



13 July 2016

Martin Lewis  
Principal  
St Joseph's School  
Pine Mountain Road  
NORTH IPSWICH QLD 4305

Dear Martin

I have recently being presented with the External School Review Panel Report for St Joseph's School. I would first like to take the opportunity to thank you for your leadership and participation in the external review process.

From reading the report I get a sense that the school has a real sense of community and that students are provided with many and varied educational opportunities at St Joseph's School. I was particularly pleased to note that the school community had engaged with the Mercy Charism as well as maintaining strong links with the changing nature of the Parish.

The report also highlights the innovative ways that have been used at the school to engage parents and students in the cyclical review process and how the outcomes of this annual process have been used to inform subsequent strategic plans.

It is quite apparent that the leadership team and the staff have a focus on improving student learning outcomes as evidenced by the school's involvement in the Delivering Excellent Learning and Teaching Strategy, the engagement of parents in their child's learning as well as the creation of contemporary learning spaces.

I would encourage you to engage with both the commendations and recommendations contained in the report which provide a sense of the school's current strengths and directions for the future. The positive outcome of the employment of the Primary Learning Leader is noteworthy and I encourage the school community to continue the journey that has already started with Visible Learning and embed it throughout the school.

The external review report also provides evidence that the 'school improvement regulations' for St Joseph's School's accreditation under the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001*, as addressed by the internal review and validation of Components 3.5 and 4.5 are being satisfactorily addressed.

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## EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW PANEL REPORT

<b>School</b>	St Joseph's School, North Ipswich	
<b>Principal</b>	Martin Lewis	
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>School Representative</b>	Martin Lewis	Principal
<b>School Representative</b>	Tracy Gaddes	APRE
<b>School Representative</b>	Kerri Dutney	PLL
<b>School Representative</b>		
<b>School Representative</b>		
<b>School Representative</b>		
<b>External School Review Panel</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Professional Position</b>
<b>Panel Chair</b>	Alain Pitot	Area Supervisor, North 1
<b>School's Area Supervisor</b>	Annette Duffy	Area Supervisor, South 5
<b>External Validator</b>	Robert Out	Rector, Padua College
<b>Panel Member</b>	Roycelyn Wilden	Principal, St Ignatius School, Toowong
<b>Panel Member</b>		
<b>Panel Visit Date</b>	Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	
<b>* Attached Documentation for NSSA Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five year Schedule for School Cyclical Review</li> <li>• Validated Internal School Review Records for Components 3.5 (Accountability and Compliance) and 4.5 (School Improvement)</li> <li>• Evaluative commentary on how school addresses accreditation requirements with evidence of same audited by area supervisor</li> <li>• Schedule for External Review Day</li> </ul>	

## **Section A: School Context**

*This section includes the panel's observations on the school's current context, strengths and associated challenges as it is impacting on review and improvement.*

St Joseph's School, North Ipswich is a co-educational Catholic Primary School in the Mercy Tradition, for students from Prep to Year Six. St Joseph's has a current student enrolment of 385 students. It is a two stream school from Prep to Year 6. The school belongs to the Parish of St Joseph's, North Ipswich.

The St Joseph's School Community is a vibrant community where children, parents, teachers and staff aim to live out the school motto "Laborare et Orare" (To work and pray). Student learning and growth are the primary focus and the principal states that the school "aims to develop children as learners and as people, by linking knowledge, understandings, capabilities and values in a way that develops the child as an active member of their community and society. Faith and prayer are also integral to everyday life at St Joseph's". The school offers a variety of activities including an instrumental program, Chinese for Years 4- 6, swimming program, Bluearth program, choir, intra and inter-school sports activities, camps and excursions.

The panel commented on the iconic building of the 'old school classroom' that sits in the middle of the school which symbolised the rich history of the St Joseph's community and the importance of the Mercy tradition in the fabric of the school and the wider community. The school commitment to the Mercy Charism has been enhanced by the staff participation in a spiritual reflection program in 2012 as a professional learning and immersion for all in order to build cohesion in the staff's understanding of the school's rich story and charism. The parish changed in 2013 to amalgamate with the St Mary's Ipswich Catholic Community. This brought a change in the parish school relationship. However, in more recent times the chaplain has been a real presence in the school community both at formal and informal times. There is also a presence of the priest at the pastoral school board meetings, which is another avenue for a stronger relationship between parish and school. The school has undergone a major refurbishment program in its learning spaces and grounds so as to develop contemporary learning spaces for students.

The leadership team is in the process of planning for an educational brief to guide the next strategic plan from 2017 onwards. In preparation the whole staff has been working with an educational consultant to design a vision for learning in alignment with the mission statement, which is currently guiding the educational agenda of the school community. This journey to the Vision for Learning allowed the staff to critique their use of data and its analyses for improvement in student learning. The journey encouraged collective responsibility of staff, a critique of the current plethora of programs and the emergence of a common language amongst a language of learning. As a member of the Delivering Excellence in Learning and Teaching (DELT) Learning Collaborative there has been a development of professional learning teams across the school. These teams are involved in the decision making process of the learning agenda. The principal holds a "happy hour" for student celebration of their learning whereby the teachers send students to the principal for commendation. It was also noted by the panel that the students' language about their learning journey demonstrates metacognition around the stages of learning.

The school leadership team sees that parent involvement in their child's learning journey is critical to their success. As a result various initiatives to include the parents in this learning journey have occurred, for example parent information sessions and learning strategies to support their child's learning is occurring each term. The school has a good reputation in the local community with many parents having attended school there and wanting their children to attend as well. Enrolment growth has been steady.



## **Section B: Effectiveness of School Cyclical Review and Impact on Renewal**

*The panel outlines its views endorsing and/or challenging the school's views on the effectiveness of school cyclical review, as necessary. The panel does not need to repeat what the school has written.*

### **B1 Effectiveness of School Cyclical Review**

#### **B1.1 Staff engagement in cyclical review and the building of a professional review culture at the school**

Staff engagement in the school review cycle has been developing over the years led by the leadership team. Staff meetings are prioritised for the review on components in term 2 of each year. Meetings are held in classrooms to showcase learning initiatives from staff. A shared language of learning is developing amongst staff.

Professional learning teams are developing so as to engage in the learning agenda of the school. The school leadership team is working towards their vision for learning and teaching and engagement in the DELT strategies as a visible learning collaborative school.

#### **B1.2 Stakeholder feedback and engagement in review (Parents, students and BCEO consultants)**

The school has developed an innovative way of gaining input to the review of its internal review components by holding an annual 'Review Dinner' where the P & F & School Board executives are invited and invitations are also sent out to various year level parents. The parents vary from year to year so as to get a broad section to attend. Around 35 parents participate in these dinners which is organised with table leaders to gather input from stake holders, looking at strengths and ways of improvement in the school. A similar process is utilised with students with a 'Pizza Lunch' so that student voice is gained in the process. A recommendation would be to engage BCE consultants as critical friends on the internal review process. This also validates the process and allows for an outside perspective on the discussions.

Parents commented on the following in the external review consultation:

- Support for children's individual learning needs is excellent
- Great improvement in the "look" of the school
- The school, although growing, still retains its family feel – every child belongs
- Strong sense of community with wider community support
- Intergenerational families in the school – strong staff retention
- Feedback process – review dinner worked well with goals set from feedback on communication for example the introduction of educational sessions for parents to become familiar with new teaching methods
- The employment of the new Primary Learning Leader has afforded the parents many opportunities to understand the rigour of the pedagogy and the curriculum particularly to build the confidence of the parents.

The students input was very valuable in gaining their voice into the school review processes. The following were some of their insights into St Joseph's:

- Great teachers – patient /kind/ sense of humour
- The people is what makes the difference
- You can make great friends
- We learn about God and Jesus. We learn about different religions
- The school has lots of room to play
- With learning – we know how we are going – why we do our assessment - we learn with the help of aides and each other
- We feel safe- we know where we can get support

#### **B1.3 The alignment of cyclical review outcomes with annual school planning, action and school and staff professional learning**

The components identified in one year inform the goal setting for the following year. Leadership and staff use these goals as a basis for their own professional goals that impacts their professional learning and the professional learning for the whole school. The panel recommends the use of SPARROW to capture the review process in a more consistent manner. The tool can also be used to develop strategic annual goal planning and compliance. Staff can also become more involved in the review process.

## **B2 Use of student learning outcomes data to inform school decision making and planning for improvement of pedagogy and student learning outcomes**

Teachers use the Business Intelligence (BI) tool to interrogate data in order to plan for the further learning of each student. Teachers participated in the Writing Analyses for DELT in collaboration with a cluster schools in order to allow another perspective on both the analysis and the learning improvement strategies. This has proved a worthwhile exercise for the teachers to build their capacity in understanding learning data and how to interpret and analyse for future learning. The employment of a PLL has enhanced the capacity of leadership and staff to begin the journey of embedding the high yield strategies of the DELT initiative into the school culture. The school is also using the monitoring tools to further use data to inform learning. The panel would recommend further investigation in bringing the use of BI to the classroom level so as to inform pedagogy.

A Monitoring Tools Timeline has been implemented to ensure that authentic data is collected and analysed in a consistent, effective and timely manner across the school. The tools that are used to collect student learning data include those specified as part of the Learning Collaborative (DELT Strategy): Concepts About Print; Sound and Letter Knowledge; PM Benchmarking; Writing Analysis and PAT-R, as well as other data gathering tools to measure student's knowledge, understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. Further diagnostic tests are also available to determine more specific skills and abilities of students, for example, Neale Analysis of Reading Ability

## **B3 Impact of Cyclical Review on renewal across the strategic priorities of Catholic schooling**

*The panel outlines its views endorsing and/or challenging the school's views on the impact of school cyclical review, as necessary*

The school has invested in the development of the religious life of the school as well as placing the religion curriculum at the heart of its vision and mission. It has developed its Mercy charism in an engaging manner ensuring that the culture of the school clearly cuts across the strategic priorities of Catholic schooling-mission and religious education, learning and teaching, professional practice and collaborative relationships and stewardship of school resources both financial and physical. The involvement of staff in the Religion Curriculum validation process has created awareness among staff of the strategic priorities for Catholic schooling and their role in the school planning processes. Once validated the Religion program integrated with the religious life of the school will provide clear guidance for the school direction in this area.

With a renewed focus on planning and the development of the school vision for learning and teaching the school is well positioned to further engage in the strategic direction of Brisbane Catholic Education - Delivering excellence in learning and teaching, developing the school's catholic identity and being good stewards of the school financial and physical resources.

### Section C: Authentication of Compliance with Accreditation Requirements

In the course of the external review the panel sighted the following documentation and confirms that the school has demonstrated its compliance with accreditation regulations:

- Evaluative Commentary on how school demonstrates compliance with NSSAB Accreditation Requirements substantiated by an external audit	Yes
- Evidence of internal review and validation of Components 3.5 ( <i>Accountability and Compliance</i> ) and 4.5 ( <i>School Improvement</i> )	Yes
- Most recent Annual School Report	Yes
- Current School Strategic Renewal Plan	Yes
- Most recent Annual School Action Plan	Yes
- Most recent school renewal report (achievements against action plan)	Yes

*Panel Comments are provided below where relevant:*

### Section D: School Report on Learning and Teaching of Religious Education and Religious Life of the School

The panel outlines its views endorsing and/or challenging the school's report.

The panel commends the religious education report as an honest reflection of the learning and teaching of religion at St Joseph's. It commends the work of the APRE to ensure that links are made to other curriculum areas in the school to ensure that priority is given to this learning area.

- Commendation on the work which has been done on the religious life of the school with St Joseph's rich history in the community being honoured whilst moving forward with the reconceptualising of the Catholic identity
- The journey to the validation of the Religious Education program
- The involvement of the school chaplain (through the parish) in school activities
- The priority placed in keeping the Mercy charism alive in the school
- The involvement of students in social justice activities
- The inclusive enrolment practices

### Section E: School Strategic Directions for Improved Learning

The panel outlines its views endorsing and/or challenging the school's view of the future directions

The panel endorses the school team's orientation using the vision for learning and teaching and the strategies to support this: for example with the visible learning journey; they have engaged in the collection of data and its analysis for student learning. It may now be appropriate to bring the whole school team on board with the visible learning journey using the key strategies of the change management process.

The employment of the PLL has been key in the drive for improvement to student learning. This role is enabling staff and parents to become more aware the directions of the high yield DELT strategies. The use of the BI tool and the development of data walls will allow staff to monitor student individual progress more closely.

The school has identified three areas of development into the future. The panel would also commend these to the leadership team to incorporate into future planning.

- Careful analysis of student learning data to inform teaching and learning (using data more effectively)
- Timely and effective implementation of a range of assessment techniques
- To make transparent the link between data and its associated tools and the impact on learning and teaching

ICLT is always a challenge to schools. In order to ensure equity of access to technology to students, the panel would recommend a strategic plan be developed to ensure that this equity is achieved. It was identified that there is a paucity of access to technology.

**Section F: Review Panel Recommendations in relation to future school engagement in respect to review and school improvement:**

The panel commends the school leadership team on its commitment to the school, noting especially the cohesion of the team. The panel particularly noted that the school community is ready for further growth in the concept and reality of developing learning teams as a professional learning community to further develop the school's vision for learning and teaching vision for learning and teaching. The following are recommendations for some further development:

- Use of Sparrow for cyclical review reporting and annual goal setting
- The development of an ICLT plan so that devices are more available to students. Equity of access has to also be addressed with parent consultation and support.

The panel also noted that there was a "lull" in the 'Positive Behaviour for Learning' agenda since the training of the teachers. The involvement in the SBSS data roll out in the development of a behaviour database could be a foundation for re-engagement in this important area.

**Section G: Panel comments on the conduct of the external review process**

The panel comments on the school's preparation for and engagement with the external review process

The panel congratulates the school on the conduct of the external review process and congratulates the leadership team; staff; students and parent community of St Joseph's for the warm and open welcome received during the day. The engagement with a wide range of stakeholders through the day provided the panel with a clear and positive indication of how the school is responding to the learning needs of all students and building an authentic Catholic culture.

The panel appreciates the open and honest approach taken by the school in this review. The panel acknowledges the considerable efforts undertaken in providing the documentation and information requested and the effort and time taken, in preparing it. The school has a rich history in the Catholic community of the Ipswich area and it enjoys the support of families who themselves attended the school. The atmosphere of the school is wonderful with very engaged staff, students and parents.

**Section H: Data made available to the External Review Panel**

- (i) The following data was provided to the Review Panel:
- School profile data including staff and student demographics, enrolment profile and religious profile data
  - Internal School Reviews of Components validated by area supervisor for the last five years
  - Relevant school student achievement data drawn from relevant Years 3, 5, NAPLAN data
  - Current School Strategic Renewal Plan
  - Annual Action Plans and Annual Reports

- (ii) Experiences through which the Review Panel gained understandings of the school and its culture:

Meeting with the Principal, Teachers and School Representatives, and conversation with them on school improvement through cyclical review (See schedule for the day)

Meetings with Parents

Meetings with Teachers

Meetings with Students

Learning walks around the school (including visits to learning spaces)

Panel Chair Signature:



Date: 17 June 2016