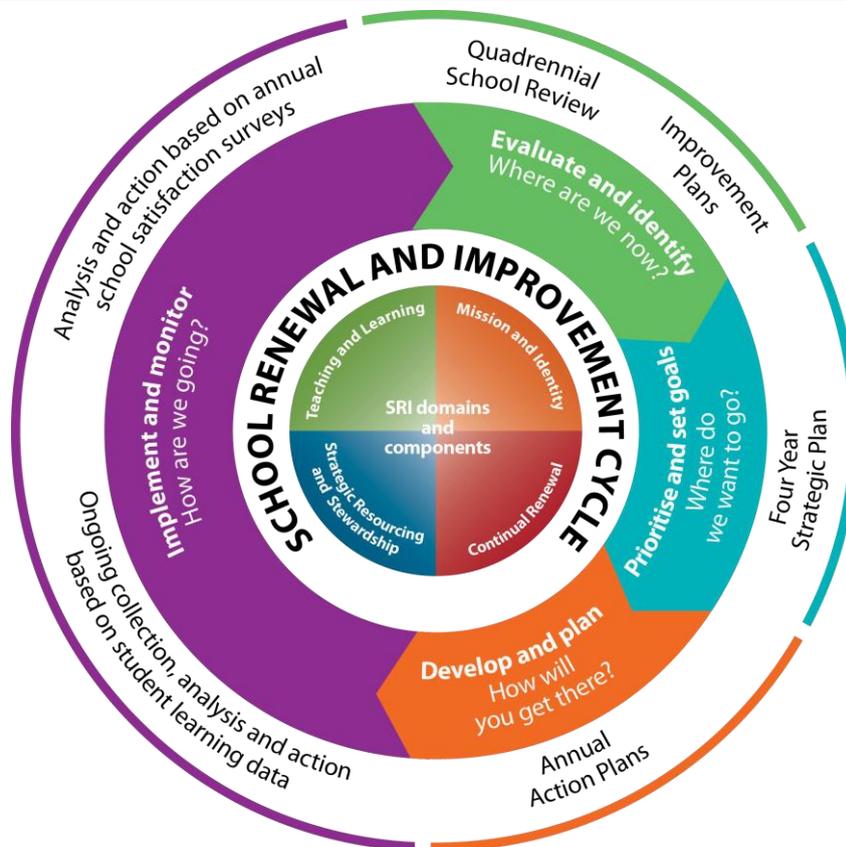




**Diocese of Toowoomba  
Catholic Schools**

# St Joseph's School Millmerran

## TCS Quadrennial school review Full report





## **Foreword**

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

Roland Barth, Harvard Graduate School of Education

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

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

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

## Methodology

The review was conducted from 27-29 April 2021.

## Reviewers

Mr Paul Murphy	Senior Education Leader, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office (Chair)
Mr Jim Midgley	Director: Teaching & Learning, Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office
Ms Casey Robinson	Principal, St Maria Goretti School, Inglewood

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

- The Principal
- Father Thomas Areekuzhy, Priest Director St Francis de Sales' Parish
- Teaching staff (6)
- School Counsellor
- School Officers including Administration and Teacher Aides (6)
- Parents including Parent Partnership Forum representatives (18)
- Students years Prep to 6 (All)

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

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



### Domain 1 Teaching and learning

Component 1.1 Students and their learning

Component 1.2 Curriculum structure and provision

Component 1.3 Pastoral care and student wellbeing



### Domain 2 Mission and identity

Component 2.1 Religion curriculum

Component 2.2 Religious life of the school



### Domain 3 Continual renewal

Component 3.1 School improvement culture

Component 3.2 Community partnerships



### Domain 4 Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1 Staff development and wellbeing

Component 4.2 Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

## Prologue

The purposes of the Toowoomba Catholic Schools quadrennial school review are

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

The community of St Joseph's leaves the review team in no doubt that the school places meeting the needs of all students at the core of its business. Parents speak of a 'one to one' and an 'individualised' teaching approach they experience in the relationship between themselves, their child and their child's teacher.

This inclusive, supportive and welcoming learning community has much to be celebrated. The challenge St Joseph's sees for itself is to identify a 'point of difference' or 'innovative educational practice' to continue to support students for their future, as well as elevating the profile and recognition of St Joseph's as a viable and contemporary school.



### Domain 1 Teaching and learning

#### Component 1.1 Students and their learning

##### Findings

The review team can confidently say that the St Joseph's Millmerran community absolutely delights in this school. Staff, parents and students are very proud and very engaged in the life of the school.

Many stakeholders comment on the obvious focus on the quality of teaching and learning under the current leadership.

*This is a great place to work. We are a collaborative team and we are achieving great things together. (Teacher)*

*My child is very happy here. She can't wait to come to school every day. The smaller classes appeal to me and my daughter seems to get a lot of one-on-one time. She loves learning. What more could you ask for? (Parent)*

Learning support plays an integral role in the planning, teaching and learning cycle at St Joseph's. Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) numbers sit at 30% of enrolment numbers (top 3 levels). Educational Assistance Program (EAP) numbers are 14% of total enrolments. This sits at almost 3 times diocesan levels and gives some explanation to the slightly high numbers for the NCCD. Despite these figures, there appears to be little negative impact on classroom behaviours and expectations.

*We have no behaviour issues here. None at all. With no behaviour distractions you can focus on teaching all of the time. (Teacher)*

The review team observed this to be a strong professional learning community. Students are very engaged in learning and talk confidently of goals and learning achievements.

*This is at the heart of what we do. We take pride in knowing our students, their needs, and using this to drive planning, teaching and learning. (Teacher)*

Reading data is strong with most year levels at or above the system benchmarks and standards in Probe and PM, 2020.

Diocesan Wide PM and PROBE Data  
 ■ At or above standard (90% or more)  
 ■ 80% - 89%  
 ■ Below 50%

School	2017						2018						2019						2020									
	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	P	1	2	3	4	5	6
Millmerran	88	83	100	67	75	43	64	67	56	57	100	73	71	33	89	75	67	100	100	86	100	67	88	50	83	100	100	82

*We know our students very well. No one slips through the cracks.* (School Officer)

*There is a focus on teaching and learning. This year especially there have been no distractions. Our teaching and learning agenda is very visible. I know how every student in this school is progressing, what their needs are. You don't get that in bigger schools.* (Teacher)

In the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the school 'punches above its weight'. Mean scale scores (MSS) are above state and national means in many areas with all students above national benchmarks.

### National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results

Year 3 test results				
Focus	Our school average	State average	National average	Percentage of students at or above the national benchmark
Reading	414.1	425.20	432.3	100%
Writing	445.3	412.2	423.1	100%
Spelling	464.4	410	418.7	100%
Grammar and Punctuation	425.5	430.5	439.8	100%
Numeracy	429.3	397.4	408.1	100%

Year 5 test results				
Focus	Our school average	State average	National average	Percentage of students at or above the national benchmark
Reading	585.4	501.7	506.0	100%
Writing	454.6	463.3	473.9	100%
Spelling	480.8	494.2	500.7	100%
Grammar and Punctuation	465.3	495.7	499.1	96.9%
Numeracy	478.2	490.9	495.8	100%

The review team heard that the Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS) Inspire Mathematics project has made a positive start. The new maths data wall, under construction, will make progress visible with short term learning cycle planning driving the curriculum. Twice a term staff meeting time is devoted to analysing student data and for planning student learning. Embedding number talks and exploring mathematical mindsets in classrooms have been effective starting points.

Future topics in Inspire Maths include developing learning dispositions for St Joseph's students that can then be applied to mathematical mindsets, as well as other areas. Investigating mathematical misconceptions within class cohorts is also on the agenda for 2021.

Parents report that the Reading Improvement Strategy (RIS) has had a positive impact on student achievement. The capacity of teachers in the teaching of reading has really grown.

*The Reading Improvement Strategy has been amazing. My son is progressing in leaps and bounds with his reading. He really benefits from the consistency in approach from year to year. (Parent)*

Long serving teachers and early career teachers believe they have built their capacity and confidence in the teaching of reading.

A highlight of the School Renewal and Improvement Process (SRIP) has been positive comments from all stakeholders around the standard of learning support for students with a variety of learning needs. Parents of NCCD and EAP students are very satisfied with the support their children are given and their level of engagement with the process.

Student Support Committee meetings are held fortnightly, with each teacher given one hour release to attend. These have been highly successful and are tracked in the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP) notes, which reduces evidence gathering and accountability requirements for the NCCD.

There is scheduled meeting time each week between classroom teachers and school officers. This initiative has been instigated by feedback from school officers at the 2020 listening forum with the Executive Director.

Planning for Personalised Learning (PfPL) has been a topic for professional learning. Teachers are recording these in the PfPL overview grid, and the leadership team report that progress is being made in this area. They indicate that recording of daily adjustments within the DLP Sequence of Learning requires further development.

### **Explicit improvement agenda**

2021 Professional learning topics include: Unpacking and understanding the Assessment, Feedback and Reporting Framework; the Online Assessment and Reporting System (OARS) Portal/Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER); analysis of the PAT reading data; Inspire Mathematics; Learning Intentions & Success Criteria, and the Reading Improvement Strategy data on student progress.

With Inspire Mathematics as the tier one improvement project selected by the school, the Annual Action Plan (AAP) for 2021 has maths as the priority with these key strategic intents in teaching and learning.

- A mathematical mindset culture will be evident in every classroom for all learners.
- Teachers will have clarity of Australian Curriculum Mathematics and how this might look in practice with their learners.
- The learning of mathematics will bring to fruition the aims and rationale of Australian Curriculum Mathematics.
- Students will make a year's progress in mathematical understanding determined through PAT M.
- Continue to integrate high impact strategies and learner-centered approaches in every classroom in all curriculum areas.

### **Analysis and discussion of data**

The school has certainly put 'faces on the data'. All teachers know every child and can speak confidently about student progress and learning needs, regardless of the class cohort they come from. It is clear that the staff in this school are building the bridge between data collection and how to use it to improve teaching and learning. Teachers use a common language for sharing data around student progress. Students are benefitting from the personalising of data – putting faces on

the data – with obvious benefits around increased student engagement and a positive impact on school culture.

The analysis of data appears to be the job of all teachers and occurs regularly and collaboratively. Reading Improvement Strategy data is reviewed each term in review and response meetings, after Week 6 RIS data collection. In these meetings student growth, achievement levels and a review of current interventions occurs. These meetings often result in a revised strategy for the next learning cycles.

An example of a review and response meeting was the 2021 inquiry question, 'Why are our PROBE/PM data not 100% reflected in PAT R data?' With assistance from the diocesan RIS consultants, the teachers were able to identify concepts and skills that would be the next focus in the learning cycle. For example, it was discovered that the early years needed more strategies for retrieving directly stated information in texts (right there in the text), while interpreting by making inferences (author and me and me on my own) strategies, was a necessary focus in Year 6.

## Learning Culture

Students speak of flexible grouping based on interests and abilities in maths and reading. They describe these groupings as based on needs, 'where we are at' and 'what we need next'.

There is obvious collective teacher efficacy in this school. While nurturing collective teacher efficacy is not an overt strategy, the Principal has strong interpersonal skills and he firmly believes he can arrive at the best decision by consulting and collaborating with the group. This is proving to be effective leadership, and something that has set the tone contributing to the positive culture of the school.

An invigorated staff culture in 2021 and a renewed willingness to collaborate to produce the best results for the students has resulted in an excellent start to the year. The community speaks of a more united staff with a clear focus on collaboration.

*Staff are learning from each other and for each other. Our work is about students and their progress and how we work together to accomplish this. (Teacher)*

Many parents speak very highly of the support given to students with special needs. The review team found that there are clearly identified and well-functioning learning structures of

- identification
- planning
- intervention
- monitoring
- resourcing.

School publications exist to assist clarity for each of these processes. The Principal and learning support teacher (LST) communicate regularly regarding the most effective processes to support St Joseph's Millmerran students. The Principal and LST met with the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Learning Support Advisor at the end of 2020 regarding the growth areas for each of these structures. The Principal and Middle Leader support the learning support processes through the Middle Leader's work. Parents are effusive in their praise for the learning support structures and the benefits for their children.

*I love the instant feedback I receive from my son's teacher. My son knows I will know very quickly what has happened at school that day. It feels like we have a partnership. (Parent)*

*My daughter has many special needs. The classroom teacher is really focused on what my daughter needs. I get regular updates on curriculum goals being achieved and know what the next focus is. It feels like we are working together. (Parent)*

*The liaison between the school, the Toowoomba Schools Office and my child's specialist external support, is nothing short of exceptional. (Parent)*

Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office (TCSO) support personnel advise the learning support teacher who makes contact with TCSO occupational therapists (OT) regularly to clarify student needs, and request support to source ideas and resources when students' and class teachers' needs are identified. Recommendations are implemented and documented in the Diocesan Learning Profile promptly.

Families report that communication is prompt when it is identified that OT support is required. The learning support teacher makes contact with the Speech and Language Advisor regularly and requests appropriate support. The learning support teacher also attends meetings and can support classroom teachers with ideas and recommended resources. Recommendations are implemented and documented on the DLP. Referral forms are completed promptly with family communication also completed promptly. The Speech and Language Advisor is always welcomed by the learning support teacher, Principal and classroom teachers. The Principal and LST help to facilitate classroom teacher meetings. The Speech and Language Advisor is invited to Prep transition day.

*The level of support our early career teachers receive from TCS is exemplary. (Parent)*

Office support staff indicate that there is a sense of community and welcoming when entering the school. The Principal makes it a priority to welcome TCS staff. Students are treated with respect and there is evidence of students feeling valued and respected. The Principal makes contact to include TCSO specialist support staff (Speech Language Pathologists, OT's) in Prep transition activities. Student meetings are multi-disciplinary and student/parent focused.

Recent audiology testing was welcomed, and all staff made visiting staff feel welcome.

The learning support teacher works very hard to ensure that recommendations, consultation and collaboration are ongoing, prompt and accurate. Hearing Health Resources are used and displayed, and the school puts these resources into newsletter articles and photos for audiology. A recent audit was conducted resulting in quotes being requested for new systems, batteries and other items. The learning support teacher makes contact with the Education Officer (EO) English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) regularly to clarify student needs & request support to source ideas & resources when student and class needs are identified. Recommendations are implemented and documented on the Diocesan Learning Profile promptly.

### **Improvement strategies**

- Continue to develop school learning dispositions that clearly describe what a learner at St Joseph's looks like and behaves like.
- Continue to ensure that the agreed practice around the teaching of reading is well embedded in all classes, and that new teachers are inducted thoroughly into these expectations.
- Produce a term document that collates and outlines target areas for each class in intervention, outlining who is being supported, why and how.
- Continue regular consultation and collaboration with the School Inclusion Coach.
- Provide teachers with clarity regarding Planning for Personalised Learning in each of the listed areas (process, product, environment, and content).
- Refine the math learning data wall to ensure Annual Action Plan strategies are monitored in an action research cycle.
- Continue to nurture a student-centred focus as the reason for being here - a place of learning for children, not just a place of work for adults.
- Continue to nurture collective teacher efficacy to reap the rewards it brings to students' development and academic performance.

## Component 1.2 Curriculum structure and provision

### Findings

St Joseph's has clear expectations for planning preparation and curriculum delivery. In 2021 there has been a shift towards short cycle planning, particularly in mathematics. The teachers have made use of system English units in the early years.

Regular discussions occur in student support committee planning meetings (SSCM). Regular communication with parents on student learning, particularly students with additional needs, occurs regularly as a part of these meetings.

Despite staff turnover, it is clear that the Reading Improvement Strategy is embedded, and it is apparent that this is due to the clarity of expectations and the documentation to support this.

Clear expectations for teacher planning are in place, with teacher planning checklists and evidence. Reading improvement Strategy assessment requirements are clearly outlined as well as reporting guidelines.

### Systematic Curriculum Delivery

It was apparent to the review team that the teachers at St Joseph's know the students, know the curriculum, and how to teach it. The review team noticed a dissonance between what is clearly expected in planning and what is recorded in the Diocesan Learning Profile (DLP). The DLP is the diocesan mandated tool for planning assessment and reporting. The general observation of the review team and office support in the DLP tool is that the obvious thoroughness of planning and assessment practices occurring in the school are not reflected as efficiently in the DLP.

The review team acknowledges that the school is dealing with the reality that multi-age classes present obvious complications for long term planning. Teachers must ensure that the relevant curriculum is covered during a child's two year period in a multi-age classroom. The community acknowledges that recording of what is covered from the curriculum and when it is taught in a multi-age cycle is complex. They have found that the Learning Area Profile (scope and sequence and unit content aligned to the achievement standards) – what is covered in the two years of a multi-age class – is difficult to record in the DLP, with the focus on short cycle planning.

Intentional planning is evident for all classes. Unit learning intentions and success criteria are recorded for many units from Prep to Year 3. There is mixed evidence of learning intentions and success criteria at the lesson planning level. While units and lessons include learning intentions and success criteria, as yet there is little evidence of assessment of learning formally or informally against these learning intentions and success criteria.

Personalised Learning information for 2021 is evident at the 'master class grid' level for students across all classes. Meetings between teachers and the learning support teacher cover appropriate adjustments. The ongoing development of planning decisions being informed by learning evidence continues. It is evident that differentiation of the curriculum occurs in classroom practice. This is yet to be reflected in the DLP unit planning.

Some teachers and parents comment on the current structures for release for teacher planning and preparation time. Currently science is one of the Key Learning Areas covered by the Principal during this time, and with the Principal's necessary absences during the term, they express concern that science has the potential to fall behind.

Students and teachers report shortcomings with the information and communication technology (ICT) hardware, and refer to frequent usage difficulties. There is concern that this may be impacting on the level of engagement with the ICT capabilities in the Australian Curriculum.

## Improvement strategies

- Seek assistance with the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office Education Officers in aligning excellent planning practice with DLP capabilities in multi-age classroom settings.
- Continue to build capacity in taking master class grid differentiation of teaching strategies into unit planning, so that adjustments (students' access to the curriculum) are a reasonable and achievable reality in the classroom setting.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate in finding ways to ensure science is given the appropriate attention if it is to be seen as a specialist subject developed during teacher release time.
- Complete the Technology and eLearning Plan to ensure the hardware and pedagogical approaches enable students to meet the ICT general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum.

## Component 1.3 Pastoral care and student wellbeing

### Findings

#### Student social and emotional wellbeing

*If something is wrong, the teachers notice. You can rely on them. They give you strategies to help. (Year 5 student)*

*St Joseph's is a small school with a lovely environment. The caring staff members really helped with my Preppie's transition to 'big' school'. (Parent)*

St Joseph's promotes a welcoming and nurturing environment that staff, parents, and students consistently report as highly valued.

Many members of the school community affirm that bullying is not an issue at St Joseph's, that the students feel the environment is safe and that 'what they say matters.' Many parents indicate that they are unfamiliar with protocols and expectations outlined in the Behaviour Management Procedure. Staff and parents suggest that despite the lack of behavior issues, there is a need for staff, students and parents to be more familiar with the procedures should incidents arise.

The school celebrates student achievement and communicates this through the school newsletter, Facebook page and at assemblies. Many members of the school community comment on the positive way that students at St Joseph's are acknowledged 'out loud' for their achievements.

The wellbeing of students is well considered, and the School Guidance Counsellor is a valued staff member of the school. Students and staff comment on the effectiveness of her small group sessions in improving resilience, teaching social skills and helping students to manage relationships.

Many parents speak about how the students at St Joseph's support each other and genuinely care for their peers.

#### Wellbeing relationships

*I have a strong partnership with the school. They know my child; they know my child's needs and they keep me informed. (Parent)*

*The school brings the families together to get to know each other. I really appreciate that chance to build relationships with the staff and other parents. (Parent)*

Parents consistently comment that the teachers at St Joseph's 'know their children as individuals' and that the school is 'family-orientated'. High quality relationships are evident throughout the school community, particularly in the way the students who participated in interviews speak of their love for their school and their teachers.

The Parent Partnership Forum (PPF) is a very supportive and active organisation. Meetings are well attended, and parents feel that they are kept well informed and have valuable input in many school-related matters.

*There are no secrets. The Principal is very transparent during the PPF meetings. (Parent)*

### **Effectiveness of systems and structures**

*The Zones of Regulation process is consistent across the school to help students manage their feelings and emotions. (Teacher)*

All teachers have completed the Essential Skills for Classroom Management (ESCM) training and there are behaviour expectations in each classroom. The leadership team and members of staff indicate that work needs to be done to ensure that ESCM is a school-wide approach with consistent positive and negative consequences.

Staff indicate there is a strong practice of collaboration among teachers and school officers across year levels, and consistency in teaching and learning across classes with the implementation of programs such as the Zones of Regulation.

The leadership team present the following as current initiatives and priorities for St Joseph's in relation to the pastoral care and wellbeing of students

- 'Go Zen' program with the School Guidance Counsellor
- Circle time in all classrooms
- Socially Speaking board game with the learning support teacher
- Lego challenge, buddy reading and end of term celebrations.

### **Improvement strategies**

- Provide greater clarity, share understandings, and disseminate information to ensure all staff, students and parents have a common understanding of the school's Behaviour Management Procedure.
- Revisit Essential Skills for Classroom Management with all staff to ensure there is consistency of implementation including in positive and negative consequences across the whole school.



## **Domain 2 Mission and identity**

### **Component 2.1 Religion curriculum**

#### **Findings**

The Religious Education (RE) curriculum is available within the Diocesan Learning Profile and includes the RE units for each year level, scope and sequence documentation and connections to mandated scripture and prayer. Teacher planning clearly shows that RE is taught across the week for 2.5 hours in each class. Each term the Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE) shares RE units with the classroom teachers. The APRE suggests that it is necessary to spend more time with the classroom teachers to encourage new expectations around high impact strategies to be enacted.

It was pointed out to the review team that the school's Religious Education Business Intelligence (BI) data shows some disparities around the spread of A to E results for religion when compared to other learning areas, suggesting that assessment in RE may require more rigour.

The importance and relevance of St Joseph's charism and traditions are clear, and parents comment on the way that the teaching of religion is connected to the life of the school and made relevant to the contemporary world. 2019 community surveys (RADII) indicate students who participated in the survey enjoy religion lessons, and going to church. Many students interviewed speak highly of their community service programs.

There is evidence that St Joseph's ensures staff have opportunity for formation through professional development workshops. The Bishop's Inservice Day 2020 allowed the staff to gather locally to discuss Catholic identity, and this was positively received by staff.

### Improvement strategies

- Ensure that teachers are collaboratively involved in all aspects of planning the RE units, and in resource development for the program.
- Revisit the Toowoomba Catholic Schools' Assessment Feedback and Reporting Framework to enable conversation around rigorous assessment procedures in RE in all year levels.

## Component 2.2 Religious life of the school

### Findings

St Joseph's School Millmerran is a Catholic co-educational primary school founded by the Sisters of St Joseph.

The religious life of St Joseph's is visible throughout the school, and discussed comfortably by the students, staff and parents who were interviewed. When available, the Priest Director is a welcome presence in the school and expresses his strong affirmation for how the school operates. The APRE works closely with the Priest to develop a positive parish and school relationship.

*We have worked hard developing a positive connection with the parish and parish members love to attend our school masses. (Teacher)*

*There is a strong sense of community at this school. Teachers know all the students by name, and they model values such as empathy to the students. (Parent)*

Acknowledging and celebrating the importance and relevance of the school's Josephite charism is a current priority. Students, staff, and parents speak positively about the monthly awards that focus on the values of Mary MacKillop. The leadership team identifies the need for the school vision and mission statements to be more familiar to staff.

### Evangelisation and formation

The Diocesan Learning Profile School Learning Framework (SLF) gives detail of specific aspects of the religious life of the School. At St Joseph's there is a strong commitment to an inclusive Catholic community, acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of students. Staff, parents and students speak positively of the way the school has developed a culture where each person is cared for and known.

All teachers at St Joseph's are accredited to teach Religious Education. This has been achieved through professional development provided by both the school and the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office, including the Mary MacKillop staff retreat, the Josephite charism day, and the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP). Staff express appreciation for the support, which is reflected in the high ratings given to this in the school satisfaction surveys (RADII) over the last four years. The APRE regularly consults with the Toowoomba Catholic Schools' Formation & Identity team for clarification and support when needed.

Prayer tables containing religious symbolism are included in each classroom with colours matching the liturgical seasons. These symbols are also displayed in the school office. Iconography promoting the Josephite tradition is less evident around the school and the leadership team identify this as an area for attention.

## Prayer and worship

*I like being a part of liturgies because I get to connect with God. (Year 2 Student)*

*My child really wants me to come to the school liturgies which means that they obviously enjoy being a part of it. (Parent)*

Opportunities for staff, students, and parents to participate in prayer and worship are presented regularly at St Joseph's. Students comment on the regular presence of prayer in their classrooms.

With support from the APRE, each class is assigned masses and liturgies to lead, and parents are invited to these celebrations. The staff comment on the school liturgies being relevant and authentic and the students comment on how they enjoy being an active part of the liturgies.

## Social action and justice

*I have been excited since Prep to be a part of the Minnie Vinnies. I want to help people. (Year 6 student)*

The Minnie Vinnies social action and justice program is successfully implemented at St Joseph's and Catholic social teachings are evident in the planning of RE. The students value the opportunity to make a difference and to raise awareness through fundraising opportunities and campaigns to raise community awareness on local and global issues. Some parents comment favorably on their children's involvement with the Minnie Vinnies program.

## Improvement strategies

- Renew the school's vision and mission and consider linking with the emerging St Joseph's learning dispositions and the Josephite charism.
- Continue to support the religious life of the school in its breadth and depth as commended above, especially in the Minnie Vinnies program.
- Explore opportunities to obtain contemporary Josephite iconography.



## Domain 3 Continual renewal

### Component 3.1 School improvement culture

#### Findings

##### School culture

Although the term collective teacher efficacy was not overtly used by the school staff during interviews, it is clear that collective teacher efficacy is core to the way of working for this staff.

Staff are clearly motivated to ensure all students reach their full potential and fortnightly student support committee meetings are held to analyse current student data and to develop short term learning goals for students.

Through involvement in the Inspire Math project the school will join the Small Schools Collaborative to allow professional sharing and engagement for the teachers with other TCS teachers working in multi-age contexts.

The Principal is dedicated to ensuring that effective and expected teaching practices in the TCS-supported Reading Improvement Strategy are continued, and the strategy's fidelity maintained through staff changes.

Parents and students report that the school is inclusive of all and that the dignity of each student is upheld and enhanced through the continuous focus on providing learning opportunities in literacy and numeracy for all. In identifying opportunities for further curriculum and pedagogical growth some parents have suggested that it would be opportune for the school to identify a curriculum specialist area that could be the school's 'point of difference' in the district. Some suggested

curriculum specialist area ideas include the arts, agricultural science and technologies.

Staff have a sense that they are involved in school decision-making and have a voice in the teaching and learning improvement agenda. The school budget reflects this improvement agenda.

It is apparent that regular and timetabled teacher and school officer meetings introduced in 2021 have contributed to a greater sense of collective efficacy for all staff.

The Principal and Assistant Principal Religious Education are available to model RE lessons for staff, and the Principal is supportive of all staff attending and participating in TCSO organised professional learning. The Principal has identified the need to enable class teachers to observe each other's practice as well as the practice of teachers in other schools, as the next step in professional sharing. It is planned that the Small Schools Collaborative will provide this opportunity.

### **Improvement strategies**

- Investigate opportunities to implement a St Joseph's specific curriculum specialty as a 'point of difference' in the Millmerran community. Possible areas include agricultural science, the arts or technologies.
- Continue to prioritise and support regular timetabled school officer and teacher collaborative meetings.
- Investigate opportunities for teachers to observe each other in classrooms as well as teachers in other schools.

### **Component 3.2 Community partnerships Findings**

The school is well regarded in the community as a place where children are cared for in a caring and engaging learning environment. The school is active in the local community, participating fully in local events such as the Millmerran Show and ANZAC Day. The advantage of having a Principal who lives in the community has clearly impacted on community involvement and the public profile of the school.

*I like that we are a small school with a very warm community – very kind and loving. (Student)*

#### **Partners**

For a small school, St Joseph's has a committed and active group of parents who willingly support the school through their involvement in the formal representative group, the Parent Partnership Forum (PPF). Recently the parent body made the decision to move to the PPF model from a Parents and Friends structure to reduce some workload and financial burdens (auditing fees etc) from the P&F/school board model.

The Principal engages effectively with the PPF and openly shares school financial and resource data to ensure transparency and trust between the school and PPF is maintained. Parents report that they are aware of the staffing allocative model used by the TCSO and how school student enrolment impacts this allocation.

Enrolment numbers are an issue, as with many rural remote schools. The Principal has been very proactive in acting on this downward trend that has mainly to do with drought, mechanisation and larger corporates taking over smaller family farms. The exit survey data shows that families who left were in pursuit of work elsewhere. The proactive marketing undertaken to date is noteworthy, with parent testimonials and incentives starting to spread interest. It is clear that the transparency of the relationship between the school leadership and the parent community has generated interest and ownership within the parent community.

*We need to continue to be proactive in offering incentives for people to come to the school. (Parent)*

Some parents believe that the current school uniform policy could be an impediment to the recruitment of new families to the school. Female students and a number of parents suggest that the current girls' uniform could be considered as discriminatory as it does not allow all girls to feel comfortable to participate in the full range of school activities. Parents suggest that having to buy a winter and summer uniform for girls and two pairs of shoes could also be considered as a disincentive for potential enrolments.

The school playgroup is identified as a positive initiative that opens the school community up to attracting new families who can get a taste of school life by attending these sessions, which are conducted weekly by a volunteer parent. The review team heard from parents whose decision to enrol was based solely on their experiences at playgroup.

Millmerran Landcare is active in the school, with activities such as 'Trashless Tuesday' organised to encourage students and families to be mindful of sustainable living practices. A container serving as a change collection point has been established at the school, and this initiative is providing a regular source of income into the school community. The school is making a conscious effort to address sustainability, positioning it firmly as a priority for this community.

### **Procedures**

As are many Toowoomba Catholic schools, St Joseph's is experimenting with a number of communication platforms with staff and parents. Currently the school accesses the new school website, Facebook, Newsletter, Town Newsletter, Sentral Messaging and is rolling out the Sentral Parent Portal.

It is understood that the school's messaging and information systems are going through a renaissance with new platforms and systems being introduced. Some parents indicate that there are times when some greater lead-in time or more notice would be appreciated when having to prepare for some class or school events.

### **Student needs**

A strong and productive relationship has been ongoing with the TCSO counsellors, allied health specialists and Education Officers. The school has effectively utilised all these services over a number of years with a clear focus on supporting the access to the curriculum for all students, and to build teacher capacity.

The local health nurse is also an active participant at the school, supporting the healthy development of all students.

Many parents note the work of the School Counsellor who works proactively with individuals and groups of students to support the growth of their personal and social capabilities.

TCSO support staff are well utilised and feel welcome at transition to Prep opportunities, and support parents and staff through the early identification of support needs for new students.

As a number of the departing Year 6 students each year transfer to the local high school for their secondary education, it was raised with the review team that some of these students may be unnecessarily anxious of transitioning to the state middle school. The review team heard from community members that there may be opportunities for both schools to be able to work together to minimise this anxiety.

### **Improvement strategies**

- Identify and promote how school information is shared with the school community across various information communication technologies, and ensure this information is provided in a timely manner that ensures all community members are well informed on school and class events.
- Commence discussions to ensure the uniform policy complies with inclusive expectations and practical, contemporary community expectations.

- Continue to engage actively with TCSO and allied health staff to support the learning of all students.
- Continue with and investigate enhancing the relationship with the local Landcare organisation to engage students in sustainable practices.
- Investigate opportunities to network with the local state high school to reduce transitioning anxiety for some students who transition there for Year 7.



## Domain 4 Strategic resourcing and stewardship

### Component 4.1 Staff development and wellbeing

#### Findings

##### School culture

All staff present as being positive and optimistic contributors to the school's strategic agenda. The staff regularly celebrate school and student successes, and particularly in 2021, present as a fully united unit committed to the provision of quality teaching and learning.

Overwhelmingly parents praise the teaching staff for their commitment to their role and the personal one to one service parents say they receive from the teachers.

The weekly school officer and teacher collaborative meetings initiated in 2021 are recognised by all as being a positive addition to a collaborative team approach staff take to support the learning of all students.

*I love coming to work. (Teacher)*

Students also speak highly of their teachers and present as happy, engaged and sociable young people.

The review team heard from many students that their favourite subject at school is maths.

*In maths, teachers have been trying out different strategies to help us learn – they go above and beyond. (Student)*

Staff regularly comment that there are very few student behaviour issues at the school, and this allows staff to focus on teaching and learning.

Following on from the school's involvement in the TCS Wellbeing Lighthouse project is the continuation of the staff wellbeing champion role and the staff wellbeing committee.

An annual goal-setting process, linked to school priorities, is undertaken by the Principal with all staff, and the Principal is keen to embed this process more deeply by having more regular 'check ins' with staff about their goals during the year.

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Officer reports that all staff take workplace health and safety seriously, and are supportive of her in her role.

##### Attraction, selection and retention

It's abundantly clear to the review team that St Joseph's is a well-resourced school that supports the work of teachers and staff. A resourcing focus identified by staff for further immediate development is the review and update of the current student devices for use in digital literacies and digital technologies. The age and inconsistencies of some of these devices are seen as an impediment to students fully accessing the curriculum.

The frequency of turnover of teaching staff is identified by some parents as a concern. The review team is aware that TCSO is working proactively with the school leadership to identify the long-standing permanent positions retained by people who have long since left the community, in order to determine the likelihood of returning to work full time.

### Improvement strategies

- Continue to consult with the TCSO as to opportunities to appoint teaching staff on a continuing basis to increase the attraction to teaching at Millmerran.
- Develop a Technology and eLearning plan in consultation with TCSO staff to support student access to full range of a contemporary devices to support the curriculum.
- Further develop the annual staff goal-setting and review cycle to include scheduled review check-ins during the school year.

## Component 4.2 Use of resources facilities and the learning environment Findings

### Resources, facilities and learning environment

St Joseph's presents as a welcoming and well cared-for learning environment, with students clearly at the core of the school's mission. Many parents shared with the review team that the school's aesthetics had continued to improve over recent years, with the student toilet upgrade, oval redevelopment and new playground equipment particularly noted.

The inclusion of a groundskeeper role in recent times has also assisted the school parent body by having regular mowing and garden work occurring, particularly as the seasons have been more favorable of late.

Additional contemporary office furniture has given the school's reception area a more modern touch and the teacher resource room has been tidied with additional shelving and furniture.

A facilities masterplan is currently being developed in collaboration with TCSO staff, and community voice will be a strong emphasis in this process. The school is also working strategically through the Facilities Maintenance Plan developed in conjunction with the TCSO, and this process is being co-ordinated by the Occupational Health and Safety Officer.

The Teacher-Librarian reports that the school, in conjunction with the Parent Partnership Forum, provides a generous budget each year to ensure that the student collection is of a high standard and high number for a school the size of St Joseph's. Students and staff comment on the need for contemporary furniture in the library to allow for group work.

A common theme that permeated this review is that many stakeholders believe that it is timely for the school to focus on the refurbishment of the classrooms into modern, technologically enhanced, flexible learning environments. This challenge has already been identified by the school leadership, with initial discussions occurring with TCSO staff as a part of the facilities master planning process.

*The Parent Partnership Forum has done a lot for the outside of the school - watering systems etc and it looks amazing. Maybe we can now focus on the inside. (Parent)*

Contemporary classrooms require access to fully functioning connected information and communication technologies (ICT) learning devices. A replacement schedule for student ICT devices is to be incorporated into the Technology and eLearning Plan.

School officers have been assigned to support in each classroom and this has assisted the development of a collaborative team approach, with the teachers and school officers believing they are more effective in supporting student learning.

A volunteer school officer provides an additional support for 15 hours a week across the school, and this role is valued by all school staff.

Office 365 Teams has been adopted by the school as an internal communications management platform, and this has been well received by most staff.

### **Improvement strategies**

- Develop a Technology and eLearning plan that focuses on hardware replacement and contemporary pedagogical practices.
- Complete the facilities master planning process to create modern, technologically enhanced, flexible learning environments.
- Develop a replacement schedule for student ICT devices.

### **Conclusion**

The members of the School Renewal and Improvement Process team wish the St Joseph's community well as the school moves into the next stage of its development. The school is a vibrant place where parents genuinely feel that they are partners in their children's education. St Joseph's is in a good place to become an even better school than it is now.