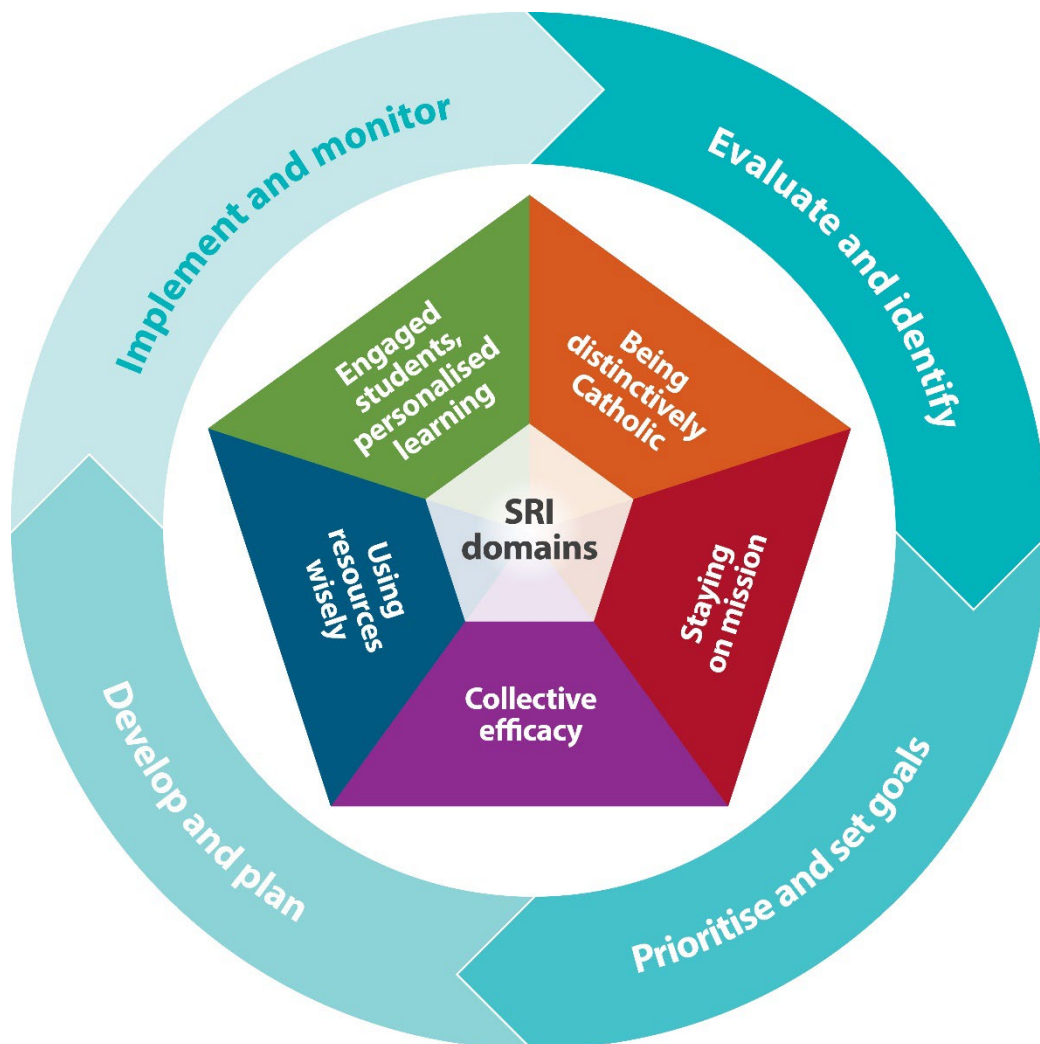


# School renewal and improvement report

*informed by TCS Quadrennial School Review*

## Assumption College Warwick



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Methodology .....	4
Purposes .....	4
School Renewal and Improvement (SRI) domains and components.....	4
School context.....	5
Findings and improvements strategies.....	8
Conclusion .....	25

## Introduction

The School Renewal and Improvement framework describes Toowoomba Catholic Schools' (TCS) commitment and approach to progressive, incremental improvement. The framework describes a four-year cycle during which each school community examines its current achievements and performance, consults widely about its aspirations, establishes priorities for the foreseeable future and undertakes regular checks to monitor progress.

To assist the community in this cycle each school undertakes a quadrennial school review, based on the Catholic traditions of renewal and subsidiarity. This review is facilitated by the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office and provides reliable, up-to-date and timely information to the community to inform strategic planning. The quadrennial school review is one source of data available to the school community to monitor progress and set goals for the future.

The strategic planning process rightly sits with each local school community, which operates within the broader system of Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS). Local school strategic planning is complementary to the TCS Strategic Plan. This connection ensures that each school contributes to, and benefits from, the larger system.

This four-year cycle has been the catalyst for significant growth and improvement in staff knowledge and expertise and student learning and achievement in all schools. It is another indicator of the mature and focused professional learning culture which is a feature of Toowoomba Catholic Schools.

Dr Pat Coughlan  
Executive Director: Catholic Schools  
Diocese of Toowoomba

## Methodology

The quadrennial school review was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022 by the review team comprising

- Maryanne Walsh, Senior Education Leader
- Kort Goodman, Principal St. Joseph's College, Toowoomba
- Norm Hunter, Consultant
- John Coman, Consultant

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

- Principal
- All Leadership Team Members and Middle Leaders
- 41 staff members across all departments
- 33 students from Years 7 to 12
- 13 parents including Board and P&F representatives
- Sharon Collins – Chair of the College Board
- Fr Franco Filipetto, St Mary's Parish Priest
- Fr Bony Abraham, St Mary's Assistant Priest

## Purposes

The purposes of the Toowoomba Catholic Schools quadrennial school review are

- to engage the school community in a process of self-reflection and continual renewal
- to ensure the school review focuses on the quality of teaching and learning
- to provide the school community with an opportunity to participate in a thorough reflection on their school's effectiveness
- to provide an external team perspective including findings and improvement strategies to affirm and improve teaching and learning.

## School Renewal and Improvement (SRI) domains and components

The reference document for the review is the Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS) School Renewal and Improvement Framework. The five SRI domains from the Framework provide the structure for the review and future planning.

### Domain 1 Engaged students, personalised learning

The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour. There is a focus on evidence-based practice.

### Domain 2 Being distinctively Catholic

The school explicitly operates as a Catholic school, with a distinctive Catholic identity. Staff, students, and parents/carers share in the narrative and charism which encompass the school and so education about its ongoing story involves all in the school's community. In collaboration and partnership with families and parishes, the school prepares young people to live as Christians in the world. The Catholic identity of the school enables it to be an instrument of the evangelising mission of the Church. There is an expectation that Religious Education will engage students in thinking about their own spiritual development. The Catholic tradition of valuing academic learning is clearly present in the school, including in Religious Education, which is taught with similar rigour to all other subjects.

## Domain 3 Staying on mission

The school leadership team have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in both qualitative and quantitative measures of improvements in student achievement and behaviour. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

## Domain 4 Collective efficacy

The school is led in a direction that develops and grows collective efficacy, based on the collective self-perception that teachers in a school make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and communities. This is evident in attributes that convey high expectations to students and foster learner autonomy. Staff are supported in building collegiality and trying new approaches based on effective practices, setting challenging goals for students and working collaboratively in attending closely to the needs of students who require extra assistance.

## Domain 5 Using resources wisely

The school applies its resources (staff, time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.

## School context

### Motto and crest

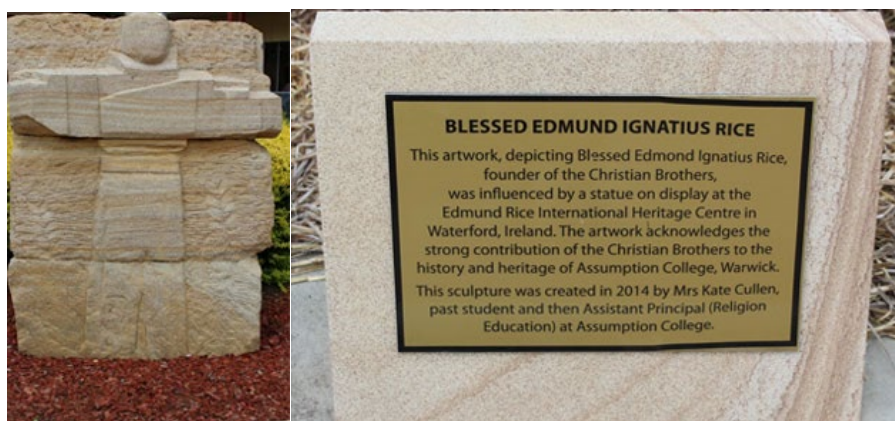
Assumption College's motto is *"Truth and Love"*

Assumption College's crest is



### Vision

Under the guidance of Mary, Our Lady of the Assumption, and in the tradition of Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice, we are a Catholic learning community sustained and empowered by witness to the Gospel message of truth and love.



### Mission

Assumption College is a Catholic community in the Mercy and Rice traditions committed to the creation of life-long learners who can respond to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in creative and innovative ways. This is evident through

- Enhancing a contemporary and inclusive catholic identity
- High quality teaching and learning that empowers students through the development of 21st century skills
- Prioritising student learning to foster personal growth and achievement
- Co-curricular activities that provide sporting, cultural, faith and social justice opportunities
- Developing partnerships with parents/caregivers, the parish and the wider community to enhance learning
- The pastoral wellbeing of staff and students
- Sustainable resourcing.



## Values

The purpose of Catholic education is to liberate all by living the Gospel truth of love. In developing the pastoral academic wellbeing of our students, we embrace four key values.

**Generosity**– we reach out to others

**Compassion**– we respond with forgiveness

**Wisdom**– we use our learning to make responsible choices

**Justice**– we act to remove barriers for the dignity of all.

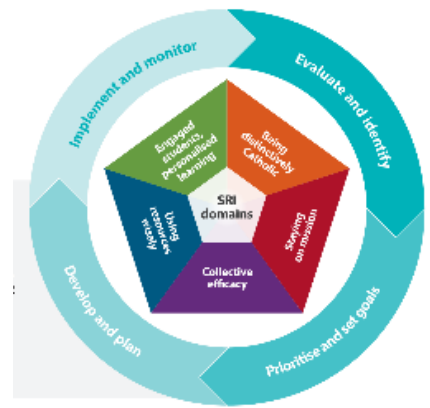


At Assumption College we follow the Marian traditions of the Church honouring Mary as mother of Jesus and mother to the Church. Our Lady brings the truth of Christ to us and is a model for love; to open our heart to the word of God, to teach of generosity, compassion, wisdom and justice as Jesus did.

## School context, history and Catholic identity

Assumption College is a Catholic co-educational secondary college offering education from Year 7 to 12. The college can trace its origins back to the 1870's. It is recognised as a vibrant, and distinctively Catholic learning community. Assumption College enlivens the charisms of Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice. A strong Marian tradition is reflected in the college name and expressed through the college's interconnectedness to St Mary's Parish. The rich heritage which is provided by these charisms and traditions allows Assumption College to thrive within its motto of "Truth and Love".

In 2018 Assumption College Warwick (ACW) undertook its first quadrennial school review. The School Renewal and Improvement report that resulted from that review has informed the development of the Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 and the subsequent Annual Action Plans that set out the goals and targets for improvement for each year. The embedding of these strategic initiatives has been impeded by circumstances which are no fault of the college. This occurred because of changes to the senior leadership of the college, including the principal, as well as a greater than usual turnover of teaching staff. The departure of those who had specific skill sets that were being used to lead some of these initiatives resulted in these projects being stalled. The table below presents a snapshot of the teaching staff changes over the last four years.



### Teaching staff turnover in the last four years

Year	New Staff Arrivals Start of Year	New Staff Arrivals During Year	Staff Departures During Year	Staff Departures End of Year
2019	9	8	4	8
2020	7	0	0	17
2021	19	7	7	10
2022	9	9	5	TBA

*It is great to see that the school is on a good path now. I believe that the effort of the school to build on and achieve its set agenda of the current strategic plan has been impacted upon by the fact that we have had three Principals in the last four years and a large turnover of staff. We are really looking forward to the next few years where hopefully we will have greater stability in leadership and staffing and can continue to move forward on the great start that Liisa has made. (Parent)*

*The combined factors of the COVID pandemic and staff turnover have had an enormous impact upon our ability to do anything. I think it is a miracle that we have been able to do anything well. (Teacher)*

## Findings and improvements strategies

### Domain 1 Engaged students, personalised learning

#### 1.1 Know the students and develop expert learners

#### 1.2 Know the curriculum and lead effective teaching

#### 1.3 Use high impact teaching strategies that personalise and connect learning

### Findings

#### Academic learning and wellbeing

It is clear that Assumption College recognises the natural link between students' academic learning and their wellbeing. The relationships between staff and students at the school are characterised by mutual respect and trust. Teachers and School Officers consistently speak highly of the students and express commitment to their learning and care. Students speak highly of their teachers and clearly trust them as confidantes as well as academic educators.

*You can always ask a teacher for help; They're generous with their time when you need it. (Student)*

*There's always a teacher there for you. (Student)*

Students from several Year groups speak about the generosity of teachers with their time, referring to individual help they've received from a teacher outside of class, the Thursday afternoon tutorials, and from some teachers the situational tutorials teachers offer at the beginning of an assessment piece or assignment. The students leave no doubt that they see this as a special feature of being a student at Assumption College, and that they appreciate it. Sometimes a student will acknowledge this personally with a teacher.

*I've never been in a school where a student stops to thank me for the lesson we've just had. It's very special to experience that, and it's happened more than once. (Teacher)*

When a group of students from one Year group explained what teachers do to help them learn best, they spoke about 'connecting'. They see the best learning environment as a personalised experience, where the teacher and students 'connect'. Some use the word 'passion' to describe what they appreciate in their teachers. When asked what that looks like students describe it as having two qualities: passion for their subject, and 'passion for us to get it'.

One issue students find disappointing is the large number of teachers who stay at the college for a short time and then move on. It is an acknowledged problem all schools beyond major cities face, neatly expressed by one student

*Sometimes we've just connected with a teacher and then they leave. We were just getting going!*

Many students in Years 11 and 12 express their appreciation at being able to combine an ATAR course with a vocational component such as a Certificate III. Some high achieving students are taking advantage of this opportunity. A number of students and parents are pleased that an agriculture subject has become available and indicate their hope that it will be appropriately resourced and afforded the status of academic subjects. The Business Manager has announced plans for the purchase of a farm as part of the resourcing of the subject. The concept is for a multi-purpose facility providing for agricultural experiences as well as cultural and sporting activities and is intended to be in reasonably close proximity to the college. At present a number of potential sites are under consideration.



## Collegiality

Teachers and support staff consistently speak about collegiality, seeing it as something special about the college. Staff feel supported by their colleagues, and by the leadership team. Mention is made often of the new leadership team being 'strong'. When asked how that is acted out, staff offer words like 'proactive', 'a sense of purpose', 'the vision is clear', 'We can see where we're going'. Many staff and parents express their approval for the way the principal moved quickly this year to improve student behaviour and personal presentation and grooming. It is a strategy she describes as addressing the little things consistently in order to short-circuit bigger issues. Many members of the college community affirm what they see as the effectiveness of this initiative.

Some teachers still see inconsistency in the way teachers deal with certain behaviour issues, at the same time saying that it is greatly improved this year and continuing in that way. A number of teachers and teacher aides indicate that they see the improvement in student behaviour contributing to class lessons running more smoothly and student learning being enhanced as a result.

Many teachers, students and parents express appreciation for the raised attention to the indigenous dimension in the life of the college. They indicate that this has been particularly evident this year, with the appointment of a First Nations Officer as a consultant to further strengthen cultural awareness, and the incorporation of Acknowledgement of country into college meetings and other gatherings. There is a clear message that he is having an impact in his work with the students.

An Assumption College Pedagogical Framework is in place to guide teachers in planning lessons and units of work. Teachers show varying degrees of familiarity with it, and those who do use it say they find it helpful. Again in varying degrees, it is apparent that teachers use learning intentions and success criteria in conducting their lessons. Students of the teachers who use learning intentions and success criteria regularly say they believe it helps their learning. Students also say that most of their teachers show patience and perseverance when students are struggling to grasp the essence of a lesson and try other strategies to help the students master the concept. At this stage it isn't evident that learning intentions and success criteria are used universally by teachers across the college.

## Data usage

There is evidence that teachers are using data from a number of sources in informing their work. Quantitative data sources include NAPLAN Years 7 and 9, PAT M (Progress and Achievement Tests Mathematics) and PAT R (Reading), the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP). Qualitative sources include personal student profiles kept by teachers and advice from colleagues, the leadership team, and learning support, and at times the teacher's professional judgement. Teachers say they also regard information from parents and the students themselves as data to inform their practice.

It is clear that teachers are using data and their professional judgement in devising personalised lessons for their students. Students affirm that they can see this happening in their classes. At this stage a whole college approach to differentiation in teaching strategies – including collecting and analysing data and taking its implications into their classrooms in order to personalise their work more effectively – is in early development. A small number of parents have the perception that some teachers' assessment models would benefit from drawing on more than one mode of assessment of students' work. The leadership team acknowledge this, and they and the staff have focused on it during the year. They believe that they have made significant progress. A number of teachers say they find the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP) a very helpful source of data. The college is rolling out use of the DLP more widely in the junior section of the college.

*What is needed is a reminder every term for teachers to update the DLP as required. (Teacher)*

## High Expectations

Some teachers and senior students have shared a concern with the review team that high expectations for academic achievement may not be embedded as an important element of the college culture, even though it is spoken about. Those who raise this issue see a need for the college to raise the status of academic excellence by engaging teachers and students in building it into the culture of the college, including recognising and celebrating it.

It was pointed out that intellectual curiosity and academic achievement have long been fundamental principles of the Catholic ethos, and efforts to strengthen this in the college are in keeping with that aspiration. The principal sees this as applying in other aspects of life at the college too, including student behaviour and the way they present themselves.

A small number of parents say they would like the college to explore further some of the practices attributed to improving the learning and behaviour of boys. They refer to engagement in class, behaviour issues and aspirations of leadership. The leadership team have affirmed that they see this as an important area in the life of the college, as part of the college's approach to differentiation and gender identity in the students' learning, and in their personal and social lives. It is seen as inseparable from the college's commitment to personalised learning for all students, and the leadership team express a commitment to addressing it with sensitivity, based on research and experience about the differing ways students learn and behave.

## Learning Support

The college's approach to learning support is centred on the class teacher, who receives advice from the learning support staff to support the learning of students with additional learning needs. These students are catered for in the main structure of their class, often working individually with the classroom teacher and teacher aides. A small number of students with disabilities or major difficulties receive Tier 3 support. They are withdrawn from class for two or three lessons in the week to do targeted one-on-one or small group work with learning support staff. At times peer learning is used in class, where a student who has mastered the focus of the lesson works with a student who is struggling to handle it.

A parent of a student with a significant learning difficulty says she is very pleased with the learning support her son is receiving. She says he was accurately diagnosed early as to the nature of his difficulty and works within his class but with assistance from a teacher aide with adjustments and/or modifications planned by the class teacher.

It is clear that there are learning support processes in the college that will benefit from initiatives toward greater effectiveness and efficiency. Timetabling and communication are among areas that are seen to have the potential for growth. The college leadership team are working with the learning support department to enhance the areas identified.

A teacher aide suggests that the way teacher aides are used by teachers could be more productive. She says that at times she has the sense that she is 'just filling in time' when she works in class with students who need support in mastering a concept. She would like to be part of the process when a teacher receives advice from learning support staff about assisting a student or group of students.

It was suggested by a small number of parents that stronger links with St Mary's would help in the transition from primary teaching and learning to secondary. The parent saw potential in establishing collegial relationships across the staff of the two schools so the transition by students can occur more smoothly.

The college has a detailed sequenced curriculum plan from Years 7 to 10, showing clearly the progression expected for students as they move through those years. The plan includes varying modes of assessment for particular subjects.

## Improvement strategies

- Develop an aspirational culture that encourages and promotes all students to be the best they can be, including positive engagement in quality learning experiences and leadership opportunities.
- Develop a coordinated, evidence-based whole college approach to differentiation as a fundamental principle of pedagogy at the college, including catering in class lessons for high potential students.
- Continue to consolidate consistency and high standards of behaviour support across the college.
- Explore ways to improve the effectiveness of the college's learning support processes.
- Explore ways to maximise the effectiveness of support staff in working with students with additional needs.
- Continue to refine modes of assessment to maximise the opportunities for students to show what they have learned.

## Domain 2 Being distinctively Catholic

### 2.1 Religious education and pedagogical practices

### 2.2 Religious life of the school and the integration of faith, life, teaching and culture

#### Findings

##### Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project

The college strategic plan 2018-2022 was developed using a process of wide consultation following the 2018 SRIP review and the publication of the subsequent report. The first strategic intent listed in this strategic plan is

To develop a shared understanding of and consistent language for Catholic identity, the College will

- Participate in the Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project (ECSIP).

The ECSIP project has been developed at the Catholic University Leuven in Belgium which has been supported by Queensland Catholic Schools employing authorities. At the college level, this involves community members, staff, students and parents alike, completing a survey about aspects of their beliefs about Catholic identity. The results of the survey are analysed, and a comprehensive report provided to the college about various aspects of the beliefs of college community members. The report compares the beliefs about Catholic identity of the college community to other school communities which have completed the surveys.

The study was commissioned in 2019 with the final report being delivered in August 2019. 55.5% of the college population, excluding parents, took part in this research. The college community was commended by the researchers for this level of participation, as it provides a solid basis for assessing and enhancing the college's Catholic identity. Throughout the remainder of 2019 the findings of the report were collaboratively discussed and provided developmental focus for the future.

##### Illuminate Religious Education Project

The college joined the Illuminate Religious Education (RE) Tier 1 project of Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS) in July 2021. Informed by the ECSIP research project and its findings, as well as baseline data collected from staff on the initial pupil free day of Semester 2, 2021, the following goals were developed.

- Further development for RE teachers in
  - using high yield strategies
  - using the Worlds of the Texts strategy for teaching Scripture
  - leading religious conversations
  - sharing their own faith stories
  - knowledge and understanding of Catholic teachings
  - leading and modelling prayer with students
- Further development of all teachers in using the pedagogy of Encounter to assist in the recontextualisation of the Catholic identity of the college to a Dialogue school as identified in the ECSIP research project.

These goals have informed the regular professional development of RE teachers and all teaching staff provided by the Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE) and TCS Manager: Mission and Identity.

## Religious Education Curriculum and Planning

The current RE curriculum on offer at the college on a fortnightly timetabled rotation is

- RE curriculum Year 7-10
- Religion and Ethics and Study of Religion Year 11-12

The RE Learning Area Programs (LAPS) are recorded in the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP) effectively ensuring coverage of the year level achievement standards and content descriptors for Year 7-10 classes. This is the first year of the college utilising the DLP for planning rather than the school portal and full implementation across all Year levels and subject levels is staged over time. Unit planning in the DLP for RE is based on term units. Scope and Sequence elements including the Religious Life of the School are complete. Learning intentions and success criteria are recorded in the term unit plans on Canvas. Scriptural texts are selected as appropriate. Resources and prayers are also on Canvas.

For Religion and Ethics in Years 11 & 12, all elements of planning are complete in the DLP.

It is evident from the thoroughness of these planning processes that the TCS RE curriculum program Years 7-10 is being followed by RE teachers.

Equally, it is evident that the academic rigour expected in other subjects in the areas of planning, teaching, assessing and reporting, is expected in RE classes.

As a component of the Illuminate RE project, RE teachers have had the opportunity to refine existing RE units. The focus has been using impact cycles to refine the use of high impact strategies in the teaching of Scripture.

Planning in SOR has begun in the DLP and remains a work in progress.

## Review of motherhood documents

From the end of 2019, the college has undergone an extensive and thorough review of the existing college “Motherhood documents” including the Vision, Mission and Values statements. Initially, a consultative committee was established with volunteers from a variety of roles and areas across the college. A significant purpose of the review was to ensure alignment of these documents across the intent of the Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 and the subsequent Annual Action Plans. Wide consultation on the first draft occurred early in 2020 across the community. This included significant time devoted in the professional learning days at the start of the year to staff exploring further the findings of the ECSIP report and providing feedback on the reviewed draft documents.

The final documentation produced has been published and is available on the college website. It is also reproduced in the introduction to this report.

### Iconography and college cross

Throughout this process the understandings of the charism(s) of the college have been reviewed to include Marian spirituality as well as the Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice charisms. To find effective and contemporary ways to conceptualise, describe and enculturate this synthesis is a very difficult undertaking. A widely consultatively process of how this synthesis may be captured symbolically was led by a current curriculum leader who is also the previous APRE, over a twelve-month period. This has led to the creation and construction of an exceptionally creative and insightful recontextualised College Cross displayed at the entrance to the college.



The basic structure of the cross is reflective of the familiar Mercy cross from the Catherine McAuley charism. Overlain is the unique circular addition at the juncture of the cross linking the college cross to the Celtic cross of the Irish spirituality of Edmund Rice. At the center of the cross the central symbols of the college crest representing the college's Marian tradition are reproduced. The coloured panes inserted into the four arms of the cross are the colours of the four college houses. The red colour of Romero house in the bottom arm of the cross strengthens the symbolism of the sacrifice of Jesus for our redemption. The tapered bottom end of this pane reminds us of Jesus' feet at the bottom of the cross. The cross is spectacularly illuminated at night and very visible to passersby. There is documentation of the symbolism of this unique college cross which is used at induction of staff and students. With further exposure this icon and its underlying symbolism will be more widely understood and appreciated by the community.

There have been significant additions to the iconography displayed around the college. These include several paintings of Mary, Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice that have been created by students and a current curriculum leader who was the previous APRE at the college.



A significant addition is the completed entrance to the college, displaying links to the Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice charisms, inviting visitors and community members into the college. This is commented on very favourably by staff, students and parents alike.



*I really love the transformation at the front of the school. (Parent)*

The principal has introduced the concept of linking the charisms more widely through LENS.

**L** (Liberating – relating the Edmund Rice tradition to curriculum)

**E** (Empowering – relating the Catherine McAuley Mercy tradition to pastoral care and the college's co-curricular activities)

**N** (Nurturing – relating the Marian tradition to the college's approach to positive education) and

**S** (Success – the result of bringing the three charisms together).

LENS is symbolised through college sunglasses which have the four concepts on the wings. LENS is also being used in a marketing campaign by the college.

It is evident that all the elements of this developing iconography are contributing to the Catholic identity of the college and are much valued and appreciated. Embedding the understanding of the college charism is very challenging and is a work in progress.

### **Social Justice and Praxis**

The introduction of the Living Water Praxis program developed by TCS was investigated as an alternative for Year 11 and 12 students in meeting the requirement for all students to engage in an approved RE course. The course involves a combination of models of service, theology, Church teachings on social justice, Scripture and preparation to serve. It was decided not to implement the course at Year 11 and 12 but to introduce a Praxis task for Year 7 to 9 students at this time. This has been very successful with students participating in a range of social justice initiatives including,

- St Vincent de Paul group – Christmas Appeal
- Caritas – Just Leadership Days, Project Compassion
- Appeals – Drought, bushfires, domestic violence
- Riding for the Disabled
- Environmental group
- Sewing group
- Visitation with residents of the Churches of Christ Aged Care home

- Ponytail Project

It is evident that these opportunities are appreciated by the college community. There is a view expressed by some members of the community that more could be done in this space.

*Greater social justice opportunities for students should be provided.* (School Officer)

Year 11 students expressed support for the need to implement Praxis for Year 11&12 although several of the students interviewed have chosen Study of Religion and enjoy it as an academic course providing important skill development for their future.

## Spirituality Plan

A Spirituality Plan 2020-2022 was developed with four elements of Religious Identity and Culture, Evangelisation and Faith Formation, Prayer and Worship and Social Action and Justice. A theme was identified for the year and the links to the college charism were specified. A matrix was completed consisting of these four elements and for both staff and students. Staff have been involved in the following activities.

- Spirituality Day
- Twilight and Bishop's Inservice Day professional learning
- Prayer
- Extracurricular activities and
- Activities for RE staff

Students have been involved in the following activities.

- Assemblies
- Retreats
- Curriculum
- Liturgies and Masses
- Extracurricular activities
- Community connections

This plan has detailed the approach to and focus of the religious life of the college in some detail allowing systematic preparation and implementation of these events and programs. The plan also contains feedback from staff and students on their experience and evaluation of future development needs. This plan is uploaded to and available on the DLP.

There has been a strong focus on Liturgy and Masses to engage staff and students in leading and participating in liturgy and prayer. This is evidenced in a wide range of opportunities including

- Pastoral Care (PC) liturgies
- Staff prayer rosters
- Liturgy group
- House Masses and Year Level Masses
- Whole school masses and liturgies that sometimes happening in PCs due to COVID
- Creation of sacred spaces
- Staff designed liturgy at Spirituality Days
- Professional learning – using Catholic social teachings as a way of praying with dialogue
- Providing a combination of APRE supplied prayer and PC teacher lead prayer in PC classes

It is evident that this wide range of opportunities is valued by the community. It is apparent that some parents are unaware of the range of activity that are expressions of the Catholic identity of the college and their focus has been on the frequency of participation in Masses at St Mary's parish church. The church is too small now to accommodate the students and staff, so whole of college liturgies and



Masses are held in the college hall. This year has seen the successful introduction of Year level Masses at St Mary's church.

*The introduction of Year level masses has been good. I am looking forward to the graduation mass for all the community. More consistency can be achieved with prayer in Pastoral Care (PC). (School Officer)*

*The monthly Mass for every class has gone surprisingly well. (Parish Priest)*

The retreat program is planned for all Year levels and is facilitated by both college staff and outside presenters.

## Parish

The Principal and APRE have a very collegial relationship with the Parish Priest. There is a very positive relationship between school and parish. The Assistant Priest has taken over much of the involvement of the clergy in liturgy Masses and other college activities. He describes the college community as very open and notes that he feels very welcomed. He appreciates that he has been invited to see the college as part of the wider Church and that he has been invited to participate in camps and retreats which has been very beneficial. He also sees the PC liturgies as important and significant in the religious life of the college.

*PC liturgies are a great initiative, aligning with the themes of the term and reducing the anxiety that the students may have with being part of the Catholic community and school. (Assistant Priest)*

## Qualifications of RE teachers

There are currently eleven teachers timetabled to teach RE. Four of these are specialist and fully qualified RE teachers. The remainder have RE as their second or non-preferred teaching area. All have gained their accreditation to teach RE in catholic schools. There is a need for all teachers of RE to work towards obtaining their full qualifications to teach RE. The TCS Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP) and Cornerstones programs are a first step in gaining these qualifications. Full qualifications can be obtained by completing the Graduate Certificate of Religious Education.

## Conclusion

It is evident that there is much for the college to celebrate in developing its distinctive and authentic Catholic identity.

*ACW is a community that is authentically Catholic and the families who have been involved as part of this community for an extended period of time are really happy that their children have access to a great Catholic education. (College board chair)*

*The school is providing an excellent Catholic experience for our family. (Parents)*

The responses of Year 11 students below when asked about their experience of being a student at Assumption College, indicate the impact that the distinctively Catholic identity of the college has on their spiritual and religious development.

*It's something we have in common as a community.*

*I enjoy learning about other religions.*

*It shapes our minds about how people do things.*

*I enjoy Mass. I feel part of a family.*

*I've decided that I'm a Christian. I'm still deciding if I'm a Catholic.  
I feel I'm being invited into a religion.*

### **Improvement strategies**

- Continue to consolidate the Illuminate project and develop the capacity of RE teachers in using high impact teaching strategies which engage students more effectively in RE.
- Support Year 7-10 RE teachers in developing full use of the available capacity of the DLP in their unit planning.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the refinement of existing Year 7 -10 RE units.
- Investigate ways to ensure that the college community understands the significance and symbolism of the newly created college cross.
- Continue to build strong partnerships with St Mary's parish.
- Support and encourage teachers of RE to obtain their formal qualifications to teach RE.

## Domain 3 Staying on mission

### 3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

### 3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

### 3.3 School and community partnerships

## Findings

### Strategic Plan

Following the 2018 SRIP review the college collaboratively developed the Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022, a detailed map was developed in relation to the implementation of the strategic intents of the plan and time lined across the four years of the Strategic Plan. This plan included agreed broad strategies that would be implemented across the timeline, and the resources required, which were to be further developed in the Annual Action Plans.

Annual Action Plans were completed in 2018 for 2019 and 2019 for 2020 from this strategic plan. The 2019 Annual Action Plan was enacted, and progress evaluated to inform the next Annual Action Plan.

2020 saw a number of changes to the senior leadership of the college including a new Principal who developed a new Annual Action Plan that was not drawn from the existing strategic plan. In conjunction with the turnover of teaching staff outlined at the beginning of the report, the result was that planned projects were stalled as teachers with particular skills to lead these projects left the college. While there had been a lot of initial engagement with and movement towards achieving the strategic intents planned, the college has not been able to reach all of the targets planned and embed some projects and intents.

### Wellbeing

One of the initiatives that was strongly supported by the community in the 2018 SRI review was the “Unleashing Personal Potential” program including Grit, Growth Mindset and Wellbeing. Further development of this important and highly valued program has continued. With the volume of teaching staff turnover described elsewhere in this report, it is seen as a priority to include further development of this program in the new strategic plan.

Linked to this wellbeing theme is the belief that the pastoral care system of the college has areas of growth that have been identified. This is mostly about systems and processes. It is evident that the college remains a community of care and that this is highly appreciated and valued by the community.

*Assumption College has always been about the people and looking after the students. Liisa has brought clearer structure and vision after things had become a touch haphazard. (Teacher)*

The support provided in Pastoral Care classes is commented on favourably by many community members.

*Pastoral care classes are going well. They create a sense of family, a sense of belonging. They are the one consistent and familiar place for our students. (School Officer)*

There is a general view from staff, students and parents that the levels of respect and appropriate behaviour have lifted considerably during this year. A number of staff, students and parents acknowledge this and at the same time find it important to convey that elements of racism and gender disrespect still occur. It is apparent that the great majority of students abhor this behaviour and wish to see it eliminated from the life of the college. The college leadership team is aware of the issue and continues to address it.

## Data usage

Teachers use a variety of sources of data. They vary in the ways they use these data sources, some using them more than others, and differing in which sources they use. A number of teachers say they would welcome professional learning sessions on ways to maximise the use of individual and group student data in their classroom teaching strategies. A coherent school-wide approach to collecting and analysing student achievement data is in its early stages of planning, yet to be embedded in the professional life of the college.

## Relationships

It is clear that relationships between staff and parents are respectful and open, and teachers say they use information from parents as an important source of data to guide their classroom strategies. Parents affirm this, saying that the teachers at Assumption College are always welcoming and open to being approached about their students' progress.

Strong respectful and trusting relationships between students and teachers are also evident, and teachers use their observation skills and discretionary judgement to adjust their strategies with individuals and groups of students. Students say that teachers try to respond to the individual learning needs of the students.

As described in Domain 2: Being distinctively Catholic above, very strong relationships are fostered between the college and St Mary's parish. Through the social justice initiatives of the college, as well as its RE programs, students are encouraged to develop a wider view of service to the community. This extends to our obligations for the care of the planet and all people from a wider theological global view.

The college has built very strong relationships with St Mary's parish as described elsewhere in the report. Over time it has also developed partnerships with employers and training companies to provide opportunities for students to engage in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

A significant initiative in building partnerships is the formation this year of the Alumni Committee. Historical data of past enrolments has not been available and one of the aims is to build the data base over time so that past students can remain connected to the college. This will provide important opportunities to build new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships in the wider Warwick community and beyond.

Another significant initiative this year has been the formation of the First Nations Committee. This group consists of the Principals of Assumption College and St Mary's Primary School, the director of the St Mary's Kindergarten, representatives of the three communities and local elders. The main purpose of this committee is to support these communities in raising cultural awareness. In conjunction with the formation of this committee has been the appointment of a First Nations Officer who works part time at both Assumption College and St Mary's Primary School. Additionally, existing links with the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) have been strengthened by additional connections to support the work of this committee and the First Nations Officer.

*There has been a great increase in the cultural / indigenous opportunities for students. The introduction and engagement with Evonne O'Neil (UniSQ) has been a great initiative. Staff have benefited greatly from this, and staff are now more comfortable in engaging with cultural questions. (First Nations Officer)*

Other important connections to UniSQ include Agricultural Science and post-schooling pathways. Significant partnerships exist with Warwick Technical and Further Education (TAFE), Warwick Chamber of Commerce and other businesses within the college's local context.

## Communication

It is evident that this year has seen a significant improvement in the timeliness, clarity and quality of communication across the college community. Many community members commented on this improvement. There is now much better clarity about the responsibilities and duties of various roles in the college. While this is a work in progress, significant progress has been made. One of the impacts of this role clarity is that community members know better where to go to access particular information, report concerns or issues and seek appropriate support. These are important elements of effective communication in any organisation.

*Communication has improved. The newsletter is great, and I especially like the careers newsletter. (Parent)*

A few staff who express the view that there were occasionally small gaps in the communication system. Some of these concerns relate to staff not accessing the information that has been disseminated using a particular platform, such as email.

## Improvement strategies

- Review and refine the pastoral and wellbeing program in the college.
- Continue to build an inclusive college culture valuing and celebrating diversity.
- Develop a collaborative college-wide approach to the collection and analysis of student achievement data by teachers, with a view to its application in classroom teaching strategies for individual students and groups of students.
- Continue to build effective communication methodologies with community members using the platforms that are available.
- Continue to develop stakeholder relationships and partnerships to strengthen and connect all members of community.

## Domain 4 Collective efficacy

### 4.1 Goal consensus

### 4.2 Empowerment

### 4.3 Supportive leadership

### 4.4 Cohesive staff knowledge

### 4.5 Embedded practices

## Findings

The four-year journey of progressive and incremental renewal and improvement at Assumption College has been greatly impacted by not only COVID 19, but also having three Principals in four years and a large turnover of staff. It is noted that while there are college improvement goals outlined in the current strategic plan and that these goals were collaboratively developed, established, and understood by all staff, these goals have not been a focus point over the last few years.

It is evident that the Assumption College community is committed to innovating and sustaining practices that draw upon collective efficacy so as to make an educational difference to their students over and above the influence of their homes and communities. Parents and staff support the change agenda and the way it's being led. One parent used the term 'authentic' to describe the consultation: being listened to and being confident it was genuine consultation, not just going through the motions and of a pre-ordained result. Some parents and staff referred to a 'strong leadership team'. When asked what that meant they used words like proactive, respectful, inclusive, 'a sense of purpose', 'vision' and 'They have a clear idea of where we're going'.

*A lot of things were, and have been started, but nothing has been followed through and embedded due to changes in focus and staff turnover. It will be great to get back to having a clear direction that we are all aware of and can begin to engage with over the next twelve months. (Teacher).*

*Leadership has a clear direction and has the best interest of the students at heart and are looking to be progressive. (Parent)*

The college has a Teacher Professional Learning Plan process in place utilising the understanding of the impact coaching cycle. All teaching staff engage in an interview and discussions on goal setting and the relative merit of teaching practices with a designated facilitator and then complete a presentation at the end of the year to celebrate the success of teaching staff with their peers. Staff and the Leadership Team identify that the process of the implementation of the professional learning plan has been an evolving journey.

*Staff professional learning opportunities are well supported by administration. (Teacher)*

Procedures and meeting structures that are in place to enable teachers to engage in collegial professional dialogue, share skills and expertise including the professional learning teams, mentor programs, Essential Skills of Classroom Management (ESCM) profiling and curriculum planning days for departments. During these times teachers have the opportunity to examine the extent to which teaching practices support the learning of all students using multiple sources of evidence. In addition, students feel very supported through their participation in academic tracking interviews, Senior Education and Training (SET) plan meetings, goal setting meetings, flexible pathway meetings, behavioural and wellbeing tracking meetings and student support committee meetings.

*There is always someone here to listen. (Student)*

Across the college it is recognised that there are many authentic leadership opportunities and avenues for staff to have a voice in matters related to college improvement and staff members' ideas and expertise are valued. These opportunities are supported by not only the college leadership but also investment in resources to support the improvement initiatives. Examples of this investment include pastoral professional development programs like Berry Street, Positive Education, ECSM professional learning and Mental Health First Aid Training.

*There is autonomy to grow and you get to have a voice. (Teacher)*

*School leaders have been empowered by Liisa to meet and discuss issues. Liisa's strength is growing staff and bringing staff onboard. (Teacher)*

There is evidence that the college leadership team have this year adopted practices of establishing high expectations and empowering the students and staff to get onboard ensuring a higher level of accountability, whilst maintaining the dignity of the person.

*Liisa has recognised the things that needed changing immediately and put in place expectations and procedures to fix these things. Examples of this include raising the standards of the presentation of the students, addressing the student's poor behaviour and providing consistent reminders to the students of the expectations on assemblies. This has had an immediate impact upon the school community. (Teacher Aide)*

Furthermore, the college leadership team is working hard to support and promote strategies that enhance the professional wellbeing of staff. These include regularly acknowledging the accomplishments and celebrating the success of individuals and teams within the college through newsletters, morning briefings, assemblies and TCS Excellence Awards, provision of Kate Hitzke professional learning sessions for Executive Leadership Team and Middle Leadership, TCSO workshops for staff, succession planning for aspiring leaders, Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT) and Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) teacher processes, proficient to graduate teacher processes and CatholicCare counselling for staff. It is important to note that a number of staff highlighted that a consistent focus on staff wellbeing is vitally important so as to enable the staff to continue to support the students with not only their wellbeing but also their learning.

*I feel valued by the leadership team, teachers, students, grounds people, admin staff – people here appreciate the contribution others make. (Teacher aide)*

## Improvement strategies

- It is recommended that the ACW leadership team work to ensure that the school improvement goals that will form the foundation of the next strategic plan are collaboratively developed, established and understood by all staff.
- Review and refine the Professional Learning Community processes and procedures to enhance the development of staff while creating and sustaining communities of practice to facilitate collective efficacy.
- Continue to empower all stakeholders in the students' educational journey.
- Continue to build a collective knowledge base that utilises college processes and procedures to understand students' dispositions and cultural backgrounds to ensure growth and success.

## Domain 5 Using resources wisely

### 5.1 Human resources

### 5.2 Physical resources

### 5.3 Financial resources

## Findings

In light of the rapidly rising positive reputation of the college within the wider Warwick community, enrolment applications and enquiries have risen significantly. This has prompted the Principal and Business Manager to work with the Parents and Friends Association (P and F) and the School Board to plan thoroughly for the expansion of facilities and human resource going forward. This involves

- Within the next 12 months, preparatory planning with a community member to lease or purchase a parcel of their land will result in the creation of an agricultural facility to cater to the needs of the students studying Certificate II Rural Operations - senior Agricultural Science and junior Agricultural Science. This facility will also house a running track to be used for athletics carnivals and physical education classes and cultural activities
- Within the next 12 months, a two storey building housing a new learning resource centre on the bottom floor, 4 general learning areas (GLAs) and a Year 7 amenities facility will be erected along with a covered walkway adjoining the adjacent building and undercover spaces for students. These two projects will be college funded through savings to date and loan
- By the end of October 2022, a 16 seater bus will be purchased by support from the P and F. A 39 seater bus will be purchased by the end of December 2022 utilising college funds.
- Planning will continue in 2023, supported by further enrolment growth, for a renovation of the existing administration building to become a 2 storey facility to allow for very much needed work and storage space and for the accommodation of more support staff
- Equally, in 2023 and on and as enrolment growth continues, the Principal and Business Manager will apply to the Building Grant Authority (BGA), as well as self-fund, a top floor to the existing building which will house further classrooms and a full staffroom for teachers with a lunchroom and amenities upstairs.

The high standard of presentation of the college is a source of great pride in the community. The high standards of maintenance of both new and existing facilities, the recent facilities additions, the beautification of the grounds including the oval and the standards of cleaning all receive commendation. This has been the result of careful master planning over many years. There is a real sense of ownership of and care for the college resources and excitement about the next stages of implementation of the master plan. This has also been noted positively in the wider community.

The college is in a very sound financial position with the communication and planning processes of the college contributing to this achievement. The Principal and Business Manager meet every week; the Business Manager has a line structure of meetings either weekly or fortnightly with the majority of Support staff as does the Assistant to the Principal with other Support staff. The Finance and Marketing staff see opportunities to link with their colleagues from other schools in the future.

While some transience of staff is evident, the college is in a stable position with specialised teachers. Staff express that, one of the main contributing factors to this stability, is the support from the principal to ensure a safe and respectful environment and quality teaching and learning.

Finance and Enrolment and Marketing staff expressed a desire to investigate further the product Digistorm with staff at other colleges, with a view to utilising the product's full capacity thereby streamlining further the enrolments process. Finance staff are looking for increased drill down functionality in some of the Power Business Intelligence reports. They also expressed some frustration with their inability to access some of the reports available in Dynamics.



The second Encyclical of Pope Francis published in May 2015 is entitled “Laudato si” which translated from Latin is “Praise be to you” from the first line of the Canticle of St Francis Assisi. The Encyclical has as a subtitle “On care for our common home”. Its central concept is the paradigm “Integral Ecology” which is based on the relationships between living organisms and all aspects of the environment in which they develop. The college aims to develop its environment in this spirit so that all of those in the college community can learn, teach, share and reflect, for the common good of all.

## Improvement strategies

- Continue to refine the provision and use of human resources time to ensure the flexibility required to enable the College to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.
- Continue to liaise with wider community and P and F to progress plans for facilities enhancements.
- Explore the potential for the formation of a professional network enabling the Enrolments and Marketing staff to link with other schools.
- Investigate the capability and usage of the product Digistorm with staff at other colleges.
- Continue to enhance resources with the view to research and design of contemporary physical resources to meet the needs of the growing community in ways that are aligned to the values the college has espoused from “Laudato si”.

## Conclusion

The review team expresses appreciation for the open and honest way in which community members contributed to the review. This has ensured confidence that the review team has heard the story of the college to reflect to the college community in the findings of this report.

The disruptions of COVID, changes to leadership and turnover of staffing are challenges that the college has worked through very professionally with the leadership team and support from the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office. Much of the strategic plan has been achieved and all in the community have worked hard to achieve this. The result is that the college is now in a very good position to move forward in completing the next strategic plan and focussing attention and resourcing.

The culture of care that has been a hallmark of Assumption College over many years, remains firmly embedded and nourished. This extends to both students and staff. One of the expressions of this culture is the respect shown between members of the community and a disposition of gratitude in the students that is not to be taken lightly. It is not always the case in schools. Students often say thank you to teachers and support staff for their service and see it as their responsibility to do so.

There is no doubt that Assumption College Warwick is a distinctively Catholic college which has very strong partnerships with St Mary’s Parish and the wider community. The college continues to work towards a recontextualised understanding of its charisms and tradition so as to engage the community in its Catholic tradition.

Many in the community see a history over time of continued growth in the college. The review team has confidence that the leadership team will lead the college through the next school renewal and improvement cycle to continue this history of continual growth.