



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW REPORT

St Peter Chanel School is situated in the western suburbs of Brisbane. The school is a focussed and child centred community with a stable staff and a supportive parent body. The school has a very credible reputation in the local community offering an authentic faith life, high academic standards and a disciplined environment where all students are valued and accepted. Parents value and support the education of their children. Enrolment of students into Religious Institute schools results in reduced numbers of students in the upper school and this can present a challenge as its impact is unpredictable.

This learning community is characterised by an authentic faith life, expressed through the charisms of both Marian and Charity traditions. The CHANEL virtues are a characteristic of the school living out its mission. Ecological sustainability within the local community has a strong focus with students and parents involved in a number of activities. The school's partnership with many community groups is a hallmark of this initiative. The development of a professional learning community, a focus on using data to further enhance student achievement and a willingness to respond to implement strategies to improve student outcomes is evident. The strengthening of professional relationships with neighbouring schools is providing closer communication and interaction at all levels of school life.

In recent years there have been significant and frequent changes of leadership within both the school and in the associated parish community leading to some destabilisation. This, combined with the devastating storm of 2008 has proved to be a challenging time for the school – a challenge to which they have risen admirably. Significant change in parish leadership over the past four years has seen the transition from Marist Fathers to Diocesan clergy and, more recently, a change in parish priest under difficult circumstance. Strong school leadership, providing consistency, clear direction and rebuilding lost confidence, has seen the school return to a position of strength within the local community and the growth of a strong, supportive and resilient community.

The school has undergone extensive refurbishment with a number of new buildings providing contemporary learning spaces. Careful financial management in recent years has been a feature of the school's organisation ensuring sound financial stewardship and stability.

Although there were procedures of strategic planning and reflection prior to 2010 these did not appear to be formalised nor were they inclusive of staff or other community members. Few components were reviewed prior to 2010. While there has been some level of community engagement there is a recognised need for broader and deeper engagement with a broader section of the community in the renewal and review processes. During 2012 the process has become driven by staff with greater levels of ownership allowing the community a "voice" in school improvement processes and outcomes.

A culture of self-reflection is becoming more evident and the engagement of the internal review process has enabled staff to be more actively involved. This opportunity to contribute is valued by staff members. In talking with school representatives it became clear that School Renewal and Review are seen as opportunities for reflection and growth and that the process was affirming of their work. The school has also exhibited a sincere and considered approach to review with this

being evidenced in their preparedness to act on and engage with learnings that emerged through the discernment processes and professional dialogue. This changing culture and engagement in professional dialogue has seen the rise of distributed leadership in learning and teaching. There is a clear direct relationship between internal review and annual strategic renewal plans.

The school has utilised Brisbane Catholic Education personnel extensively to develop a vision for learning and sought support across a number of areas of renewal, including formation for the school's new school board. The development of the school Mission and Vision statement has clearly engaged and enthused stakeholders as there is a real sense of them wishing to embody the CHANEL virtues in the everyday activities of the community.

The panel recognises the School Board as contributing much to the school in master planning and renewal processes and would challenge the school to continue to seek creative ways in which to gather data from parents using existing communication structures to advantage.

The importance of the use of data has emerged as being critical to informing all recent initiatives undertaken in literacy at the school as evidenced in the introduction of Fast ForWord along with the implementation of a suite of systematically scheduled data gathering tools. The school has used SunLanda to assist diagnostic analysis of the data and to involve all staff in evidence based reflection. As a result of data analysis there is a strong sense of shared responsibility for improved learning outcomes with authentic and targeted engagement across the whole community.

Several steps have been taken to enhance the use of student learning to inform teaching. These have included:-

- The engagement of a number of external consultants from BCE to support their endeavours in both targeting intervention and in visioning for the future. This included Mark Snartt, Speech pathologist and EO curriculum engaging to assist in analysing data and presenting to staff and parent groups.
- The school's response to the issues raised in data in a considered and well measured manner.
- The increased expectation of teachers to be provided with data for them to consider and utilise data in confirming their professional judgement.
- Professional dialogue and conversation around data
 - to link to improved classroom practice
 - to influence pedagogy
 - to promote and enhance consistency, particularly in numeracy and literacy
- A clear focus on improved literacy levels through the introduction of a Learning Enhancement teacher
- Consistency of approaches to learning and teaching
- A renewed focus on assessment for learning in numeracy
- Engagement with staff members from local schools in cooperative curriculum initiatives

The maxim "No child is invisible" challenges teachers to ensure they know each child and so the school will collect a range of other diagnostic data for spelling (SA Spelling), reading (PM Benchmark) and comprehension (Neale, Torch Waddington). The results are to be analysed and used to further monitor and inform student learning. The panel noted a clear goal of the school is to continue to explore consistent, efficient processes to establish a comprehensive school student data base which records data in student achievement for every student in the school.

In endorsing the areas for strategic development that the school has identified the panel would suggest the consideration of the following initiatives to inform future renewal planning. The panel encourages the school to

- Continue to embed its religious identity and heritage and to explicitly articulate this within the community in a holistic and integrated manner drawing on Marist and Mary Aitkenhead charisms.
- Establish the CHANEL virtues as “touchstones” for action within the community allowing them to provide a framework for future planning and school wide approaches to learning and teaching.
- Continue to explore consistent, efficient processes to establish a comprehensive school student data base which records data in student achievement for every student in the school.
- Maintain its commitment to professional learning through the development of a reflective professional learning community focussed on improved learning outcomes, shared practice and professional dialogue.
- Refine processes that support the de-privatisation of the classroom to make teaching and learning visible and provide opportunities for relevant feedback and reflection.
- consider a range of evidence gathering strategies and processes to further connect parents with the cyclical review processes (eg focus groups)

The panel noted the dedication of staff members and their significant contribution to school life. In conversation it became evident that the strengthening of professional relationships among staff members has enabled them to share their ideas and points of view in open dialogue. The time provided to allow teacher to plan and talk together is greatly valued providing collegiality and support. Teachers spoke of professional learning opportunities and planning time as generating professional conversation that satisfied their thirst for learning while leaving them “hungry” for more. This is indicative of a vibrant professional learning community.

The panel would like to make comment too on the insightfulness in their reflections of their past, their strengths, and the direction in which they are heading. They are growing also as a very reflective community.

The panel encourages school leadership to continue the positive conversations in regard to renewal and review processes and to continue to seek innovative and creative ways to engage community members in authentic dialogue.

Of significance are the strong links with community groups and the commitment to environmental sustainability within the school community.

Finally the panel congratulates the school on its significant growth journey in recent years and encourages them to celebrate their significant achievements.

The panel expresses its thanks for the warm welcome afforded as well as the organisation of the day in preparing appropriate documentation and facilitating the visit to the school.

The panel would like to congratulate the school for the participation of community members in presenting information about the school in such a comprehensive and enthusiastic manner and commends the school community on the open and transparent way in which they engaged in dialogue throughout the day.

The panel would like to make comment too on the insightfulness in the teachers' reflections of their past, their strengths, and the direction in which they and the school are heading. They are growing also as a very reflective community and this was evident on the day of the external review.

The panel appreciated the openness and honesty in reflection and review and the alignment and congruency between documentation, the presentations and the evidence gained from engagement through school walks.

The following data was provided to the Validation Panel

- School Profile including staff and student demographics and religious profile data
- Internal School Reviews of Components validated by area supervisor
- Relevant school student achievement data (Years 3, 5, 7, NAPLAN data), data from the BI tool
- Current School Strategic Renewal Plan
- Annual Action Plans and Annual Reports

Experiences through which the Review Panel gained understandings of the school and its culture:

- Meeting with the Principal and School Representatives, and conversation with them on the school's learning improvement journey
- Learning walks around the school (including visits to learning spaces)
- Other experiences as noted:
 - Meeting with parents and community members
 - Meeting with Education Officer who shared story of development of vision for learning

External Review Panel

Helen Royan (Chair) - Director – Learning and Teaching services

David Hutton – Executive Director - Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane

Michael Kearney – Area Supervisor

Rick Sheehan – Principal – St Agnes School