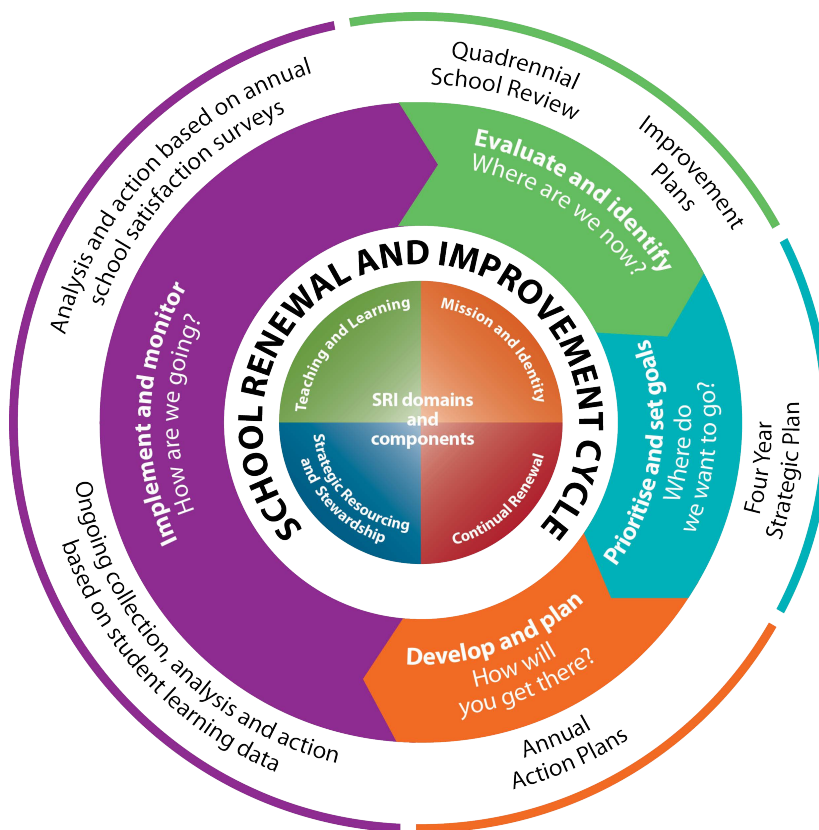


**Diocese of Toowoomba
Catholic Schools**

St Monica's School Oakey

TCS Quadrennial school review Full report



March 2019

Foreword

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

Roland Barth, Harvard Graduate School of Education

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

Appreciative Inquiry aims to bring ownership to the school. The review 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 Tuesday, 19 February to Thursday, 22 February 2019.

Reviewers

Paul Murphy, Senior Education Leader, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office, Chair
Terry Carter, Manager: Teaching and Learning, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office
Louise Pfingst, Principal: St Anthony's School, Toowoomba

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

- The Principal and the Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE)
- Fr Thomas Areekuzhy, Parish Priest
- Teaching staff (6) & Learning Support Teacher (1)
- School Officers including Administration, Groundsman, and Teacher Aides (10)
- Parents including Board and P&F members (5)
- All students from Year 5–6

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 review team thanks the St Monica's School community for the open and trusting way in which they have approached this quadrennial School Renewal and Improvement review. The review team experienced an openness and trust across the school, with people speaking frankly about where they see the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Throughout the three days at the school the review team experienced a school that presents as well organised, calm and friendly.

We believe we have received an in-depth and accurate portrait of the school.

The review team has found many strengths, particularly in the collective mindset demonstrated by the school staff who consistently give the message that they hold their school in high regard and are happy to be on staff at the school. Parents interviewed are also appreciative of the efforts of the school leadership and school staff in their efforts to provide a quality educational environment for their children.

Among the affirming messages that emerge in this report is the setting by the school of a good baseline of classroom organisation and management through the adoption of the Teach like a Champion strategies.

Among the main areas the school community sees for improvement are exploring and addressing the learning needs of those students who are high potential learners, and including opportunities for greater student voice in the upper primary classes.

The review team hopes that this report is empowering for the school and wishes the school community well as it moves through this important phase in its life.



Domain 1 Teaching and learning

Component 1.1 Students and their learning

Findings

Explicit improvement agenda

The school has an Index of Community Socio Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 973, placing it below the national average. Indigenous students account for 11.3% of the school student population which is almost double the Diocesan mean. Similarly, students for whom their first language is a language or dialect other than English represent 10.5% of the student population with the Diocesan mean being 4.8%.

NAPLAN data show that Year 3 are achieving at levels lower than the State and National mean in all domains. In 2018 the Year 5 cohort performed above the Australian mean in all domains of NAPLAN with spelling being the exception. The relative gain Year 3 to Year 5 in 2018 is significant, and the school is to be complimented on the improvement the students are showing.

There is a documented specific improvement agenda that is published through the school's Annual Action Plan (AAP). In recent years there has been a strong focus on the implementation of the Reading Improvement Strategy (RIS) and the whole school adoption of the Teach Like a Champion school and classroom organisation strategies. Several teaching staff state that the quality of support provided by the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office reading coaches is exceptional. The 2019 AAP identifies high yield teaching and learning strategies as a focus for development in 2019.

The Principal is focussing on sharing the teaching and learning dimension of the school in the fortnightly school newsletter. This is a deliberate strategy to raise the academic profile of the school in the wider community.

Teachers meet regularly with the Middle Leader to analyse student performance data and to identify student strengths and gaps in learning, using this to prioritise areas for targeted teaching. The school has provided additional release time for teachers to meet collaboratively with the Middle Leader. Currently the school is moving towards a more coherent application of these targeted teaching goals within teacher planning across all classes.

"The focused analysis of student performance data has allowed us to now plan units and lessons with more intent." — Class teacher

Parents identify a general focus in the school on 'higher standards', which is being well received in the school community.

The leadership team has developed a plan for the full implementation of Planning for Personalised Learning (PfPL) where two teachers work to become 'champions' in this area. Existing procedures around recording adjustments on the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP) are comprehensive and thorough. Parents report that children with specific learning needs are well supported and feel welcomed.

Staff goal setting is continuing to be developed at the school. Staff goals reflect school and Diocesan priorities and are revisited in individual meetings with the Principal. A number of staff indicate that it would be beneficial if they could have more opportunities to follow self-identified professional learning needs such as attendance at the non-violent crisis intervention training.

Analysis and discussion of data

The school has embarked on the systematic collection and analysis of relevant data. This includes external sources such as NAPLAN, and internally generated data mainly drawn from the PM and PROBE resources in support of the RIS. The PM and PROBE data collected through the RIS are analysed by the Middle Leader

and collaborative planning sessions held with all teaching staff. A number of teachers and school officers comment on the greater use that is being made of the school's data wall.

"It is great to be able to follow a student's progress from year to year on the data wall." — School Officer

Finer analysis of student learning growth data from the RIS has demonstrated that St Monica's is supporting and developing students who score below average or average on the reading analysis instruments.

The leadership of the school have also identified that generally, those students who are performing above average or well above average on the RIS test instruments are not showing similar growth trajectories. These students, identified as high potential learners, have been identified as a school-wide focus to ensure that all students are meeting their potential.

St Monica's has begun the professional learning community (PLC) journey with the establishment of PLC norms. The continued development of this culture of collaboration and efficacy will be an important focus for the school in the immediate future. The PLC operational model could be expanded to include the provision of opportunities for teachers to observe peers teach and to provide feedback to each other on agreed criteria and to assist staff to develop their leadership potential.

"There is a good culture of collaboration with the teachers at St Monica's." — Parent

Learning culture

The Year 5 and 6 students interviewed by the review team say that they enjoy learning and that their teachers are supportive and respectful. All students interviewed could articulate the LEARN behaviour framework (Listen, Engage, Attitude, Respect, Now we're ready) and identified that the framework provided examples of behaviours that students can utilise to be fully engaged in their classrooms.

On visiting classrooms the review team observed high-quality routines, procedures and transition activities. All staff identify that the Teach like a Champion strategies, universally used throughout all classrooms, have contributed to the development of excellent routines and classroom and school-wide organisation of students.

Parents interviewed state that the communication from teachers to families is of high quality and consistent across classrooms.

Some students state that they would like greater opportunities to explore curriculum areas of interest, such as science and art.

Based on discussions with students and through classroom observations, it is unclear at this stage as to how widely the high yield teaching and learning strategies are embedded at St Monica's.

Learning support procedures and processes are currently under review and staff report confidence in the direction that learning support is heading at the school. With Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office (TCSO) support, a model of learning support is being developed that will provide a tier support model that will enhance the planning for personalised learning that is currently in place at the school.

School officers are highly valued and well engaged in the teaching and learning process at the school.

The following quote from a parent suggests the school is experiencing success in setting high academic expectations for its students:

"It is noticeable that there has been a focus on higher academic expectations at St Monica's over the past few years." — Parent

Improvement strategies

- Develop a clear and consistent approach to identify and support high potential learners.
- Ensure that a professional learning community model is fully developed and enacted at St Monica's, including peer lesson observations and feedback.

- Continue to provide collaborative planning opportunities with all teaching staff.
- Identify leadership roles staff could take in teaching and learning, for example, formalising the mentoring that is already happening.
- Build on the structure and organisational cohesion that has begun through the Teach like a Champion initiative, taking the next step to move from 'good to great' through the school-wide implementation of high yield teaching and learning strategies.
- Continue to develop a learning support model that is responsive to the needs of students and staff at the school.

Component 1.2 Curriculum structure and provision

Findings

Systematic curriculum delivery

It is evident that the school has well documented and sequenced curriculum programs as recorded on the DLP.

The Middle Leader has been proactive in working with TCSO staff to ensure that the appropriate curriculum mapping has occurred to ensure that there are no gaps or double ups in the implementation of Year 4/5 and Year 5/6 classes in 2019.

The schools Learning Area Programs (LAPS) have been developed for 2019 and are housed in the DLP.

Teachers provide an opportunity for all parents to attend an information session early each year and formal parent teacher interviews are conducted in Terms 1 and 3. Formal written reports are provided to parents at the end of each semester. The school's reports are personalised, and a comment is provided for English, Mathematics and a concluding general comment.

School context

St Monica's offers a large range of subjects in line with the Australian Curriculum requirements. Like many schools St Monica's has struggled to secure Language Other than English specialist teachers and Physical Education teachers in recent years.

In 2019 the principal is teaching physical education, and this has been well received by the St Monica's community. Feedback from interviews indicates that now is a prime time to look at extending the students' involvement in sporting activities both within the school and in the wider community.

"Sport will be a way to engender more school spirit and team spirit." — Parent

Of note is that several parents and staff interviewed suggest that the school could investigate the teaching of an Indigenous language, Filipino or Portuguese given the percentage of students who identify as Indigenous or English as an additional language or dialect (EALD). These parents suggest that this would be an opportunity to provide another avenue of welcome or inclusion to these families.

Parents commented on the quality of the music program and that a number of opportunities are given to students to perform in choirs at eisteddfods and 'Sing Out'. The music teacher also teaches a range of musical instruments to students with the ukulele band being the next musical venture.

Improvement strategies

- Continue curriculum mapping for multi-age classes to ensure that there is a cyclical implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

- Investigate opportunities to provide a Language other than English (LOTE) or cultural immersion for all students in Indigenous or other contextually appropriate foreign language.
- Investigate ways to extend the students' involvement in sporting activities both within the school and in the wider community.

Component 1.3 Pastoral care and student wellbeing

Findings

"The students know what's expected. I feel confident in behaviour management as everyone does the same across the board. While the Behaviour Framework is clear, our processes are also the same across the board so you feel more confident that what you are doing is within guidelines." — Teacher

Student social and emotional wellbeing

It is evident that a priority is given to developing a safe and nurturing environment for students. Students report that the teachers generally go out of their way to come to know them individually and provide the individual attention that can be given to students in a small school. Parents also have generally conveyed to the review team that they agree with this view.

This sense of the school as a community is consistently conveyed to the review team as one of the positive features of St Monica's that influences parental decisions about enrolment of their children at the school. It is also evident that there is a well-integrated focus on developing the 'whole person', including the spiritual dimension of young people's lives.

Staff indicate that the community highly values the safety of students and acceptance of each student as an individual. This contributes to an overall development of inclusion, resilience and wellbeing.

Based on the review team's observation, the students display an open, friendly, welcoming disposition and speak of the school with pride and a sense of belonging.

As part of the Lighthouse Wellbeing initiative, teachers send home postcards to parents, highlighting positive affirmations about their child. Some staff and parents state that the students could benefit from a whole school social emotional program to build student self-esteem and resilience.

Relationships

It is evident that relationships between staff and students are well developed.

Students report that the school provides an environment where all are welcomed and treated equally. They also report that teachers are conscious of the wellbeing of each student and that they try to assist students to succeed in their learning and participation in school life. In doing so they cater for different types of students making the experience inclusive for all students.

The school has a student rewards program that acknowledges positive behaviour and the students report this to be fair and consistent. One student states "If you do the right thing, teachers notice and good things happen".

"Relationships between teachers and students are great. Teachers understand when we don't understand. You can trust the teachers, you can tell them anything." — Year 6 student

Effectiveness of systems and structures

St Monica's leadership team has developed a behaviour support plan that is nearing finalisation and will be available for staff and parent consultation. This plan clearly outlines processes and procedures to bring

consistency to school wide expectations around student behaviour, in line with the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Behaviour Sanctions document.

Year 5 and 6 students report that behaviour expectations are set very clearly for students and are consistent.

“There is no bullying at this school.” — Year 6 Student

It was raised by some staff that there are some students with significant low school attendance.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to nourish the existing culture of high-quality relationships between staff and students.
- Implement Wellbeing Lighthouse School initiatives in collaboration with the Education Officer and other Wellbeing Lighthouse schools.
- Publish and implement, with appropriate professional learning, the new student behaviour support plan ensuring that the roles, responsibilities, processes and expectations are widely known and consistently understood by staff, students and parents. Monitor the new system to ensure that all staff are equipped to implement the system consistently.
- Collaboratively devise and implement a school wide social and emotional program that promotes positive self-esteem and regulating emotions.
- Monitor student attendance data, acknowledge and celebrate high attendance and engage with families of students with poor attendance



Domain 2 Mission and identity

Component 2.1 Religion curriculum

Findings

Systematic curriculum delivery

The Religious Education curriculum taught at St Monica's is based on the Toowoomba Catholic Schools' (TCS) Religious Education Guidelines which utilise the resources of the Archdiocese of Brisbane Religious Education Guidelines. The school LAP identifies what content is required to be taught. Teachers undertake 2.5 hours per week of formal religion teaching in their classes. These times are timetabled by the Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE). The LAP and timetables are endorsed by the APRE.

Teacher unit planning is documented on the DLP using the same protocols expected of teachers for all other learning areas. Staff advise that they are working towards personalised learning in the planning of Religious Education units. Staff are released for half a day a term where they plan RE units in collaboration with the APRE.

It is evident from speaking with staff, students and parents that at this stage the Vision statement is not widely known and cannot be clearly articulated.

The staff participated in an in-service at the beginning of the year focused on the charism of the school with a Good Samaritan Religious Sister. At this stage it is not evident that this has flowed through to the students, who appear unable to identify or clearly articulate this charism of St Monica's.

Professional learning community (PLC)

A small number of teachers are formally accredited to teach Religious Education in a Catholic School. One teacher completed the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP) in 2018 and another is enrolled in 2019.

School context

Within the student population, 49% are Catholic in comparison to the Diocesan Mean of 52%. There is one other-than-Catholic teacher on staff.

Improvement strategies

- Assist and encourage current staff to gain full accreditation to teach Religion in a Catholic school.
- Continue to implement the Plan for Personalised Learning (PfPL) in the planning, teaching and assessing of Religious Education.
- Ensure opportunities for rigorous teaching and use of high yield strategies in the teaching of Religious Education.
- Review the school's Prospectus, including a Vision statement which explicitly states why St Monica's School exists, what makes it a school of excellence and what it means to be a Catholic school. Publicise this with staff, students and parents.
- Include in the Religious Education program the explicit sharing with students of the charism of St Monica's.

Component 2.2 Religious life of the school

Findings

Evangelisation and formation

St Monica's Catholic Primary School is a Catholic school founded in 1921 by the Sisters of Good Samaritan whose charism is based on the story of The Good Samaritan.

Each classroom has a sacred space. A sacred space is also present in the office foyer and the staffroom. The religious symbolism on each prayer table is consistent throughout the school. Students can confidently explain this symbolism and have a clear understanding of the significance of the sacred prayer space and how it's used within the classroom.

It is evident that there are strong links to the life of St Monica's Parish. The school uses Parish facilities for prayer and meetings, Fr Thomas celebrates liturgies and masses with the school community and the school joins with the Parish for significant celebrations such as Catholic Education Week. The APRE and school staff support Parish activities including the program of preparation of students to receive the sacraments and combine with the Parish for the Lenten program.

The school badge is prominent on the welcome sign at the front entrance of the school. Art works promoting strong connections to the charism of the school are currently not evident in the wider outdoor environment of the school.

"We could add murals or art, to 'engage the sensitivity' — we could easily do something around that while preparing for the centenary." — Staff member

Prayer and worship

Class and communal prayer and liturgical celebrations are a feature of the school. Students confidently recite the school prayer, which is a focus at morning parades and whole school assemblies.

One class is rostered to attend the weekday Parish Mass on Thursday mornings. The school coordinates a Parish family mass once a month on Sunday mornings, where students participate with the readings, offertory procession, altar serving and liturgical movement. The APRE reports that these are well attended by families and have grown from approximately 5 families attending to 25 on average currently. The school celebrates significant events such as NAIDOC Week, The National Day of Action Against Bullying, the Feast of the Assumption and Catholic Education Week through whole school liturgies in the multi-purpose hall.

Each class has a liturgy in the classroom once a term, where parents are invited to attend. The liturgy is part of the culmination of a religious education unit. Several parents comment on the positive value of these times and appreciate the welcome that is extended to them to be part of the celebration.

Both staff and parents affirm the strong connections between the Parish and school community. Parish members are invited to a morning tea or barbecue following Parish family masses.

The celebration of faith and life is evidenced by participation in class and staff prayer, school liturgies and masses, and these are identified as important parts of the Catholic life of the school.

Social action and justice

2019 has seen the introduction of a new leadership structure amongst Year 6 students, where all students are inducted as leaders with a focus on assisting the wider community through social justice and outreach. Under the guidance of the leadership team, students involved in a Mini Vinnies committee, recycling for specific charities significant to the local community and raising funds for Caritas. Year 6 students lead these initiatives in the wider school community.

The Year 6 students attend a Leadership Day at Emu Gully early in the new school year.

A very strong Year 6 — Prep student 'Buddy Program' operates within the school to share school values, beliefs and culture with the younger students. The Year 6 and Prep students share morning tea one day a week and the Year 6 students set up the obstacle course for the Prep students each day.

Faith in Action is a well-developed school-based strategy for educating students in this aspect of Catholic social justice teaching. It is practically grounded in activities such as 'Cup Cake Day' where funds are raised for a specific charity and most recently the school leaders each wrote a letter to students at a school recently affected by floods in Townsville. The students are able to clearly articulate fair and just relations between themselves and society.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to nurture and strengthen the 'Buddy Program' and ensure that it is in place and ready for implementation at the beginning of the school year.
- Continue to develop a Student Leadership Policy and Procedure outlining the new student leadership structure that values and includes student voice.
- Continue to deepen and embed Good Samaritan charism in the life of the school. Investigate ways to represent the Catholic and Good Samaritan values visually around the external environment of the school.



Domain 3 Continual renewal

Component 3.1 School improvement culture

Findings

Collective Teacher efficacy

The implementation of the Diocesan initiatives of the Reading Improvement Strategy (RIS), and the Planning for Personalised Learning (PfPL) collectively have engaged staff in considerable reflection and professional learning at both Diocesan and school levels. These processes are developing a shared common language about effective teaching and learning practices across the school, and are already impacting positively on the development of collective teacher efficacy. The implementation of high yield teaching strategies and hence improved student learning and achievement are articulated by some staff as being the next stage of developing collective teacher efficacy.

School improvement survey (RADII) responses indicated that peer observation for teachers is an area for development in building collective teacher efficacy.

School Culture

It is clear that the school culture is underpinned by mutual trust and respect between the school leadership team and staff, and it is apparent that this extends to students and parents. Staff express appreciation that they feel supported, both personally and professionally.

The school's award system mirrors the school's focus on academic excellence as well as its connection to its Listen, Engage, Attitude, Respect, Now we're ready (LEARN) philosophy where each week has a particular focus, and students are publicly recognised for acting out that focus in outstanding ways.

Teachers new to the school express appreciation at the way they were inducted into the culture of the school, particularly referring to the way they were welcomed by staff and the leadership team, both personally and professionally.

All staff are engaged in a performance and development program through the RIS. The next stage in this engagement is that staff set developmental goals in relation to the school's Annual Action Plan (AAP) as well as in developing their own competencies.

Improvement strategies

- Implement school-wide high yield teaching strategies as the next stage of developing collective teacher efficacy.
- Engage staff in peer observation visits and participation in the performance and development program.
- Engage staff in setting developmental goals in relation to the school's AAP as well as in developing their own competencies.

Component 3.2 Community partnerships

Findings

Partners

In interviews with the review team, parents, staff and students consistently refer to St Monica's as being supportive and friendly.

Parents are seen by the school as the main community partners in the students' education. Parents express praise for the quality of teaching and learning in the school, the care extended to their children, and the approachability of staff, including the leadership team. Students are also clear in this praise for the staff.

The school is well supported by the School Board and the Parents and Friends (P&F) Association who are strong advocates for the school. The P&F are very active in raising money to buy resources for the school. The students articulate their appreciation of the support that the P&F provides through its donations of equipment and resources for the students.

It is evident that there are established links to St Monica's Parish. The Principal attends Parish meetings once a month, and the Parish Priest regularly visits the school, where he is a welcome visitor to the children. The school uses Parish facilities for prayer and meetings, Fr Thomas celebrates liturgies and masses with the school community and the school joins with the Parish for weekly masses and significant celebrations.

Students are involved in a number of community activities beyond the school. Most are service activities involving Little Vinnies, Catholic Mission and Caritas. Students visit the local nursing home which is appreciated by the residents and is an uplifting experience for the students.

Parents express appreciation that the school is beginning to become involved in inter-school sport through the Catholic Schools Swimming Carnival, as an example. They are keen for the school to continue to seek ways for the students to be involved with wider community sports activities. They also see this as a way to enhance the building of enrolment numbers.

Procedures

It is evident that there is open communication between the school and the School Board and P&F and a clear mutual respect and trust between all.

Student needs

The school builds partnership with parents/carers, families, Parish and TCSO staff to promote the wellbeing and learning of students. Parent information evenings are conducted as a way for parents to gain an insight into their child's learning experience and to build their partnership with teachers.

Improvement strategies

- Continue to seek ways to involve the students in community sporting activities beyond the school.
- Use partnership opportunities as a way to promote St Monica's School in the wider community, with a view to enhancing opportunities for future enrolments.



Domain 4 Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1 Staff development and wellbeing

"St Monica's School is a community within a community. The staff care about their students and they care about their students' ability to achieve." — School Officer

Findings

School culture

Teachers and support staff make clear that they support the values and beliefs that underpin the life of the school. The Catholic ethos is supported, and teachers say that they feel valued and particularly appreciate the collaborative nature of the staff. Parents comment that this is clear for all to see.

“Teachers work well cohesively, there’s lots of peer support and review. Teachers are close knit and want to stay here, they enjoy working here and want to continue.” — Parent

Positive reference is also made by parents, staff and students to the inclusion of the Teach Like a Champion techniques in the daily life of the school. During the visit the review team observed the ‘Safety Line’ approach to lining-up and the calm nature of the students and staff.

Irrespective of how long they have been at the school, staff are well-versed and committed to the values and beliefs of the school culture.

Staff goal setting is a work in progress at the school. Staff goals reflect school and Diocesan priorities and are revisited in individual meetings with the Principal. A number of staff indicate that it would be beneficial if they could have more opportunity to follow self-identified professional learning needs, such as attendance at the Non-violent crisis intervention training.

Many staff comment that the new Principal is building greater opportunities and methods for communication amongst staff. One example cited was the staff calendar that is now used at the school.

Caring for the individual

It is clear that the level of support that staff offer to one another and receive from the leadership team are valued both professionally and personally. The school working environment is modern and allows staff to feel safe and to focus on students and their learning.

The leadership team ensures a safe environment for staff and students, with documented protocols that are visibly displayed.

Attraction, selection and retention

Turnover of staff has decreased, and this has led to a sense of continuity for staff and for parents. St Monica’s is now being seen as a school where teachers choose to come and stay. A staff induction program is in place and is well-received.

“Recruitment and retention of staff is top notch.” — Parent

Nurture and empowerment

Goal setting processes are in place to record individual teachers’ goals for the term. Teachers’ goals are set by discussion with a member of the leadership team.

Improvement strategies

- Investigate ways to cater for staff individual professional learning aspirations as well as school-wide and Diocesan priorities.
- Review the effectiveness of internal and external communication as experienced by staff and parents.

Component 4.2 Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

Findings

Resources

The school has a well-equipped and orderly library. A wide range of book and non-book resources is readily available to staff and students. Classrooms appear to have considerable resources available to augment teaching and learning.

All classrooms have digital/interactive projection devices. All classrooms use 'phonic ear' type voice amplifications systems used by both staff and students. Classroom furniture supports contemporary teaching practices.

The school has effective processes in place to identify and respond to diverse student needs, strategically allocating human and physical resources to these needs. There are programs in place for students requiring additional or specialist support. The school is preparing to build capacity to provide for high-achieving and highly-motivated students. ICT resourcing is provided for classroom learning in ways that are seen as generally equitable. There is a sense that some of these could be updated to help with continued integration of skills into learning.

Facilities

The school's physical environment and resources are conducive to learning and recreational play. The grounds are exceedingly well-maintained and provide a safe area for students and staff. The buildings are all in good condition, they are all clean and welcoming.

A groundsman is employed for one day per week to maintain the gardens and grounds, and he also attends to minor maintenance issues. An adult volunteer and past student helps daily with cleaning, gardening and keeping the grounds tidy. It is obvious that great pride is taken with the school's physical appearance. The grounds where students eat their lunch are very clean and tidy and the grassed areas are watered and green. The school looks inviting from the main entrance in Lorrimer Street. Of particular note are the quality of the sports hall, music space, shade and outdoor areas, play areas and learning support space.

The school is currently investigating the development of a Master Plan to guide future development

Learning environment

The classrooms and other learning areas are all well-equipped, modern and clean. There is a calm atmosphere throughout the school and in classrooms.

Improvement strategies

- Continue developing the idea of a Master Plan for future planning.
- Update Information Technology resources to help with continued integration of ICT skills into learning.

Conclusion

The review team believes St Monica's is establishing itself as a school that provides a strong platform for all students to meet their academic, cultural and spiritual potential. It is clear too that St Monica's is becoming an attractive option for teachers seeking a place where they can make a difference in the lives of young people.

It is hoped that the findings and improvement strategies identified in this report will provide the school community with clear direction for St Monica's to grow from its already strong base and become a great Catholic school.