Confirmation. It was explained to the panel that all members of the community became real participants in the ceremony, and there was great interest and involvement in the liturgy. Another student is becoming a candidate as a result, and it is clear that this ceremony has had a significant impact on the College community.

The Year 12 retreat is described by a staff member as 'a wonderful experience for all the students involved', with high levels of engagement. Teachers and support staff indicate that they too gain much from the experience. At the conclusion of the retreat, the students describe the retreat with one-word answers. These have enabled R.E. teachers to re-direct the students to the Emmaus Story – 'God is with us all on this retreat.'

Social Action and Justice

Rosie's, Just Joeys, Vinnies, the Breakfast Club and the Philippines Immersion Experience through Catholic Missions are examples of hands-on and real-life activities addressing issues of social justice in the students' world. It is evident that such activities are highly engaging to students. Staff support for these programs is strong, and attendance by students at each of these social justice activities is extensive. The importance given to ensuring a subsequent time for reflection of these experiences provides students with a critical language and articulation around how students are beginning to understand God. Student leadership is an important development that ensues from these programs.

Social Justice expectations are articulated for all students in each year level, starting with social justice at home, and extending to the wider community. Through these activities it is hoped that students will see their efforts as part of their personal experience of God.

A challenge for the College is to ensure that for St Joseph's students social justice work is linked to their relationship with God. Students in every school have social justice initiatives, but at SJC it is integral to the Catholic ethos and tradition. Students are encouraged to reflect on this in regard to the person of Jesus and their own faith journey.

Improvement Strategies

- Instigate an explicit induction process for new staff and students in the way St Joseph's acts out the Catholic and Edmund Rice ethos of the College.

- Investigate the potential of developing a Campus Ministry Team or similar body to nurture faith formation among staff, and to attend to the growth, empowerment and sustainability of Mission, Identity and Religious Education classes throughout the College.

- Engage with the College community in discussing and defining the key elements in the culture and ethos of St Joseph's in the Catholic tradition and the principles of Edmund Rice education.

Domain 3 Continual renewal

Component 3.1 School improvement culture

Findings

Collective Teacher Efficacy

The Principal and leadership team are working to strengthen collective teacher efficacy, aiming at building a culture of collaboration across the College while developing relationships of trust and respect among colleagues and the leadership team. This includes establishing professional learning communities in which a member of the leadership team works with 14 or 15 teachers on a particular topic, mentoring of early career teachers, coaching in areas such as 'Visible Learning in a culture of thinking', and classroom observations and feedback. It is evident that much of this is in its early stages.

Opportunities for staff to work together and learn from each other occur in horizontal groupings of teachers from the same year group, and vertical groupings such as action research professional learning communities. Horizontal grouping to engage in curriculum planning or moderation is currently conducted in an *ad hoc* manner, with meetings held when a particular need arises. Vertical grouping, such as the culture of thinking action research team, have scheduled meeting times. It is apparent that these meetings do not always occur in the scheduled times.

The College has a policy that every teacher is formally linked with a colleague who acts as their professional mentor or confidante. It is not evident that this is translated into school-wide practice through regular meetings or discussions by these pairings.

Many staff state that they are keen to contribute their voice to the strategic and operational direction of the school and would like more opportunities to do so. Many staff see the current renewal process as an opportunity to share staff and student voice. The leadership team indicate that they see this process as an opportunity to commence the strategic planning and prioritising of the next steps for the school.

A number of school officers express appreciation at the decision to move them to the same area as teachers for their work space and common room, stating that they feel valued and seen by the teachers as professional colleagues. A number of school officers indicate that they need to be included in communications that impact on their work, and that this does not always happen.

The school has a policy of deploying staff across the year groups from Year 7 to Year 10 in keeping with the ways their interests and particular skills can enhance students' learning and achievement.

Staff professional development opportunities are geared towards the school's stated priorities. Staff express appreciation for the professional learning opportunities they are able to access.

School Culture

The school is embarking on a significant change agenda, which includes the introduction of the International Baccalaureate curriculum from Years 7 to 10, adopting particular principles of

Visible Learning and adapting those within 'a culture of thinking'; a wellbeing initiative ('You'll Never Walk Alone'); a technology drive including robotics and a laptop for every student; the introduction of elements of Positive Education; increasing the prevalence of collaboration among staff; extending the community service program to include 'service in the home'; QCAA changes for Years 11 and 12; enhancing use of data to inform teaching; use of CANVAS as a learning management system; literacy improvement across the school; 'Passion Projects'; an extensive building program; and modernising the school's image through signage and language such as 'Future Thinkers' and changes to the school uniform.

It is apparent to the review panel that there is widespread support for these changes across the staff. Many teachers indicate that while they see the changes as important and necessary, they are struggling with the pace of introduction, and a significant number express the need for a sense of purpose and coherence to enable them to hold the various strands of the change agenda together in their minds.

It is evident that staff hold a collective belief that all students can learn successfully if provided with the necessary teaching and resourcing. The school has embarked on the move from differentiation through withdrawal for students with additional learning needs, to differentiation through mainstream class work. This movement is well in place, with teachers and school officers working in classes with the great majority of students, supported by the Student Services staff. Teachers speak highly of the advice and support they receive from Student Services.

A number of teachers refer to enrichment or extension work they offer to high potential learners in their classes. It is not evident that there is a schoolwide policy or expectation that that this should be normal practice across all classes.

It is clear that there is a school-wide understanding and acceptance that student wellbeing and academic achievement are strongly linked. This is exemplified in the 'You'll Never Walk Alone' initiative, which aims to integrate students' & staff academic, personal and spiritual development. There is a clear school-wide commitment by staff to enhancing the learning and wellbeing of the students. Despite stating the need for the behavior management plan to be rationalised, staff speak highly of their students, using words like 'appreciative' 'friendly' and 'keen to learn'.

There is a strong stated intention to align the school's award system with desired behaviour from students. Some examples are the badges awarded to high academic achievers, and students who take leadership roles in activities such as the Breakfast Club which links with the Clifford Special School, Music, and Liturgy, as well as sporting awards.

It is clear that academic achievement is valued at the school. It is less evident that the high importance placed on academic learning in the Catholic tradition is overtly communicated to staff and students.

Improvement strategies

- The school leadership team establish and articulate a coherent overall vision that links the various strands of the current change agenda in an overall vision with a common purpose.

- Engage collaboratively with teachers to identify a small number of the current change

initiatives to focus on and develop in depth over a set period of time.

- Ensure that scheduled meetings of established teams, including the leadership team are given priority and occur regularly at their scheduled times.

- Ensure that all staff are included in communications about matters that impact on their work.

- Establish a formal, documented school-wide approach to catering for high potential learners in classes across the school.

- Explore ways to strengthen teacher 'voice' in response for the need for change as a vehicle for improved student learning and achievement.

- Continue to overtly affirm the place of academic learning in the Catholic tradition.

Component 3.2 Community partnerships

Findings

Partners

Parents speak highly of the school and see it as giving their children a strong start in life. Parents who work in the Toowoomba area express pride in the school, stating that St Joseph's students have a reputation for being excellent employees, showing initiative, team spirit, and a strong work ethic.

Many parents use the words 'community' or 'family' to describe the ethos of the school, often referring to the quality of pastoral care their children receive. Parents and students speak highly of the way the vertical House structure works for the pastoral care of students. Some staff suggest there is a need to begin giving consideration to whether the current system will continue to work so well in the future, and if it will need some adjustment as enrolments continue to increase.

Teachers see communication with parents as an important part of their role, and formal reports and parent teacher meetings occur at set times during the year. Many teachers communicate informally, often by email, to update parents on the work being done in class, or with a personal message about a particular student's progress or conduct. Parents express appreciation for these informal communications, some of them linking it with professionalism by the teachers.

Student learning

It is clear that significant learning occurs for students through the school's community links. Much of it is geared at learning that students cannot experience at school, broadening their experiences. It is also clear that many community activities support the College's commitment to service. Some examples: working with Rosie's, visits by the Breakfast Club to Clifford Park Special School, working with 'Vinnies', and the initiative to extend the concept of service to apply in students' homes with their families. An ambitious plan to hold a Philippines immersion experience is currently under way.

A current parent who is a tradesperson and has had a number of children pass through the College has conveyed to the review panel that in his experience working in various workplaces in the Toowoomba area, past students from St Joseph's are held in high regard by employers, who find a work ethic and willingness to take initiative as particularly attractive qualities in potential employees.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to explore ways to build on the College's current community links, particularly those that complement the College ethos of 'Serve Him in others'.

Domain 4 Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1 Staff development and wellbeing

Findings

School Culture

There is a resounding theme that staff feel very welcome at St Joseph's and value the collegiality they experience each day in their work.

Staff readily identify and express commitment to the foundational values and beliefs which underpin the school motto. 'Serve Him in others' is widely known and influential in this regard. Staff view this as a helpful reference point for nurturing and developing student capabilities and dispositions around social justice, compassion and service. The quality of prayer, liturgical and particularly retreat experiences and the religious life of the school in general, receive strong affirmation from students as being influential to their sense of belonging and place within the school community, and also their responsibility to reach out in service to others.

Students are less able to make the link between good citizenship, as experienced through the service-learning experiences, and the Jesus story and Gospel message. Some staff, and many new staff are unsure what SJC stands for. They struggle to articulate the charism, vision or story (history) of St Joseph's College. Many new staff see induction as an event, rather than a process, and it is apparent that not all staff are inducted due to the timing of their employment.

Caring for the individual

Staff and students name pastoral care, both formal and informal, as a feature of St Joseph's College. Staff feel appreciated and valued and appreciate opportunities such as staff retreats, as well as specific events such as yoga and massage for staff members. A small number of staff indicate that they do not always feel included and they see this as partly attributable to communication processes.

Students generally feel well cared for and older students appreciate and take seriously the opportunity to interact with and mentor new and younger students as part of the induction process into the values and culture of St Joseph's. The students and staff affirm the current College pastoral care structure as being effective in meeting the belonging and induction aspects of pastoral care. There is a growing understanding of the crucial link between pastoral care and student learning which staff are open to exploring further.

Most staff say they feel respected as professionals and that they have the best interests of their students as the focus of their work. Staff have opportunities to grow and develop their personal and professional skills and capabilities. Staff welfare is seen by many as a priority, and opportunities are provided to support this, with the stated intention of strengthening it through 'You'll never walk alone'. Recognition and priority are given to the three aspects of staff development and formation: academic, spiritual and personal.

Staff speak highly of the range and diversity of professional development opportunities available to them. Staff are encouraged and supported to engage and develop in their area of passion and expertise. The College aspires to be a leader in the field of educational reform and innovation. In this context many staff talk of 'innovation fatigue' and 'exhaustion', where good and worthwhile programs and initiatives are championed without apparent links to a 'bigger picture'. The perceptions and experiences of many staff, as explained to the review panel, are that well-intentioned programs often move hastily to implementation without sufficient preparation, training or follow-up, or time for deep learning to take place.

An example offered by some staff is the practice of sending groups of staff to view aspects of the operation of other schools. Some staff state that with an agreed and well defined 'bigger picture' the choice of schools, programs and support for staff to implement changes can become more targeted, directly linked to a strategic purpose at SJC, and are more likely to result in embedded practice.

The panel heard little evidence of a formalised approach to systematic goal setting and performance development for staff. Staff are enthusiastic to engage in the performance and development process in order to receive feedback on their performance, identify areas for improvement and set personal goals that sharpen their individual focus within a complex agenda. There is an opportunity to link staff professional development with the College Strategic Plan. The panel recognises that a new mentoring program is beginning and the leadership team acknowledges that goal setting and performance development are not yet embedded.

Attraction, selection and retention

In recent times there has been a high turnover of staff resulting in a greater need for recruitment and selection processes. It became apparent during review panel interviews that there is some confusion around TCS disciplinary protocols and that there is a need to communicate more specifically the high expectations of the TCS Code of Conduct and child protection policy and procedures.

Communication

There is a general perception by both staff and students that existing communication channels and levels need to be more effective. This includes corporate, group and individual communication of vision, expectations, rationale for proposed actions and feedback about progress and performance. This appears to relate to all aspects of College life and is impacting on consistency and cohesion with which standards are named and applied.

This is particularly evident in the perceived variation of expectations and approaches applied and experienced by both staff and students. One area cited is the work and role of middle leaders, who are seeking further clarification about the interaction between the leadership and supporting dimensions of their roles.

Improvement strategies

- The College leadership team, in consultation with staff, parents and students, ensure that the strategic plan sets a clear, coherent direction for the next 4-5 years.

- Explicitly market and publicise the new strategic plan to clearly communicate the direction of the College. In doing so, articulate 'What St Joseph's College stands for', including its history and charism.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of current communication processes and allocate specific responsibilities for establishing and reinforcing key messages and expectations.

- Enact the TCS Performance and Development Framework and Procedures to complement the mentoring program already being introduced by the leadership team.

- Complete goal setting processes and establish review timelines so that the relevant members of the College community accept personal accountability for taking the strategic plan forward.

- Establish a coherent College professional learning plan to focus the professional learning activities of staff, while ensuring reasonable time is allocated for this.

- Develop a formal induction process that caters for all roles, career stages and starting dates so that incoming staff are best aligned to the intent, history and structures of the College.

- Liaise with the TCS human resources department to determine future retention strategies that are both evidence-based and supported through system-wide processes.

- Firm up the leadership team's expectations on how the middle leadership structures and responsibilities align with the desired balance between leadership and management roles.

Component 4.2 Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

Findings

Resources

It is evident that there are effective processes in place for the identification of students with additional learning needs as well as effective resourcing to support these students. This is supported by consistency in the use of Spider to maintain accurate individual student information.

The College's engagement with the VET/SBAT program is well considered and supports students with many career pathways. It has been conveyed to the review panel that local tradespeople often seek St Joseph's graduates for employment opportunities. There are 36 students on school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and 16 in Vocational Educational Courses supplementing their studies.

It is evident that the primary modes of catering for high potential learners across the College are through opportunities to attend externally organised academic events. There is a general expectation of 'extension' planned by individual teachers for these students. It is not yet evident that there is a school-wide approach to differentiate the learning in classrooms for high potential learners.

Facilities

It is apparent that the College's recent rebranding is a point of pride and celebration for the students and community.

The College's masterplan and subsequent projects have a clear agenda toward creating a better learning environment for students through modernising facilities.

The College is engaging in a variety of new technologies with the purpose of enabling enhanced learning in a contemporary context. It is evident that the reliability, dependability and resulting effective use for learning of the ICT resources by teachers in class are still developing.

Learning environment

As mentioned earlier in the report, a common theme expressed by staff, students and parents to the panel is the need for improved management of student behaviour including consistent expectations, processes and consequences. The common staff perception is that teachers and school officers are independently responsible for behavior management in their classrooms, rather than part of a school-wide approach that balances class teacher responsibility with support when it is needed. Staff, students and parents express the need for consistent expectations and consequences for behaviour. Some students have articulated that they are attempting to change subjects based on the inappropriate behaviour of some individuals in their class. One teacher suggested to the review panel: 'If we could get behaviour management sorted out we would go from being one of the best schools in Toowoomba, to being the best.'

Improvement strategies

- Collaboratively establish and implement an evidence-based behaviour management plan with consistent expectations and consequences, and regularly monitor its effectiveness as viewed by staff, students and parents.

- Engage staff in professional learning to develop collective staff capacity in consistently managing student behaviour through the behaviour management plan.

- Develop and implement a *School Technology and eLearning Plan* emphasising common ways that staff use technology to enhance student learning in classes across the school.

Epilogue

The review panel thanks the St Joseph's College community for their open and insightful contributions to the review. It has been an uplifting experience for the panel members.

The panel found many strengths in the life of the College, including the quality of pastoral care, the successful journey in differentiation for students with special learning needs, the commitment of staff to the need for change, the developing focus on academic achievement, the ethos of family and community, the strong identification with Catholic tradition, and the recognition of the qualities of past students by local employers.

Two key areas for improvement emerged early and grew stronger as the review evolved. The first is that while staff see the need for change, there are important issues of coherence, prioritising and pacing of the change agenda, all of which are impeding the ability of staff to work with the leadership team in the most effective ways to implement the desired initiatives.

The second key area for improvement is behaviour management, which is widely seen in the school community as needing urgent attention with regard to consistency in expectations, consequences and implementation by staff. A number of staff make reference to the inability of conscientious students to learn to their capacity while this remains unresolved.

The review panel is confident that the College leadership team and staff have the capability to continue to nurture and enhance the many strengths of the College, and to address the issues impeding its progress. The panel hopes the review and this report are empowering for the College and wishes the College community every success as they take the next steps into their future.