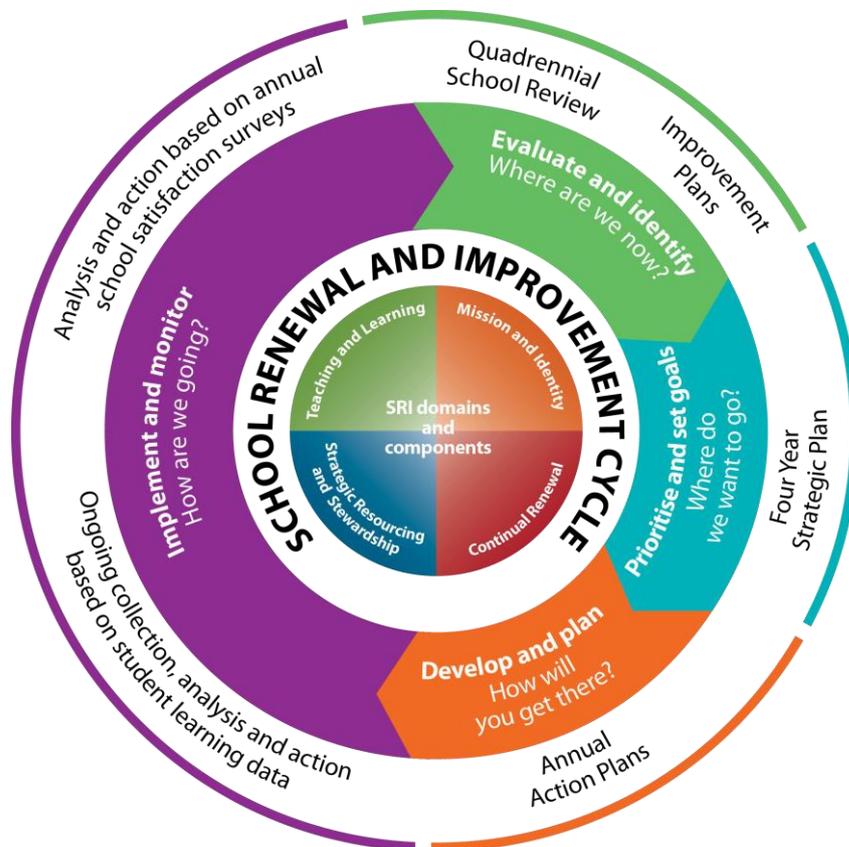


**Diocese of Toowoomba
Catholic Schools**

Sacred Heart, Toowoomba

TCS Quadrennial school review Full report





Diocese of Toowoomba Catholic Schools

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.

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

Methodology

The review was conducted from Monday, 1 March to Thursday, 4 March 2021.

Reviewers

Marty Savage	Senior Education Leader, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office Chair
Jim Midgley	Director: Teaching & Learning, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office
Terry Carter	Manager: Teaching & Learning, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office
Lawson Short	Principal, St Joseph's School, Millmerran
Norman Hunter	External consultant, previously Principal, Hillbrook Anglican School

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

- The Principal
- Teaching staff
- School Officers including Administration and Teacher Aides
- Parents including Parents and Friends Association Executive members
- Students from years 5 and 6

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 purposes of the Toowoomba Catholic Schools quadrennial school review are

- a. to engage the school community in a process of self-reflection and continual renewal
- b. to ensure explicit focus on the quality of teaching and learning
- c. to provide the school community with an opportunity to participate in a thorough reflection on their school's performance
- d. to provide an external panel perspective including findings and improvement strategies to affirm and improve teaching and learning



Domain 1 Teaching and learning

Component 1.1 Students and their learning Findings

Learning culture

Teachers describe a developing collective teacher efficacy that is apparent in some year levels across the school as teachers show growing acknowledgement that teaching is a collaborative profession. Discussions with the new Principal reveal that he values co-constructing goals with teachers, collaboratively reaching understanding of the changing roles of teachers and leaders, and sharing experiences, successes, failures and learnings.

The school appreciates, and values students' varying cultural backgrounds. This is a well-known and highly regarded inclusive school.

This school is for all cultures and all types of learners. I'm not that smart but I try to be a hard worker. I think my teacher likes me and she knows when I need help and she helps me learn. (Student)

Sacred Heart Primary School in Wilsonton has an assigned Index of Community Social Education Advantage (ICSEA) of 1003, which is slightly above the Australian average (1000). This is worth noting due to the steady increase in assigned ICSEA over the last few years and the corresponding community perception that this is linked to the improving academic and behavioural standards in the school.

There is strong collective teacher efficacy apparent in the early years, with collaboration and reciprocal support across classes. Teachers share ideas, strategies and resources and generally offer each other a high level of support both professionally and personally. Teachers and support staff genuinely believe they can have an impact on the learning and achievement of their students regardless of individual student needs. This collaboration and unity is frequently observed by parents who share these views frequently during interviews.

Quality relationships between teachers, students and families are the hallmark of this wonderful school. (Parent)

Parents and students speak of the learning environment as 'safe', 'respectful', 'tolerant' and 'inclusive'. The Positive Behaviours for Learning (PB4L) approach is held in high regard. It is becoming embedded across the school and teachers feel it is having a significant positive impact on the classroom learning environment as well as in the playground.

Staff are quick to address disruptive behaviours so others can continue to learn. I put this down to the impact of the PB4L approach and having all teachers applying it consistently. (Parent)

School satisfaction survey data indicate the vast majority of parents feel that their children are motivated to learn. Parents agree that students are given helpful feedback on how to improve their learning and agree that students are acknowledged for their achievements and efforts.

Academic data trends are improving. Over time assessment data show continual growth over the last three years in all National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) domains. In recent times - 2018 and 2019 - NAPLAN data show remarkable growth from Year 3 to Year 5 (same cohort). The school was acknowledged nationally for the improvement trajectory from Year 3 to Year 5 in all NAPLAN domains that now sit in the optimal quadrant of high growth and high scores. There is a view that this should be investigated further to determine the analytical decisions and strategic responses that went into this achievement.

The reading targets vary significantly across year levels, suggesting some inconsistency around formative assessment protocols and applications. Despite these variances, the school has an average of 80% of all students reaching the system wide reading targets.

System reading achievement standards are known and targeted and the data wall shows individual levels of progress. Review and response meetings in the form of Professional Learning Community (PLC) discussions have occurred to analyse these levels. Staff indicate that they would like these meetings to be held more frequently.

NAPLAN data analysis occurs at a meta level with the leadership team aware of trends in the whole of school context. The purpose and practicality of the reading data wall is unclear for some teachers. Teachers say it is occasionally referred to on an individual basis but at this stage does not form any co-ordinated foundation for action.

At this stage it is unclear as to what extent teachers use formative assessment as the driver for planning and pedagogical adjustment. The alignment between assessment and learning intentions is unclear in the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP), the diocesan tool for collecting and recording planning and assessment data. Teachers acknowledge they receive some training and support around the effective use of the DLP and seek for this to be ongoing. There is currently a wide variance in teacher understanding of how to use it in a useful practical way. The emerging perception is that the DLP is regarded more as a compliance activity rather than a useful tool for planning, monitoring, data gathering, and reporting.

Some students speak of learning intentions and success criteria in lessons as giving them clarity around learning purpose and a criterion to self-assess progress. Year 6 students explain that the 'best teachers' use this approach.

Learning intentions and success criteria are the expectations I use to decide if I am understanding the work. (Year 6 student)

Improvement strategies

- Design a consistent process and procedure for review and response meetings based on student progress and learning data.
- Investigate the degree to which learning intentions and success criteria are used in classes and consider the impact this may have as a school wide approach.

Analysis and discussion of data

Quantitative data are available through NAPLAN, Reading Improvement Strategy data as well as Progressive Achievement Tests in Mathematics (PAT M). Qualitative data is available through school satisfaction surveys that occur every two years.

It is unclear to what extent staff are involved in formally analysing data and interpreting student data. Individual student needs are frequently discussed. How these decisions are made around how best to address the learning needs and when to determine the impact, is less evident.

Data analysis gives consideration to overall school performance. A focus on performances of individual students or identified priority groups is yet to occur. Individual teachers and year level groups speak comfortably of individual student specific needs. System dashboard data (August 2020) show that the Planning for Personalised Learning (PfPL) master grid is operational and completed.

Some teachers have evidence in planning that adjusts content to meet the needs of high potential learners. There is a growing number of teachers submitting evidence in planning that their students with disabilities have goals linked to the Australian Curriculum. Most teachers have adjusted content for students with disabilities.

Teachers interviewed share mixed messages around the student support processes in the school. There is ample anecdotal evidence that students' needs are known and addressed. The recording and monitoring of adjustments and subsequent impact are less evident. Teachers explain that a student support committee has existed, but the process has been *ad hoc* in recent years. Teachers explain that they feel unclear about Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) data collection processes and expectations, subsequent decisions, recording and the storage of this evidence. Most teachers express a desire for support with PfPL in terms of practical and reasonable adjustments and how to show this in unit planning.

Many teachers feel that any interventions required are planned and managed by themselves and would appreciate further support and input from the Learning Support Teacher and Principal.

Improvement strategies

- Explore the use of impact cycles as a way of capitalising on formative assessment.
- Develop data analysis by staff further to involve decisions about differentiating for individual or priority groups of students in class.
- Collaboratively decide on the best processes for student intervention decisions and how teachers can be supported in meeting the needs of their students with additional needs.

Explicit improvement agenda

The new leadership team is preparing a strategic plan with a detailed explicit improvement agenda. They advise that improvement strategies suggested in this report will provide the foundation of this strategic plan.

At this stage, it is not evident that there is a coherent, school-wide, documented improvement agenda. At the same time, actions have been taken to focus on improvement in student academic achievement.

I am loving the maths mindsets and the number talks. I'm finding that I am better at maths than I thought I was. (Year 6 student)

Students report a change in the practices for teaching maths and teaching reading. This use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms is becoming embedded through projects like the Reading Improvement Strategy and Inspire Mathematics. All teachers have engaged in some form with this to maximise effective teaching methods and student learning. Most teachers believe that these teacher capacity-building projects have had significant impact and are becoming embedded in most classrooms. They believe these are having a significant impact on student academic achievement.

In 2020, the leadership team has committed to the Tier 1 Inspire Mathematics project. Leadership in this area has received regular affirmations throughout this review. Many teachers compliment both the Education Officer and the lead teachers on their practical advice and support in this project. The modelling and coaching teachers are receiving is acknowledged as first rate by these teachers.

I never thought I would ever say this, but I am enjoying the maths focus. (Student)

The Wellbeing Lighthouse Project (PB4L) has had a targeted improvement agenda over the last three years. The leadership of the Wellbeing Committee in this project is frequently acknowledged by parents and teachers during the review process. The positive impact of this on school culture is highly commended by students, staff and parents. The manner in which this project's purpose, intentions, and strategies have been communicated and adopted by the community is a significant achievement, with its impact on school culture immediately evident to parents, staff and students.

The walking with Jesus positive behaviours for learning is good. Most students try very hard to get 'Gotchas' and 'Hearts'. It has really improved how we treat each other and how we behave in class. (Student)

Parents feel informed about teaching content and methods. They say that at this stage they are not aware of targets and goals or measures of impact on student learning.

Improvement strategies

- Continue the current degree of support for the Inspire Mathematics project.
- Investigate the purpose and perceived value of the student performance data collected and provide professional learning on how to best analyse and make use of this data as a formative assessment tool.
- Continue to support PB4L as the schoolwide behaviour model.
- Develop ways to inform parents about learning targets, goals and measures in ways that are clear to them.

Component 1.2 Curriculum structure and provision Findings

The school has a comprehensive detailed plan for curriculum delivery with most learning areas having a detailed scope and sequence. Units are designed around numerous content descriptors - not achievement standards. Alignment of units to achievement standards is unclear in the DLP which makes it difficult to monitor learning across the year levels. It is also difficult to align assessments with unit content. Qualitative data suggest that parents are satisfied with reporting processes.

Professional learning community (PLC)

When PLCs occur, they focus on student achievement. The leadership team plan to extend this focus so that the teachers are familiar with and work within the school's shared curriculum expectations.

The leadership team plan to use the curriculum as a basis for ongoing staff discussions about the best ways to maximise student learning and wellbeing.

Some professional development and collaborative time with peers and the Middle Leader are provided to build staff skills in curriculum planning and development that align with system expectations supported through the effective use of the DLP.

Many teachers suggest priority needs to be given to planning support meetings and release time to facilitate the design and construction of learning experiences that are accessible, engaging and challenging for all students, including those with particular needs.

Improvement strategies

- Seek support from relevant TCSO personnel around curriculum planning, unit design and assessment in the DLP.
- Investigate the current teacher perceptions of the DLP and determine how best to address the variance in regard to its usefulness and efficiencies.
- Explore ways to schedule planning time with the Middle Leader or Principal in order to establish a consistency of expectations in planning and alignment to achievement standards.

Component 1.3 Pastoral care and student wellbeing

Findings

The genuine level of care from the teachers here is amazing – they really do care; they really want to support my daughter. (Parent)

We have exceptionally caring and dedicated teachers. The children feel really comfortable, they feel at home and happy. As a school community they feel really supported. (Parent)

The support for our child is amazing. They quickly identified his needs, got us on track and gave us the support and direction we needed. The teachers have been really great in understanding his needs. (Parent)

Staff, students and families consistently affirm that there is a very welcoming and inclusive culture at Sacred Heart. The positive community feel that exists at Sacred Heart is evident in all conversations with staff, parents and students.

School satisfaction surveys show the following student responses

- I know where to find the Student Protection ('Feeling Safe') posters at school: 100%
- I have learned about child protection and ways to stay safe through my lessons at school: 93%
- my teachers take account of my interests and learning style: 90%
- I learn about the school's values, history of our school and its founders: 65% of students agree
- student behaviour is managed well at my school: 80%
- the school recognises and rewards my academic and other achievements: 97%
- I feel safe at school: 93%
- the school gives me opportunities to take part in community service programs: 82%
- parent responses
- the school treats students from all backgrounds with respect: 100%
- the teachers care about my child: 100%.

Student social and emotional

Since the introduction of the Positive Behaviour for Learning, an evidence-based whole school process to improve learning and achievement, staff, parents and students report an overall improvement in student engagement, behaviours and learning. It is clear that implementation of PB4L is a part of 'how things are at Sacred Heart' and 'not just words on a poster', and there is a common desire for the continued roll-out of this approach.

A visit to the school's Facebook page shows that these expectations around positive behaviours are visible to all. The Wellbeing Committee is acknowledged by many as the driver of PB4L, and is supported in this by staff who acknowledge the improved behavioural outcomes for students.

Sacred Heart School clearly endorses and upholds a safe and nurturing environment for students. Students' individual needs (cultural, emotional, physical, psychological, academic and medical) are responded to promptly and effectively.

We embrace all our students. We have students from many diverse backgrounds with diverse needs and we are very good at supporting these students. We check if they've had breakfast, if they need a jumper in the cold weather, send flowers to families who have had sadness in their family. (Teacher)

We look after our children really well, we really care about them. They know they're cared for. They know we are trying our hardest to do what we can for them. (Teacher)

We try to cater for those who need social/emotional support as well as cognitive support. (Teacher)

Wellbeing relationships

I really like the fact that it's a smaller school and that all the teachers know the students and they know me. (Parent)

We have really lovely students with really lovely families. For those students who can't self-regulate, we have to try to make them want to come to school and be happy here. (Teacher)

Many parents, staff and students highlight that Sacred Heart is a friendly, welcoming and inclusive community. Students and parents indicate that staff demonstrate genuine interest and support of all students across the school. There is a very clear sense that the school values its diversity, and during the review many commented regularly on how inclusive the school is. High quality relationships are very evident in the everyday life of the school community, and are observable through positive, empathic and affirming interactions between all stakeholders. Students experience inclusivity and connection through participation and engagement within the classroom and the broader school community.

The four guiding pillars from 'WALK With Jesus Everyday' – **W**ork and Play Responsibly, **A**ct Safely, **L**ive Like a Learner, **K**ind and Respectful – are linked to the school vision and mission, and connect to all elements of student support within the school. These pillars are focused on, implemented and celebrated through student awards presented each week.



Effectiveness of systems and structures

PB4L is a very positive thing for Sacred Heart and the students are responding well. (Parent)

PB4L provides consistency which means we are all on the same path and our expectations of the children are the same. (Teacher)

PB4L is recognised as an important part of the culture at Sacred Heart however there is a consensus that Tier 2 and 3 supports still require some structure. Much work in Tier 1 has been done. (Teacher)

Again, the use of PB4L as a system and structure is proving to be highly effective and linked to Catholic values and the school's vision and mission.

It is apparent that Student Protection procedures and programs are understood and implemented across school life. They are documented, accessible, reviewed and updated. Students, unprompted, quickly identify the Student Protection posters in the school and who their Student Protection Contacts are.

Staff engage in professional learning programs to build capacity and sustainability in pastoral care and student wellbeing. It is not yet evident that opportunities exist to extend this learning into induction and formation procedures.

Improvement strategies

- Implement the planned roll-out of PB4L to add Tier 2 and 3.
- Strengthen induction procedures to ensure common understanding and implementation of the systems and structures.



Domain 2 Mission and identity

Component 2.1 Religion curriculum Findings

Systematic curriculum delivery

A great school, that helps guide students on their individual spiritual journey. Religion isn't forced on students, but is used to guide and grow them, and the religion Curriculum is great at modernising Jesus. (Parent)

The Religious Education Curriculum taught at Sacred Heart Primary school is based on the Toowoomba Catholic Schools' (TCS) Religious Education Guidelines which utilise resources from the Archdiocese of Brisbane Religious Education guidelines. Teachers are utilising the TCS endorsed Religious Education units, which teachers access via the DLP.

Religion lessons are taught for 2.5 hours per week, which is evident in timetabling and individual teacher units within the DLP. At this stage, within some RE units there is minimal evidence of assessment and the recording of student learning. In the DLP, Religious Education Learning Area Programs are completed, ensuring coverage of year level Achievement Standard and Content Descriptors.

Survey data indicate that: 100% of parents agree that Sacred Heart gives high priority to the teaching and learning of religion, 83% of students enjoy Religion lessons and 90% of staff agree that Sacred Heart has a clear religious education program.

The school leadership team identifies a need to build teacher capacity in planning, assessment and reporting in the Religious Education Curriculum. The leadership team has identified that in 2022 Sacred Heart will be a Tier 1 'Illuminate Religious Education Strategy' school.

Some staff identify a need for more contemporary teacher resources – books, posters and age-appropriate websites/apps suitable for younger students.

Professional learning community

We are very supportive of each other and have each other's backs and everyone gets in and helps each other out. (Staff member)

Staff of Sacred Heart have engaged in several professional learning opportunities in Religious Education, including the unpacking of the Catholic Identity Position paper, which formed a part of a spirituality day at the beginning of 2020. Staff also participated in an APRE led TCS workshop, 'Faith Seeking Understanding,' as a part of the 2020 Bishop's Inservice Day.

The school leadership team identifies a need within the school for time to meet with teachers to discuss Religious Education units, with a focus on targeting alignment between the achievement standards and assessment. This was to be undertaken in 2020 with consultation and support from members of the Formation and Identity team from Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office (TCSO),

but due to COVID-19, this is yet to take place.

School context

We are very happy with the values and teachings that are coming out of our school. Students are always handled with kindness, dignity, and respect.
(Parent)

Sacred Heart was established by a lay committee rather than founded by a religious order. This is identified as an area that has made it difficult for the school to establish its own charism. Recently the school has linked into the Mercy tradition and is building on this area. Census data shows that 37% of the school's student population identify as Catholic.

Improvement strategies

- Strengthen teacher capacity in planning, assessment and reporting within the Religious Education Curriculum.
- Establish processes around the procurement of quality, age-appropriate resources to enhance Religious Education.
- Investigate ways to create time with the APRE to review RE units, their assessment, and their links to the curriculum and achievement standards.
- Develop and strengthen the school's beginning ties to the Mercy tradition and values; using this link to build on the school's current charism and motto.
- Facilitate staff professional development based on the adjusted RE Curriculum.

Component 2.2 Religious life of the school

Findings

Religious identity and culture

The schools 'Gotcha' award is linked to Positive Behaviours for Learning which is tied in with our School Motto 'Journey every day with Jesus in our hearts', and there is lots of excitement around the school about this. (Teacher)

The school motto 'Journey every day with Jesus in our hearts' is frequently referenced throughout the teacher, parent and student body. The school's recent work in PB4L, and in the creation of their 'WALK' reinforces the Catholic identity of the school by applying a Catholic lens to the teaching of student behaviors and interactions. This is seen in student interactions, behavior management procedures and school reward systems. The strong Catholic identity is clearly articulated by most in the school community. Not all students appear able to elaborate on what 'Sacred Heart' means.

The school leadership team are supportive of the relationship between parish and school, especially the relationship with Parish Priest, Fr Roque Maguinsay. This relationship is further strengthened with Fr Roque's regular presence within the school, and within classrooms, and there are a number of examples of positive relationship building between staff, students and families with Fr Roque. Recent school satisfaction survey data indicate 96% of staff surveyed believe the school's values are easily recognised within the school and that 100% of parents surveyed agree that Sacred Heart's Catholic Identity is easily recognisable.

Evangelisation and formation

The school's motto 'Journey everyday with Jesus in our hearts' is clearly witnessed throughout the grounds, artworks, posters and prayer spaces within the school, once again highlighting the Catholic Identity that exists at Sacred Heart. Regular visits from the Parish Priest Fr Roque are highly valued amongst staff, students, and families. This strong presence and involvement of the Parish Priest in school life also strengthens student connection to Church and each student's own faith development.

The school promotes and encourages students to engage in the parish Sacramental Program, and recent survey data indicate that 88% of students enjoy going to Church with their class.

Prayer and worship

At Sacred Heart it is evident that regular liturgy, Masses, and class prayer rituals are in place and occurring regularly. Some of the regular whole school services of note include the Opening School Mass and Sacred Heart Day, as well as a number of events from the liturgical calendar. Survey data indicate that 81% of students enjoy praying at school.

More recently teachers have been encouraged to undertake the planning and preparation responsibilities for significant events throughout the year, such as ANZAC day and whole school liturgies, which are assigned to the appropriate year levels. Teachers have said they would appreciate more support and direction in the planning and running of these events.

In 2020, due to COVID-19, school Masses and liturgies, especially those involving the parish have been impacted.

Social action and justice

All the money we raise, goes to the poor and homeless, and those who are less fortunate than us. (Student)

The money we raise goes to charities because we want to give back to people and we want to share what we have. (Student)

Our school is very generous... families are very generous and happy to assist the needy. We live out that part of our mission statement. (Staff member)

Sacred Heart places a strong emphasis on social action and justice through a variety of fundraising events and participation in charitable causes, including Caritas, Project Compassion, Salem Age Care visits, food drives, Mini-Vinnies, Works of Mercy and other fundraising ventures. Survey data indicate 100% of staff agree that Sacred Heart encourages students to discuss social and moral issues and 100% of parents agree that the students of Sacred Heart are encouraged to learn about social and moral issues and that the school promotes justice, compassion, and service to the community.

A strong, Catholic identity and commitment to prayer, social action and justice, are very evident within the school and in the actions and activities of students. The leadership team and some staff identify a need to make connections with the 'WHY' we are doing these actions and dedicating our time to these causes. It is intended that this will be linked back to the school's Catholic identity, charism and Catholic teachings.

Improvement strategies

- Strengthen student knowledge around the importance and meaning of 'Sacred Heart'.
- Update and maintain the Religious Life of the School Calendar information within the DLP.
- Develop and assist staff in their knowledge, understanding and ability to plan prayer celebrations and liturgies with the support and guidance of the APRE.
- Strengthen staff and student understanding around the 'WHY' behind the school's involvement in community activities and social justice initiatives.



Domain 3 Continual renewal

Component 3.1 School improvement culture

Findings

The most recent school opinion data show the following staff responses to questions related to school improvement culture

- the school provides opportunities for collaborative discussion on professional learning: 92% either agree or strongly agree
- I have many opportunities to observe colleagues teach and to have my lessons observed: 90% either agree or strongly agree
- constructive feedback is provided to me from peer lesson observations: 80% (up from 57% in 2018)
- professional learning is targeted at specific, evidence-identified needs to meet improvement targets: 96%
- staff work collaboratively and support each other to achieve high quality outcomes for students: 87%
- whole school professional learning takes account of the learning priorities in the school's strategic renewal plan: 95%
- professional learning is targeted at specific evidence-identified needs to meet improvement targets: 95%.

Collective teacher efficacy

Teaching staff are very open to sharing their ideas, resources, peer observations. (Teacher)

Expectations must be consistent for all teachers to ensure a united approach. (Teacher)

The school has established an Annual Action Plan (AAP) for 2021 which includes a number of improvement priorities including: 'continue to integrate high impact strategies and learner-centered approaches in every classroom through the implementation of the Inspire Mathematics Tier 1 Project'; and 'integrate the use of technology into pedagogy to accelerate learning'. The leadership team acknowledge that further collaboration is required for this AAP and that they need to ensure this happens in the future.

Elements of the plan are relatively new. The leadership team is cognisant of the fact that progress will require monitoring and systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving student learning and achievement, and to maintain alignment with the Australian Curriculum.

Parents, students and staff report high satisfaction with the one-to-one iPad system, and feedback includes a recognition that consistent practices for use of the iPads as learning devices across the whole school are still developing. Teachers indicate that they are keen to keep learning about the best digital pedagogical practices and develop school-wide expectations about their use for learning.

It is obvious that staff hold the wellbeing of students as core to their daily work. The school leadership team organise appropriate opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Teachers demonstrate a developing willingness to show vulnerability when inviting others in to observe their practice.

The Student Support Committee which consists of the Principal, the Learning Support Teacher and various classroom teachers, is designed to support teachers and students when problems arise in any area of their education - social, emotional and academic.

Classroom teachers refer children to this committee who, in consultation with teachers, parents and outside agencies, determine a pathway of intervention. This Committee provides a relevant platform to develop collective teacher efficacy.

School culture

The leadership team plans to continue to build a culture where teaching staff are invested in the continuous improvement of their own teaching. The school leadership have identified that further refinement to the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model is required. In particular the scoping out and planning of a clear PLC agenda to provide improved alignment and continuity to the school's improvement agenda will be explored.

Clearly Sacred Heart is making improvements in learning and achievement for students, particularly in reading. A number of staff and parents identify the Reading Improvement Strategy as being beneficial for staff pedagogical development and improved student learning and achievement.

Improvement strategies

- Strengthen the implementation of data-informed practice and goal setting through a student support meeting approach.
- Investigate further opportunities for professional learning in digital pedagogies.
- Moderate school-collected student performance data to ensure the reliability of the data.

Component 3.2 Community partnerships

Findings

Partners

It is clear that staff and parents see Sacred Heart as an exceptional community. Most adults interviewed mention the sense of community as what they value most about the school. Teachers and support staff say that their interactions with parents are almost all positive and respectful, and parents see the leadership team, teachers and school officers as welcoming towards them and supportive of their children.

This is a very welcoming place. From the moment I stepped in here I felt valued.
(Teacher)

My kids have learning difficulties and they struggle a bit, but they love coming to school. (Parent)

All parents interviewed are impressed with the way the school leadership and staff take collective responsibility for all students in the school, whether they teach those children or not.

They know all the kids and parents, and I've got to know many of the parents too. It's a great community. (Parent)

The teachers know what's going down, and if there's an issue they're onto it quickly. (Parent)

A parent speaking about the school's community ethos says

We're not that religious, but it's the school's values that attracted us to Sacred Heart for our children.

When asked to identify some of those values the parent lists kindness, being respectful, the no bullying policy, the encouragement to work hard in order to achieve success, and the way all teachers take responsibility for all students.

My concerns have always been taken seriously, never ignored. (Parent)

School Officers see a sense of community in the way they are treated with respect by the school leadership, teachers, students and parents. They indicate that they feel appreciated and that their work is valued. Teacher aides say that they are well briefed by the teachers they work with, and that the teachers make clear that they rely on them in meeting the varying learning needs of the students in their classes.

Parents also express appreciation about the quality of the communication they receive from the school. They mention quick responses from teachers when parents make contact, as well as communication through the newsletter and through Facebook. Teachers say that an entry by one of them on Facebook often brings several positive responses from parents. A small number of staff and parents suggest that future enrolments could be enhanced if the school expanded its external communication to find more ways to promote some of the achievements of students, as well as facilities like the planned nature play area near the oval.

Communication is a strength for us- Weekly Words, Newsletter, Facebook. Ty has asked us to email parents about something great their child has done.
(Teacher)

A number of parents praise the way the community culture of the school has sprung into action to help them in a time of need. One describes how supportive the school leadership, staff and other parents were of herself and her family during a recent health issue.

Many staff say that they believe the school's internal communication needs to improve, both from leadership to staff and from staff to other staff. An issue mentioned by some is when there is a change in a routine or an event, and people affected by this change are not notified. Another communication issue mentioned by some is the need for detail about an upcoming event or excursion: parents often inquire about times, what students should wear, equipment that might be needed, and the people they contact sometimes haven't been supplied with the relevant information. A number of teachers and school officers suggest that internal communication, including effective use of Teams, has improved this year, adding that it still has a way to go.

Many teachers see the adoption of Positive Behaviour for Learning contributing to the school's community culture. They see the affirming nature of Tier 1 of PB4L being successfully implemented widely across the school, with affirmation in the playground through 'Gotcha' awards and in the classroom through 'Heart' awards. Some suggest that implementing the next tiers will bring its challenges, particularly in working to achieve consistency in addressing undesirable and unacceptable behaviour.

The leadership team and some staff indicate that the school has a strong relationship with the parish. Regular liturgies are held at the school, with several welcoming Masses being held in the first five weeks of the school year, the most recent being for Ash Wednesday. The intent is to hold two or three whole school Masses during each term, usually to commemorate a particular event. The school acknowledges that it has been difficult to include parents in these ceremonies due to the restrictions related to COVID-19, but it is hoped that they can be invited in the future.

The Parish Priest is a welcome and valued visitor at the school, attending a class every Friday afternoon to build relationships with the students.

Students also see their school as a place of community, referring to the supportive relationships they have with their teachers and school officers. They say they can ask for help with a personal problem or with their classwork, and that their teachers follow through to ensure they understand the work.

Teachers help us with our work. If we don't get it they try another way to explain it, and sometimes put us in a group for a while so we have time to understand. (Student)

We trust our teachers. We can come to them if we have a problem. (Student)

Students say they like the guidelines and expectations for behaviour on signage set out in classrooms and on posters around the school. Many refer to the WALK initiative as something they can relate to and which gives guidance. The students relate these signs and guidelines to feeling safe at the school.

Some students explain that they have experienced bullying from other students, and are confident to act on 'The Five': the actions to take if experiencing bullying. They indicate they are acting out all five steps and though it is hard, they say that they are coping.

The school has established a number of links engaging students and staff with the local community. These include

- The annual St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal. In previous years, the school has run food and home goods drives. In 2020, at the request of the organisation, the focus was on fundraising, and through free dress days the school raised just under \$500, which was presented at the end-of-year school assembly.
- The Caritas Lenten Project Compassion. Every year the school runs the Project Compassion fundraising appeal.
- Northridge Salem Lutheran Aged Care Facility. Up until the COVID outbreak the school has had a standing arrangement of weekly class visits to the Northridge Salem Lutheran Aged Care Facility, situated in walking distance from the school. It is hoped that these weekly class visits will begin again soon.
- National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week. The school celebrates NAIDOC week every year with a Mass, and through the invitation of external performers and/or education providers into the school. In 2019 a representative from the Toowoomba Police Citizens Youth Centre (PCYC) ran indigenous games with all the classes and in 2020 a local indigenous educator and performer, Buddy Hippi of Winangali Infusion, visited the school and ran cultural sessions with all the classes.
- The National Day for Daniel and the National Day against Bullying are also recognised each year.

Student learning

The purposes of the links with the wider community are threefold: to engage students in service activities that reflect the Catholic tradition of social justice; for students to experience the feeling of wellbeing that goes with serving others; and to engage students in some learning activities that they would not experience at school.

Improvement strategies

- Explore possible ways to widen the outreach of the school's communications into the wider community.
- Seek ways to improve internal communication from leadership to staff and from staff to staff.
- Continue to strengthen the 'no bullying' policy and encourage students to implement 'The Five' if it happens. Ensure that if a student implements the fifth action – reporting it to a teacher – every effort is made to eradicate the behaviour permanently.



Domain 4 Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1 Staff development and wellbeing

Findings

School culture

There is strong recognition from all conversations and survey data from the last few years, that there is a supportive and welcoming school community at Sacred Heart. Staff and parents indicate a strong and improved school culture focused on student learning and progress. The positive learning data in reading over the last three years, and recent engagement with Inspire Mathematics are continuing the strong focus on the students and teaching and learning. There is a widespread sense of community and collective responsibility for every student and a culture that is compassionate to the needs of all students, families and staff.

This school is my happy place. (Teacher)

Parents greatly appreciate the communication and helpful approach of the front office staff and feel that they are responded to in a very supportive and prompt manner. There is also a strong acknowledgement of the exceptional work the leadership team do to support staff, students and families and go well beyond what is expected of them. This creates a school culture where people feel valued and appreciated. Some parents indicate a desire for improved awareness and access to Parents and Friends meetings and minutes from meetings. Given some families have work and other commitments they find it challenging to attend these meetings and are interested to be informed of minutes and decisions originating from discussions at the P and F meeting.

Staff say that they value the opportunity to participate in social gatherings, and that these are appreciated and well attended. It is clear that a continued focus on staff wellbeing and spirituality remain a priority.

Nurture and empowerment

Most staff indicate they value collaboration and a strong commitment to improvement. Overall, there is an increasingly consistent approach across classrooms, and this is apparent in the knowledge and shared language around the PB4L. Staff, students and parents say they will welcome a continued embedding of this throughout the school to ensure consistency and sustainability of this approach.

Students and staff speak confidently that at Sacred Heart they WALK with Jesus every day, and what this means in all areas of the school. The posters are visible across the school and classrooms.

WALK reminds us how to walk with and be like Jesus and be kind and respectful to everybody around the school. It reminds us of what our actions should be when we are learning and playing. (Student)

Staff indicate that they see a variance in the effectiveness of the transition conversations between the last year's class teacher and the current teacher. A small number of parents suggest these conversations have not always effectively informed the new teacher about student needs.

Caring for the individual

Parents indicate that communication from the school is effective and they feel well-informed. The variety of platforms to communicate is well appreciated. Staff and parents suggest that they find the leadership team very approachable and supportive, responding to concerns promptly, thoroughly and respectfully.

The external promotion of the school is an area raised in many conversations with the review team. There is a strong sense and knowledge of the many successes and welcoming culture at Sacred Heart.

Staff and parents suggest that there is an opportunity to grow this awareness in the local area in an attempt to build future enrolments through the collaborative creation of a school marketing plan. In many conversations the school website is mentioned as an area requiring attention, to ensure all content is current and presented in a contemporary and user-friendly format.

There is a small number of identified priorities for the school in terms of commitment to the Inspire Mathematics and PB4L. Staff recognise this targeted focus as greatly assisting in clarity of objectives and direction. Having a small number of priorities and doing them well is recognised by staff as sensible strategic planning.

There is a strong call for greater clarity of roles across the Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Middle Leader, Assistant Principal Religious Education and Principal, and for this clarity to be known by the role holders and communicated to all staff and where appropriate to the community.

Conversations with staff indicate a desire for protocols to be established ensuring all voices are given an opportunity to be heard. A consistent message from staff is that while the majority respectfully engage and interact with one another and school initiatives, a small number of staff need to be reminded of expectations to ensure their conduct aligns to agreed and respectful practices. A small number of staff suggest the importance of confidentiality as an area to revisit.

Attraction, selection and retention

Some new staff suggest they would have benefitted from a more considered and thorough induction process. Staff and parents acknowledge that recruitment of new staff is effective and that they share the values of Sacred Heart and align to the culture of the school.

Improvement strategies

- Strengthen the embedding of PB4L throughout the school.
- Establish a more effective and consistent transition process and practices for students from one year to the next.
- Create a Marketing Plan, exploring strategies to promote the school in the wider community.
- Establish agreed protocols for meetings to help build collective teacher efficacy and respectful collaborative practices amongst staff.
- Clarify, communicate and document the specific roles of members of the school leadership and student support team.
- Review the timing and accessibility of Parents and Friends meetings and communicate the minutes of these meetings to the school community.

Component 4.2 Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

Findings

Resources

Teachers and parents see the school as generally well-resourced. Some qualify this by adding '...for a small school'. A number of parents express satisfaction at the way the school caters for students with additional learning needs. A parent with two students who have additional learning needs would like to see greater access by the school of external specialists such as Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists. At the same time, she expresses appreciation for what the school is able to do for her children, and emphasises that they both are very happy at the school. Teachers, school officers and parents refer often to 'inclusion', citing the way students from differing cultures and students with additional learning needs are all accepted and have a place at the school.

I think we're good at including every student and family in the life of the school.
(Teacher)

Recent staff changes appear to have led to uncertainty among staff about the school-wide model for learning support at this stage. The leadership team and Learning Support Teacher are currently working to establish clarity in the school's approach to supporting teachers in working with students with additional needs in class.

Teachers say they would appreciate having more say in the purchase of resources in the library. Some refer specifically to the need for resourcing to support the Inspire Maths, Reading Improvement Strategy and other initiatives that are prioritised in the school. Some parents suggest that the home readers should be updated to complement the expectations of the Reading Improvement Strategy. The teacher-librarian indicates that she would welcome input from teachers regarding purchase of resource materials to support these initiatives.

Some teachers suggest that the potential for utilising the expertise of the APRE and Learning Support Teacher as human resources and in the implementation of PB4L should be tapped more strongly than is currently the case.

A number of teachers say they would appreciate the school leadership revisiting the annual amount per teacher allocated for consumables. They indicate that most teachers spend their own money to top up on the cost of consumables.

Facilities

The leadership team acknowledge that the school's existing strategic plan is not a widely known document, and a new four-year strategic plan will be developed after completion of the current School Renewal and Improvement Process. The Annual Action Plan for 2021 has been discussed with teachers and is now being refined by the leadership team. The existing Master Plan, completed in 2018, is also not widely known. The Principal acknowledges the need to update the Master Plan to develop the school's built and natural environments, and this process is in the early consultative stage. The Principal has expressed the intention for these processes to be highly consultative with the school community and linked to greater clarity around a shared vision for the school. As part of this process, he refers to the need to continue to ask 'Why?' as the planning process moves forward.

The review team noticed the tidiness of the school grounds and gardens as well as the absence of litter. Staff, students and parents refer to the need for an organised schedule of cleaning and maintenance of the school's facilities.

Mum said there's a big difference between tidiness and cleanliness. This school is tidy but it needs a good clean. (Student)

Many staff, students and parents express appreciation for the natural environment at the school and the staff who maintain it. A small number of parents have raised concerns about the need for a fence to separate the church carpark from the Prep area. A similar number suggest that thought be given to a more organised, expanded drop off and pick-up zone. There is clear excitement about the potential of the planned nature play area to enrich the experiences of the students.

Crossing guards indicate their appreciation for the way they are welcomed and involved in the life of the school by the leadership team and staff, both saying they see their role as important in ensuring the safety of the children.

Learning environment

The school has a policy of every student having access to an iPad. A coherent approach to the use of iPads and other information and communication technology (ICT) is under discussion with the school's ICT committee, with the committee working to develop an e-learning policy that will form the framework for coherence in ICT use in class from Prep to Year 6. Some students say they would like to experience more classroom integration of their iPads in their day-to-day learning.

We used our iPads more in Prep than we do now... (Student)

Improvement strategies

- Build on the work of individual teachers and the ICT committee to devise a coherent Prep to Year 6 framework for use of ICTs in teacher pedagogy, including consultation with relevant personnel at TCSO.
- Establish a process through which teachers liaise with the teacher-librarian on the purchase of support resources for school-wide initiatives and priorities.
- Investigate ways to further incorporate the expertise of the APRE and Learning Support Teacher in advice and support for teachers.
- Clarify and communicate the school's model for supporting students with additional learning needs.
- Revisit and share the Master Plan with consideration to building improvements and safety of students.
- Develop and communicate formal cleaning and maintenance schedules.

Conclusion

The members of the review team express their appreciation to the Sacred Heart School community for their openness and enthusiastic involvement in the 2021 School Renewal and Improvement Process. Staff, parents and students were well informed of the purpose of the process and this was reflected in their preparedness and considered responses during the interviews with panel members.

The panel members hope that the findings and improvement strategies in this report will assist Sacred Heart to consolidate its considerable achievements and its welcoming and valued community culture, while continuing to build a clear and precise focus for future directions and continued growth.