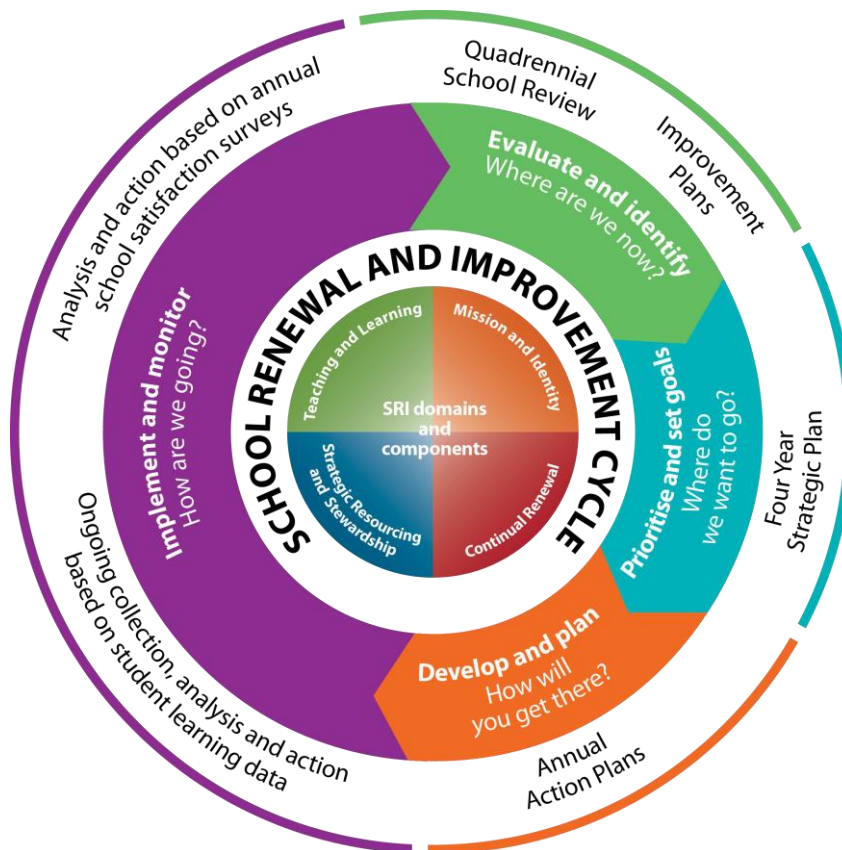




**Diocese of Toowoomba
Catholic Schools**

Good Samaritan College Toowoomba

TCS Quadrennial school review Full report



21 – 23 April 2021



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

Methodology

The review was conducted from Wednesday 21 to Friday 23 April 2021.

Reviewers

John Coman, Senior Education Leader and Chairperson

Jim Midgley, Director Teaching and Learning TCS

Kort Goodman, Principal St Joseph's College Toowoomba

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

- The College Principal and all members of the College Leadership Team
- 10 staff members
- 12 parents and community members
- 8 young people

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

Good Samaritan College is an ungraded unique learning environment that provides customised educational experiences for young people for whom mainstream schooling is not currently possible. As such, it is uniquely positioned to provide a visible and practical expression of the mission of Catholic Education and the Catholic Church within the Diocese of Toowoomba in outreach to the marginalised and excluded.

In the last three years, the College has undergone a significant transformation that began with collaborative conversations with the College seeking to clarify its intended purpose and place within Toowoomba Catholic Schools. From this clarification an extensive period of consultative collaboration followed involving all stakeholders.

The first outcome of this was the redesigning of the College curriculum structure and timetable to provide both flexibility and the systematic provision of monitored pathways to certification and qualifications. The provision of a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) pathway for those Year 11&12 young people able to engage with it was investigated and implemented. At the same time additional resources were allocated to assist with this provision.

Concurrently, the College which was known as the Youth Community Learning Centre (YCLC) was rebranded to become Good Samaritan College. This brief statement belies the intense period of whole of community consultation which occurred and the creative efforts of all involved to decide on the new College name and all that goes with that identity including narrative, values, symbol and presentation and marketing to the wider community.

This redefinition of purpose and identity, coupled with an expanding need within the Toowoomba community to support the young people the College serves, has resulted in an expansion of the College in terms of current and intended future enrolments and the attendant additional human and physical resources required to service this ever-expanding need in the current and predicted future context.

This review report sits within this context where there has been an exponential rate of change and innovation with more to follow. The review panel, in this report, presents the findings of what the current experience of community members is of both being community now, and also reflection on the very unique journey of the College to reach this juncture – poised to continue the journey into the future. We also provide suggested strategies to inform future planning in what will continue to be for the College an ever-changing landscape.



Domain 1 Teaching and learning

Component 1.1 Students and their learning

Findings

The community at Good Samaritan College believe in the inherent dignity and capacity of all. It is an innovative enhanced learning community that priorities the wellbeing of all members – spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Good Samaritan College mission statement

The April 2021 college renewal team is unanimous in their belief that this mission is played out and lived daily and is truly embedded in the life of the college. Students interviewed were effusive in their appreciation for the opportunities the college offers. They spoke of feeling valued, of the reality of personalised learning programs, of always feeling safe, of a very caring staff, understanding teachers and support staff who seem to love working there. They also spoke of opportunities and support not experienced by them in other schools. Students spoke of trust and respect from and for their teachers which, in their experience, is unique to this place.

"We respect each other's differences." (Student)

"The learning is tailored to my needs." (Student)

"It is very obvious to us that teachers here like each other, they are a happy team." (Student)

"All of the teachers here go out of their way to help me - all of them do. Liisa has high expectations for me academically, but I know she will help me get there." (Student)

"Staff are prepared to work one on one with me. I feel like they really know me very well. Teachers have helped me set goals and I know what I need to do to achieve these goals." (Student)

The review team heard that college staff aim to be leaders in innovative and responsive education, and this is a community that requires such ambitions. This is an 'enhanced learning community' and the level of enhancements are numerous. Community members spoke of the innovative practices and a willingness to try new things and leave no stone unturned to respond to the needs of the individual child to get the best out of each student.

Some of the statistics of the college enrolment include

- 95% have either a physical or mental diagnosis.
- 50% are assessed as having Depression, Anxiety and Stress in the severe and extremely severe range.
- 46% feel they are struggling with anger management. (In saying this, violence within the college is extremely rare)
- 30% identify that they have had thoughts of suicide and are struggling with certain aspects of their mental health.
- 10% of young people have identified that they are currently at risk of homelessness and five of the young people are living in supported accommodation.
- 26% of young people struggle with negative thoughts about their body image and disordered eating.
- 20% of young people indicate they are currently in need of food and hygiene supplies.

As would be expected, the enhancements to the educational environment to deal with this level of needs is significant and the innovation and flexibility required for all young people to gain the experiences, knowledge, confidence and curiosity to follow their own pathways for success, are indeed unique to this college. The level of collaboration with the wider community is significant with over fifty agencies (social enterprises and allied health services) engaged by staff to work with the young people enrolled here. Despite this level of need, students are appreciative of the support as well as the expectations. Currently a third of the students have a 100% attendance record for this year.

Under the current Principal there has been a significant improvement agenda and a very significant focus on student academic outcomes with individual pathways to accomplish this. The college has become much more than a drop-in center or a social service support provider.

"This college is in the empathy and consequences business. The last thing these students need is blind indulgence. Liisa delivers this balance of expectation skillfully - advocacy for the young person but with a bottom line of expectations and consequences." (Maryanne Walsh, Peer Principal)

The community engagement network believes the college offers the 'complete package'. Draw cards such as the bus pick up and drop off, meals supplied (breakfast and lunch), a focus on literacy and numeracy and a number of electives that students like.

"There was once a time when you would wonder if you would pick up any students on the bus. That is not the case anymore. Student attendance has significantly increased." (Bus driver)

Explicit Improvement Agenda

The leadership team has an explicit and detailed improvement agenda focused on individual pathways for each student. Each young person has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP), safety plan, Curriculum Modification Plan (CMP), Behaviour Management Plan (BMP) etc. There is a strong commitment to differentiated practice for each young person to ensure success in their chosen pathways.

Each young person participates in diagnostic and psychometric testing for academic and wellbeing matters. The improvement agenda in the areas of enrolment, tracking, reviewing and reporting processes was highly endorsed by families and students. New students participate in a two-week trial before enrolment is officially completed. This allows for stakeholders to try each other out for fit and suitability.

“The enrolment process here was awesome. It was focused on me and my future rather than what I could afford to pay or where I had come from.” (Student)

Analysis and discussion of data

What data to collect and how to use it has been a focus in recent years. Staff are growing in their capacity to collaborate and act upon data. The collection of data such as demographic, diagnostic and psychometric testing for each young person is the starting point for the academic journey. Currently the leadership team collects and analyses this data and presents to the staff in support meetings and staff meetings as well as individual response and review meetings. The intention is for all staff to be skilled in this level of analysis.

Teachers do collect and analyse academic and wellbeing progress data. Quantitative and qualitative data collected is collected via reports and support meetings. Testing and surveys are used in weekly meetings, both formal and informal. Meetings with parents and carers around progress in academic areas as well as learning dispositions is based on data and individual goal setting.

Data informs the achievement and progress of the annual action plan (AAP) as well as student goals. The multi-age unit planning is framed around the student as the starting point. Teachers here know their students and what they need to teach them. There is growing capacity in students to talk about their learning with senior students able to speak confidently about what they need to attain the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE).

Learning culture

All staff are trained in trauma-informed practices. Staff and students receive professional career counselling and participate in formal and informal debriefs.

All students participate in the Rock and Water program. This program promotes

- communication skills
- development of compassion
- understanding and sympathy
- boundary setting
- awareness of purpose and motivation in life
- intuition, mental strength, empathetic feeling, positive feeling, thinking and visualising.

There is a recent shift in the expectations of the learning standards. The individual pathways approach has promoted a more rigorous academic agenda. Fewer students sit out and the level of engagement in classes has increased significantly. Senior students now speak of disappointment in younger students who they perceive as lacking their focused ambition, sometimes distracting others from learning.

There is a learning culture modelled by and very evident in staff. As a Professional Learning Community (PLC) staff participate in professional goal setting, monitoring, reviewing and presentations as well as involvement in Professional Learning Teams (PLTs).

Component 1.2 Curriculum structure and provision

Findings

Systematic Curriculum Delivery

The college exploits the flexibility that is allowed within ACARA and QCAA. They are agile enough to deliver what suits the young people as well as the skill sets of staff. A flexible timetable has been constructed, built on requirements of ACARA and the QCE system.

The curriculum leaders are in the process of developing a scope and sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that meets the needs of the unique context that includes multi-age classes in the middle years. While the focus is clearly on literacy and numeracy, since 2020 there has been the introduction of planning document expectations as well as bespoke ACARA, QCAA Applied and Essential courses and Certificate courses.

The curriculum is a blend of Maslow and Marzano – Socio-emotional learnings (Rock and Water, Connect, and Social and Emotional Program [SEP], Meditation and Spirituality) with English, Mathematics, Reading Improvement and Electives.

“We are on the right track with the focus on teaching and learning. Students are starting to talk QCE and academic progress. These students wouldn’t have been seen as capable of academic pathways in the past.” (Teacher)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

The PLC’s purpose is best described as sharing curriculum experiences including, Deep Learning, Visible (Ignite) Learning, Inspire Math, Reading Improvement Strategy, High Impact Teaching (HIT) Strategies and Trauma-Informed practices. A recent focus of PLCs has been formal planning expectations, including use of PLP data, student check-ins, and the facilitating of data information debriefs.

There is a current focus on formative and summative assessment procedures for on-going assessment of students. Collective efficacy is being sought around on-going consultation in expectations of planning, pedagogy, assessment and reporting.

“We are a great team here; collective efficacy is really building.” (Teacher)

Component 1.3 Pastoral care and student wellbeing

Findings

Student social and emotional wellbeing

The review team believes that the Good Samaritan charism is the foundation on which the college will thrive. Community, Courage, Curiosity and Compassion and a belief in the inherent dignity and capacity of every student underpins the inclusiveness and care for others, a hallmark of what the review team witnessed and heard from community stakeholders. This is a charism known by students and lived by staff. Social and emotional wellbeing is the cornerstone of this college’s vision and mission.

The National Safe Schools Framework is a focus, and the college revisits the principles in reference to the safety of all members of the community.

A proactive pastoral care approach promotes resilience, reflection, and positive mental/physical health. Home groups, counselling sessions, Men’s business/Women’s business, Social Emotional Program, and numerous community connections exist.

Behaviour support procedures including re-entry processes are known and practiced, and while some question the “frequency of forgiveness” and look for a line in the sand the Principal and leadership team have a well-defined philosophy and clarity around when the young person has stopped participating.

Relationships

Relationships are built on inclusivity and meeting young people where they are at. Their goals are determined jointly, and individual celebrations of goals being met occur. The review team heard many conversations between staff and young people where progress was acknowledged and students proudly shared successes.

The review team heard from many community members: school principals who refer student; social workers and community social enterprise leaders; and service providers. All spoke of the high level of collaboration between the college and themselves.

“Where would these young people be without this place?” (Community leader)

“This college reaches beyond the students, they work closely with mums and dads and carers, I know many parents who are surviving and thriving because of this place.” (Community leader)

“Liisa is absolutely amazing, she’s a strong inspirational leader. She is innovative and will try things others would not have the courage to do. She’s open to new ideas and really listens to the voice of the young people.” (Community leader)

“It’s not forgiveness all day every day. The kids know there is a line in the sand and most don’t want to cross it if they can help it.” (Community leader)

“Another of Liisa’s skills is in selecting her people. She has amazing staff here. From the front office to the kitchen to the classrooms — other schools would kill for this level of commitment and talent. She grows leaders. It’s a very effective leadership group surrounded by a very effective staff.” (Community leader)

“Liisa makes sure that staff are prepared and continually developed for this context. She does not throw them in and see if they sink or swim. She builds capacity for this context”. (Community leader)

Improvement strategies

- Continue to build staff capacity to gather, interpret and use data to track the young people’s progress and to inform pedagogy and practices within differentiated learning programs.
- Continue to provide structured and well-planned learning experiences within a flexible and responsive educational environment.
- Continue to action a collaborative approach to employing and developing innovative approaches to ensure the engagement of our young people in their learning.
- Continue to promote curiosity as a fundamental value at Good Samaritan College to develop the intrinsic motivation to engage in the life-long and life-wide pursuit of knowledge and learning experiences.



Domain 2 Mission and identity

The Mission and Identity goal for Good Samaritan College is *“To empower our community to recognise their encounters with Jesus through the Good Samaritan ethos and through the understanding that we are all made in God’s image.”* Through consistent and persistent staff development around this goal and explicit teaching for the young people and its implications for the day-to-day life of the college for all, this goal has become embedded in the daily experience of life in this community.

“I have never felt closer to the mission of the Catholic school than I do as a member of this college community.” (Teacher)

A three-year faith and formation plan has been developed collaboratively in conjunction with stakeholders and the Manager, Formation and Identity Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS). It is expected that this plan, as an expression of this important domain in the life of the college, will continue to evolve to meet the needs of this ever-changing college community.

Component 2.1 Religion curriculum

Findings

Systematic curriculum delivery

Religious Education (RE) is integrated into the teaching program at Good Samaritan College (GSC) in a variety of ways. The RE curriculum for the year is based around the four values of the college – Community, Curiosity, Compassion, and Courage. Elements from the RE curriculum are selected which build on these values. Students participate in an integrated program from the TCS RE curriculum, which incorporates curriculum elements of prayer and spirituality, beliefs, first nations people spirituality, world religions, Scripture and Catholic social teachings.

“I can definitely see that the college is building a great name and there are solid values about what the college is about. The college holds its values strongly and it has found its role in the community. It is inclusive of our beliefs and non-beliefs.” (Student)

This is an alternative program of Religious Education designed to suit the particular needs of the young people. A timetabled Spirituality session is used to cover a wide range of topics and provides opportunities for prayer and reflection.

“Spirituality is one of the classes that everybody likes.” (Student)

Meditation sessions are also timetabled where students choose a variety of meditation experiences including walking, drumming, narrative, artistic and tactile using Lego.

Embedding of Catholic social teachings across all curriculum areas is encouraged as part of all planning.

“Historically the approach has been that the students aren’t interested in religion and spirituality. However now there is a clear focus they are beginning to engage.” (Community member)

“Encounters with God at GSC are put onto the reality of each student’s life experiences.” (Staff member)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Staff members are currently completing further study in this domain. Two staff members are working towards their Master of Educational Leadership degrees, two staff have completed the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP) and a further two are completing Cornerstones.

This ever-widening, and ever-deepening knowledge base has informed the deliberations of the RE PLC in determining the content and structure of the GSC RE program to meet the needs of the young people.

School Context

Many of the young people and their families have not identified as having a religious background or affiliation. The practices undertaken, are designed to be inclusive and cater for young people with a diverse range in their age group, academic ability, and faith experiences.

The meditation program has been developed to allow the young people to develop self-awareness and have a basis to be able to ground and centre themselves. Many of the young people struggle with anxiety and controlling their impulses and behaviour. A scheduled time, after lunch each afternoon, before the last lesson, assists these young people to complete the end of the college day successfully.

“Meditation is really good because you have choices, gets you ready to go to the next class. Prepares you and calms you down.” (Student)

Improvement strategies

- Further recontextualise the Spirituality program to continue to meet the changing needs of the young people and their context.
- Further investigate and implement the use of High Impact Teaching (HIT) strategies developed through Teaching and Learning within the delivery of the Spirituality program.
- Continue to utilise and further develop responsive meditation practices to enhance the wellbeing of young people.
- Continue to support professional development so all teachers are accredited to teach Religious Education, and to be proficient in the planning and delivering of GSC’s spirituality programming.

Component 2.2 Religious life of the school

Findings

Religious identity and culture

The four values of Good Samaritan College are made explicit in aspects of the GSC community, and are communicated and unpacked, often with a Gospel perspective, in relation to academic success and wellbeing of the young person.

The Good Samaritan parable has become the underpinning narrative of the story of the college and is frequently referred to and recontextualised.

As part of the comprehensive and consultative rebranding of Good Samaritan College, values and their associated colours and symbols are displayed, referred to and are now underpinning facets of the unique religious identity and culture of the College.

“The change of the branding of the college to GSC and the process of working with the young people and community and explaining the reasoning behind the change has been very effective.” (Staff member)

The review team heard from some teachers and students who wondered about the extension of specific Catholic Religious Instruction and iconography. It was suggested that iconography could be used to further recontextualise the college’s values and mission within the Catholic context.

Evangelisation and formation

Since a high percentage of the young people enrolled at Good Samaritan College identify as being of a First Nations background, the college continually acknowledges and pays respects to Aboriginal Australians Spirituality. Smoking ceremonies and welcoming ceremonies are often included with significant events or liturgical celebrations.

The behaviour of young people, both positive and negative, is often challenged or praised within the context of the four values of Good Samaritan College. These values are used as the vehicle to recontextualise the parable of the Good Samaritan. They are used to make explicit the Gospel message. An example of this was witnessed by the review team during the Principal's address as part of the Anzac Day Liturgy.

"There is a culture of safety in being able to talk to staff about faith related concepts and my understanding of God." (Student)

Prayer and worship

Opportunities for young people to participate in prayer and worship include:

- Daily meditation with a focus on reflective thinking.
- Scripture reflection and exposure through Home Group activities and Spirituality lessons.
- Planning liturgies with staff as part of Home Group activities.

The review panel had the opportunity to participate in the college Anzac Day Liturgy during the review. The level of respect and reverence shown by the young people was exceptional. The quality of the liturgy and the level of participation by young people were both of the highest order.

Staff are provided with resources to use in planning liturgies that reflect the college's symbols and colours.

"There is a subtlety to the way prayer and spirituality is offered at the college." (Community member)

Social action and justice

It is evident that for the members of the college community, there is a genuine commitment to and acceptance of the importance of the college as an outreach activity of the Mission of the Church to marginalised and excluded young people and their families in the Toowoomba community. This is surfaced in the continual narrative of the college and the actions and words of the staff in their daily interaction with the young people and their parents/carers.

A Community Engagement Network (CEN) has been established that allows members of the community, including parents/carers of young people, to have input into the strategic direction of the college and provide an avenue through which they can have significant input into both the decision-making processes at GSC. The CEN further strengthens the network connections of the college through the community and the many services that it seeks support from.

Good Samaritan College also has an Advisory Board that consists of professional people from different organisations and backgrounds that can give a wide range of feedback and advice in strategic planning.

At a college level, young people are engaged in raising and discussing local and global issues through several different committees. These committees include a Cultural Committee, Leadership Committee, House and Sport Committee, Spirituality Committee, and a Community Committee. Young People are willing to participate in and be actively involved in these committees.

A cyclical implementation of the Spirituality curriculum for Good Samaritan College is inclusive of the Catholic Social Teachings. This allows the young people to focus on many different issues concerning justice on a global scale. The Spirituality curriculum has previously, and will continue to look at, contemporary issues as they arise such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

As part of the curriculum offered at Good Samaritan College, there is a Certificate II in Active Volunteering which gives young people the option to consider perspectives of others and allows them to assist others in the Toowoomba community outside of the college.

Improvement strategies

Continue the development of traditions to enhance the religious life of the College, including communal prayer, liturgies, and other significant inclusive spiritual practices.

- Continue to ensure that the inherent dignity of all community members is upheld through word and actions so that the college continues to be the “Face of Jesus” within the lives of the young people.
- Investigate how a personalised approach can be delivered in religious education as it is in other areas of the curriculum.
- Explore how iconography can be developed to further bring to life the Good Samaritan story.



Domain 3 Continual renewal

Component 3.1 School improvement culture

Findings

Collective teacher efficacy

Individual learning opportunities

All staff have access to ongoing Professional Development (PD) to ensure currency of practice as well as options to shadow expert staff in other schools. This provides staff opportunities to expand their current skills to ensure the young people continue to receive the best teaching and support possible.

All new teachers can complete a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and have the option of completing PD in areas of interest that align with the College Strategic Plan.

Collaborative learning and understanding of the young people

All staff, including bus drivers, are currently completing Trauma Informed Practice training together to ensure there is a high level of understanding of how trauma can impact on behaviours and learning.

A Professional Learning Community consisting of the whole staff is now well established. In practice, staff members accept the responsibility of leading a staff Professional Learning Team (PLT) for a term. To date the PLT's completed are Young People's Leadership Program, Religion Curriculum and House Points system.

Last term, the College Counsellor led a PLT examining evidenced based, successful behaviour management strategies in the classroom. The purpose of the project was to develop an up-to-date data base of the young people which includes, diagnostic information, typical classroom behaviours and a range of strategies to address these. All staff have been involved in this research. The College Counsellor and Learning Support Teacher are now collating all diagnostic information and evidence, which will also inform the college's Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD). This PLT data base will be completed by the end of the year and will be updated in the future to ensure all current and new staff are up to date with strategies and information on all the young people.

College staff work with each young person holistically to address any barriers or concerns they may be facing. Staff have regular reviews every Tuesday afternoon and during the fortnightly preparation and planning days. This ensures solutions to any issues are addressed as a whole staff team.

This whole of team approach to collaboratively learning and finding solutions to current teaching and learning questions, is at the heart of effective practice in developing collective teacher efficacy and one of the key reasons for the very effective growth trajectory evident at the college at this time.

School culture

Good Samaritan approach

It is evident that a supportive environment is actively fostered by the entire staff and community with the underpinnings of being a 'Good Samaritan' showing love and compassion for our 'neighbours' (the college team members) and acceptance and forgiveness.

Staff are committed to the College values of compassion, curiosity, courage, and community and look for opportunities to recognise and reward the young people when this is seen, using an award system. Successes and accomplishments are celebrated regularly, and staff believe in the inherent dignity and capacity of all the young people. These foundational beliefs and values are experienced by young people and parents/carers who comment positively on this experience.

"Good Samaritan College has been a Godsend for my grandson. The staff here know and care for him. They are always willing to listen to me about his needs and open to working flexibly to meet them." (Carer)

Maslow approach to community

Spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, and personal wellbeing within the community is a priority for both young people and staff. Maslow's hierarchy of needs demonstrates that when basic needs are met, young people are more likely to be in a positive mindset to learn. College procedures that support this understanding include

- Regular reviews of young people to identify gaps and ensure that each young person is being supported at the college, at home and the community.
- Twice per year parent/carer meetings are held to identify learning and personal goals and complete PLPs for every young person.
- The college genuinely welcomes and encourages parents and carers to contact the college for support of their young people and their families.
- Open and active communication with parents and carers is highly prioritised by the college. This ensures that when something has happened at the college during the day, parents and carers are informed and can support the young person appropriately when they arrive home.

"I used to cringe when I got a phone call from my son's previous school. At Good Samaritan College, I am just informed so we can work on it and if needed, asked to come in for a chat about how best to support him. I do not feel excluded or pushed out. They understand him and expect what he is able to do while encouraging him to grow." (Parent)

As described above, the college is currently in the process of developing individual behaviour support plans for each young person.

Recognition, Acceptance and Celebration of uniqueness

Good Samaritan College focuses on what both staff and young people bring to the community, accepting where they are at and celebrating their unique identities. This mindset leads to the provision of opportunities for learning and growth, including:

- Recognising and celebrating Indigenous and cultural events
- Cultural identity program
- Indigenous Leadership Camp
- Remembrance of the battle of One Tree Hill
- Yarning days at Peace Haven in Highfields / Women's business and Men's business
- NAIDOC celebrations
- Providing education about mental health; sexual health and healthy relationships
- Enabling guest speakers to provide education about topics, community concerns and the supports that are available. Domestic Violence Action Centre (DVAC) – ran Healthy Relationships during the Social and Emotional Program (SEP).

- Supporting the community - USQ students during SEP.

Trauma informed practice strategies

Since many young people at the college have been impacted by trauma, the college ensures that staff have a good understanding of the young people by

- Providing online training in Trauma informed practices.
- Developing an up-to-date data base as described earlier of current information about the young people and classroom which will be available online for staff later this year.
- Providing regular meditation for young people and staff which assists in self-regulation.
- Developing individual safety and behavioural plans for each young person to ensure that staff understand the most effective ways to enable success in the classrooms for the young people.
- Planning for the introduction of iCare watches, a world first trail, which is further outlined below.

Critical to the agenda for continuous improvement is the Principal's persistent search to identify any gaps if they exist in the daily life and operation of the College. Once identified these gaps are closed collaboratively.

Improvement strategies

- Embed the current programs and practices, while continuing to be innovative, dynamic, and flexible to allow for the emerging challenges the college and community face.
- Investigate ways to support staff to continue to engage in PLTs and the PLC in innovative and collaborative ways.
- Continue to promote and prioritise a sense of belonging and self-actualisation of the college's Indigenous young people.
-

Component 3.2 Community partnerships Findings

Partners

It is evident that Good Samaritan College has embraced and embedded partnerships with their young people's families and carers. There is a clear sense of community and partnership evidenced by the positive relationships that exist.

"The outstanding partnerships that exist between the staff and the parent/carers is foundational in the success of the college." (Community member)

The college communicates to all parties in effective, transparent, and open ways providing opportunities for the development of supportive relationships. This has resulted in partnerships that are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the college and partner organisations.

The College Leadership Team have actively nurtured staff commitment to and participation in striving to achieve their strategic objectives.

"We face challenges as a team, we are progressive, innovative, young person centered, dynamic and unique and willing to go the extra mile to ensure that our young people are offered the best supports to have a positive future." (Staff member)

"We are very lucky with the new staff. We have very quickly all got on the same page." (Staff member)

The College Leadership team is to be commended for their efforts to develop partnerships with the other Good Samaritan charism schools within the Diocese. This strategic decision has created a sense of belonging for the college community as part of its transformation from YCLC to Good Samaritan College.

The review team heard from a number of community members suggesting there would be significant benefits for current enrolled young people to hear the success stories of past students.

Student Learning

Good Samaritan College has actively sought ways to enhance the learning and wellbeing of the students by partnering with over 50 agencies and community groups. These partnerships have been strategically established after reflection on collected data to support the intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the College.

“The college has been great at keeping in touch with my support services and the college has a lot of connections with services that are available throughout Toowoomba. Last year students were provided with great support in regard to hearing, vision, flu shots etc.” (Student)

The award-winning College Counsellor was highly commended by all stakeholders, many suggesting that she is doing the role of two people. Many young people and families commented on the positive impact Jacinta Jensen (JJ) has made in their lives.

“JJ does a phenomenal amount of work. There is a need for more support in this role.” (Community member)

“Now that I am on staff, I appreciate how thoroughly deserved JJ’s State Spirit of Catholic Education Award is.” (Staff member)

“JJ handles a lot of complex cases. Do we need another JJ?” (Community member)

The College Leadership team highlighted that student academic reports have been developed to not only meet formal reporting requirements, but also as a means of beginning a discussion between the teachers and young people and their families and carers. These conversations are about the young people’s outcomes, learning attributes, future goals and aspirations and any support required. The students reported that they greatly appreciate the efforts that staff make with their reporting and follow up conversations.

Procedures

It is evident through the conversations conducted with staff that there is excellent clarity around the roles within the College and the responsibilities that are entailed in these roles.

Staff and students report that there is excellent understanding of the daily procedures and this is one of greatest contributors to the current success of the college. All staff and students know what is happening and where they need to be which reduces stress and confusion. The staff handbook is an excellent example of the organisational clarity that exists.

“The greatest thing about the procedures at the college is the start of the day and then end of the day community meetings to set the tone and allow for reconciliation or matters to be resolved prior to the next day. The young people leave with a clean slate.” (Staff member)

Staff report that procedures around decision making are transparent and made collaboratively with a focus on both the young people’s and staff’s needs and wellbeing.

Improvement Strategies

- Continue to work diligently to maintain the excellent partnerships that have been developed within the community by holding information session in any new areas of concern for parents/carers, staff and the young people.
- Continue to ensure that the college remain current and relevant within the context of youth in Toowoomba through connections with relevant agencies.
- Identify and engage affordable or free services needed to support the young people at Good Samaritan College.

- Investigate the possibility of past students being invited in to share their stories. Provide the opportunity for students to see success of past students and build pride.
- Investigate ways to enhance human resources support for the College Counsellor (eg provision of college vehicle).



Domain 4 Strategic resourcing and stewardship

Component 4.1 Staff development and wellbeing Findings

School Culture

It is reported by students and staff that the Principal continually promotes a safe and supportive environment, and it is the maintaining of high expectations with high support, that has greatly contributed to the current success of the college.

“I can definitely see an improvement in the last year in relation to the way students treat each other. This is because of the decision the college has made around expectations of members of the community, and how we go about being part of the community.” (Student)

One of the most evident aspects of the current culture of the college is the staff’s understanding, contribution to and commitment to the values and beliefs of the college culture. This can be attributed to both the Principal’s leadership and the flexibility and adaptability of the College Leadership team in their response to the staffing changes at the beginning of 2021. The improvement agenda was temporarily paused while the five new staff underwent induction and enculturation.

“At GSC all staff are committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities to our young people in an enhanced learning facility.” (Staff member)

“Your status as a school officer at this college is very much part of the team supporting the students and you are included.” (Staff member)

The college’s professional learning is clearly aligned with the stated priorities within the strategic plan and the professional goal setting program that all staff participate in. Examples of this include the professional learning that staff have completed in trauma informed teaching practice, deep learning, Ignite, Inspire Maths, RIS, HIT, REAP, Master of Educational Leadership study, and Cornerstones. Good Samaritan College is an excellent example of a high-functioning professional learning community. Staff speak of being encouraged to be innovative in putting into practice their professional learning.

“The openness for trialing different curriculum strategies and teaching practice is a real positive and the leadership team is very supportive of this. The focus on students engaging with an organised and structured curriculum is very positive.” (Staff member)

Caring for the individual

The college promotes and supports strategies that enhance the health and wellbeing of staff and students. The current initiative (Healthy Minds, Healthy Body, Healthy Lives) being investigated is an excellent example of how the college is proactively providing the young people and staff with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge to make decisions to optimise the health and wellbeing of themselves and others.

Staff wellbeing is a strong focus of the College Leadership team. Liisa as Principal has regular check-ins with all staff to gauge mental health wellbeing and she has proactively engaged a leadership coach to provide all staff the opportunity for discussions and guidance.

“The Principal is on board with staff wellbeing and ensuring that they are cared for, it is important to have the time for staff to reflect and relax to rejuvenate.” (Staff member)

“Staff wellbeing is certainly considered. Professional counselling has been made available for staff and the way that the staff support each other is great. There are certainly times when being a staff member at GSC is hard on your health and wellbeing but there are processes in place for example the PAC days which allow the time and space to not only prepare, but also reflect and share with peers so that relationships are built to support each other.” (Staff member)

The college timetable and curriculum structure is evidence of the skills and interests of the staff being identified and deployed in ways that best meet student needs. In addition, the inclusion of PAC days every second Monday, staff debriefing time for the last hour of each day, participation in an active yoga retreat and staff picnic are further examples of staff wellbeing structures.

“Liisa encourages and sees people’s possibilities. She has the ability to focus on people’s passions and how they can develop fulfilling their potential.” (Staff member)

Attraction, selection and retention

The College Leadership Team proactively implemented a more conscious and formal induction and orientation program for their new staff in 2021 in response to the arrival of five new staff.

The strategic initiative to investigate and implement a staff incentive scheme with the support of TCSO has been well received by the staff and the College Leadership team is to be congratulated on their efforts. Furthermore, it has been instrumental in the recruitment of the outstanding staff that are employed at the college.

Nurture and empowerment

All staff and students are engaged with reflection and goal setting processes. This process of goal setting for 2020 culminated in staff presenting their goals and outcomes to their peers and invited guests from the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office.

The review team heard that only a very small percentage of students have regular access to technology and internet away from college. There has been great improvement made to the availability of ICT devices at the college with all junior students having access to iPads and senior students have access to laptops when they are at the college. Staff comment that this has been greatly beneficial for the students and their learning in the senior years.

Improvement strategies

- Further implementation and embedding of the Staff Incentive Scheme (with the support of TCSO)
- Sustain the Good Samaritan College Staff Wellbeing program to ensure the physical and mental health of all staff members.
- Continue to support staff in their professional development, modelling a commitment to life-long and life-wide learning that is expected from the young people.
- Complete an eLearning and Technology plan to sustain the level of technology needed to allow for the innovative practices underway.

Component 4.2 Use of resources facilities and the learning environment

Findings

Resources

Good Samaritan College’s learning support teacher is active in supporting staff and the young people with the implementation of targeted learning programs. All new students partake in Probe testing to assess reading levels prior to being allocated to level appropriate classes.

The results of these targeted programs are clearly evident in the improved reading ages of the young people. Most of the young people have improved 2-3 reading year ages in 6 months of participating in the college's Reading Improvement Strategy program. 2021 has seen the introduction of the Inspire Maths initiative, another example of targeting the approach to the student's needs.

"School is providing resources and implementing programs that allow me to learn and the teachers are providing great feedback and constructive criticism." (Student)

"Resources and facilities are being efficiently and effectively used to allow for the introduction of new subjects. This can be greatly attributed to Marita." (Community member)

There is clear evidence that the college staff believe that their young people can succeed with support and the Leadership Team have prioritised the resourcing of initiatives aimed at improving student wellbeing, engagement, and learning.

"The high expectations that Liisa has for students about their learning and believing that they can do it is a great improvement. A big credit to the staff for what they are doing. The fact that the students are coming to school rather than just turning up irregularly is evidence of the success of the college." (Community member)

The Review Team heard great satisfaction in the planned new building and facilities upgrade from all stakeholders. These stakeholders also expressed some concern about the impact of increased enrolments.

Facilities and Learning environment

The college effectively uses its physical environment and available facilities to maximise student learning. The college has done a great job to accommodate the increased enrolments whilst still providing the appropriate space to provide a safe learning environment.

In 2020 the college developed its master plan which is clearly aligned with the strategic plan for the college. The building plan has been collaboratively created meeting the current and future needs of the college through three distinct phases. Phase one involves the demolition of the existing kitchen area, construction of a new three-story building to accommodate an undercroft for storage of college buses, hospitality kitchens and refrigeration facilities and new classrooms which the college has received capital grants funding to undertake later in 2021 – 2022.

Good Samaritan staff are using collaborative digital resources to complete their planning which greatly benefits the young people's learning.

Improvement strategies

- Embed the current practices already developed at Good Samaritan College to ensure the prudent financing and sustainability of innovation at the college.
- Continue to pursue the implementation of the master plan through phases two and three.
- Complete the successful implementation of the Healthy Bodies, Health Minds, Healthy Lives – a proactive and innovative neurological approach to the young people's wellbeing.
- Ensure that as enrolments increase in the future, resourcing levels are maintained so that the college can continue to implement its Mission and Vision.

Conclusion

The review team thanks the college community for the openness and trust extended to the reviewers over the three days of the review. We are confident that we have heard the 'story' of the college as perceived by staff, young people, parents, carers, and community members. There is consistent agreement, understanding and support for what is important in the college, including the change initiatives introduced during the last two years.

The college Principal is to be commended for her work in leading the college community through a significant rebranding process that genuinely engaged the whole school community. The underlying narrative of the Good Samaritan is known by all as well as the values and symbols that are associated with it. They are referred to and known in the daily life of the community.

The college Principal has ensured that the message of the Good Samaritan parable permeates all aspects of college life and touches the lives of the young people, staff, and the wider community. The everyday interactions and learnings at GSC are a tangible example of recontextualising the Gospel and encountering Jesus in word and action.

There has been a very significant strengthening of the academic focus of the college. This has resulted in the redesigning of the college curriculum offering and timetable structure. Staff have researched evidence-based best practice in teaching and learning in this context and adopted these practices whole heartedly. In doing so, they have become a genuine collaborative team who gather relevant data and collaboratively decide on the best way to meet the individual wellbeing and learning needs of the young people. As a result, attendance rates and level of student engagement in their learning have significantly improved.

The College Master Plan, developed in the same collaborative and inclusive way that the other initiatives have been developed, points to an exciting future with Phase 1 beginning this year.

The focused, committed, and capable leadership of the college Principal has enabled the very successful improvement agenda to move forward significantly in just two years. The review team's suggested improvement strategies are largely to strengthen what is currently happening and is aspired to, ensuring ongoing ownership and engagement across the whole college community.