



**Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane**

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EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW PANEL REPORT

School	St Michael's College, Merrimac	
Principal	Michael Nayler	
	Name	Role
School Representative	Veronica Wasiak	Deputy Principal
School Representative	Margaret Petherbridge	Assistant Principal Religious Education
School Representative	Kathryn Janovsky	Assistant Principal Curriculum
School Representative	Christopher Oakes	Assistant Principal Staff and Student Development
School Representative	Lloyd Robb	Business Manager
School Representative		
External School Review Panel	Name	Professional Position
Panel Chair	Tony Harkness	Educational Consultant
School's Area Supervisor	Annette Duffy	Area Supervisor – Cluster 2
External Validator and Panel Member	Mark Stower	Principal Villanova College Coorparoo
Panel Member	Les Conroy	Principal St Thomas More College Sunnybank
Panel Member	Mark Elliot	Principal Education Officer Change Management
Panel Member	Paul Allen	Director – School Operations
Panel Visit Date	Friday 20 October 2017	
* Attached Documentation for NSSA Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five year Schedule for School Cyclical Review • Validated Internal School Review Records for Components 3.5 (Accountability and Compliance) and 4.5 (School Improvement) • Evaluative commentary on how school addresses accreditation requirements with evidence of same audited by area supervisor • Schedule for External Review Day 	

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 Michael's College is a Catholic co-educational secondary College administered by Brisbane Catholic Education and located within in the Gold Coast suburb of Merrimac. The College opened in 1985 with an initial Year 8 cohort of 86 students. The College grew steadily in both enrolments and facilities over its first ten years. Presently the College has an enrolment of around 950 students across Year 7 to Year 12.

Educational providers on the Gold Coast operate within a very competitive arena. The College fee structure makes it one of the most affordable Catholic or independent schools on the Coast. Over the last three years Year 10–Year 12 student retention has been approximately 85%. It should be noted that student transitions on the Gold Coast tend to be higher in number than in other areas of South East Queensland.

The College has attracted many long-standing dedicated staff and the College has developed strong links with the local community. Positive relationships among teachers and students continue to be a feature of the College. Panel interviews with parents, students and staff confirmed the College's well-deserved reputation for providing a safe, welcoming and supportive community for students and their parents.

There is a positive disposition among parents and students to the Catholic ethos, the religious life celebrations, and the core College 'pillars' of respect, courage, justice, protection, integrity and dedication. These pillars are visually represented throughout the College.

There is a well-resourced and structured student services provision. This provision includes two counsellors, learning support teachers and learning support aides, a careers and vocational pathways coordinator and Campus Minister and Pastoral Aide.

A structured *Responsible Thinking and Restorative Justice* framework at the College supports effective behaviour management across the school and this, along with the positive relational culture among students and teachers, provides for a calm classroom-learning environment. There is some evidence to suggest that academic aspirations of parents and students are not as high as they could be, and the College is working on articulating a more effective balance of relational and academic culture within the college's mission, pedagogical, communications and marketing processes.

The College Leadership Team (CLT) has a number of acting positions at present with the Deputy Principal (DP) acting as Principal and the Assistant Principal–Staff and Student Development (AP-SSD) acting in the role of Deputy Principal. At the beginning of this year both of these roles had new occupants from outside of the school. A middle leader stepped up to the AP-SSD role. The AP–Curriculum and AP–Religious Education role holders have been continuing in their roles for a number of years.

The CLT and some middle leaders spoke of the movement and loss of key staff in the recent past as an impediment to building momentum with pedagogical change. Maternity leave and the required take-up of long service and movement in and out of contract positions were noted as examples of impediments.

A *Learning Enhancement and Academic Performance (LEAP)* program has been operating for a number of years. This program allocates a scheduled class period each week, which is primarily used to enhance literacy and numeracy but can also address particular academic processes such as for Year 10, transition planning. The program is coordinated by the AP–Curriculum and most teachers are involved in delivering the program throughout the year. While the content of the program has been previously revised to address College learning data there is some evidence to indicate that the delivery of the program particularly in relation to teacher skill capacity needs further review to make it more effective.

There is an *Excellent Learning and Teaching (ELT)* team coordinating and leading the College's implementation of the Brisbane Catholic Education *Excellent Learning and Teaching* Strategy across the school. This team comprises the Deputy Principal, the APC the APSSD and two middle leaders one of whom has a designated role for the monitoring and use of learning data throughout the school. The focus of the team is on embedding the high yield strategies of *ELT* that include the use of student learning data walls, review and response procedures and learning walks and talks.

The College provides a one-to-one device for each student to support learning across the curriculum. This initiative includes an iPad for Year 7 through to Year 9 and a MacBook in Year 10 through to Year 12. The College operates a learning management system (*LMS*) and independent cloud server (*OwnCloud*) that provides students and staff with 24/7 access to and storage of learning documents and resources.

Over the last three years the College has used a number of pedagogical narratives for teaching and learning across the school. The first narrative is the College's eight pedagogical principles that were developed in house using contemporary research. The concepts and language of Visible Learning and signage in classrooms has been a later development, and more recently the high yield strategies from the Brisbane Catholic Education *ELT* strategy have been introduced. Targeted whole school professional learning through 2016/17 and a change in the role description of a middle leader focused on embedding literacy has assisted this pedagogical renewal.

This new, consistent and explicit approach to evidence-based pedagogy aligned to BCE initiatives has provided a significant challenge for staff to adapt and align their pedagogy but it is a challenge that the majority of teachers are now embracing. To some extent the pedagogical narratives have been synthesised in the minds of teachers but there is more work to be done to align and embed the narratives in classroom practice. The panel saw frequent evidence of learning intentions and success criteria being used in classrooms.

NAPLAN results for Year 7 and Year 9 reading and numeracy are generally below the national mean standard. Writing results have been generally stronger than the national standard although there has been a recent dip in Year 9 results. In 2017 there was better than average learning growth for reading from Year 7 to Year 9 and significant growth in writing for the same cohort. The numeracy growth results however are both below the national standard and not keeping pace with national trends.

The panel met with a group of parents who expressed very positive views about the College, particularly in regard to the "*safe, welcoming and inclusive ethos*" that they recognised in the school. Student well-being is recognised by parents and staff as a feature of the school. Parents affirmed the value of the lunchtime tutorials that staff offer. Some felt that subject selection procedures for the senior phase of learning could be improved and that the LEAP program could be more effective.

Middle leaders indicated that they were still working on '*moving their role more towards leadership of learning*' rather than primarily on the coordination and management of the demands of the job. They spoke very positively of the introduction of Visible Learning language and the use of learning intentions and success criteria and regarded it as "*one of the best things we have ever done.*" Middle leaders affirmed the leadership of the AP-Curriculum with these changes and her support of their work.

Middle leaders also indicated that there had been an increase in teacher capacity to understand and use student learning data and that teacher conversations about such data were becoming more frequent. They spoke positively of the introduction of collaborative team meetings occurring twice a term and made up of core class teachers to address consistency of learning and assessment, examine the learning data of classes and develop strategies in response to the data. Cyclical review reports (2016) indicated that further work was required to improve communication across core teaching classes.

Teachers indicated that they have, at times, felt overburdened with the pace of the current pedagogical changes underway and they believed the underlying rationale for the various changes could be better communicated and discussed. They noted however that there was good resource follow-through by the CLT for implementing the changes. The CLT is very conscious of the increased demands on staff caused by recent pedagogical changes as well as the impending changes to senior secondary teaching and assessment.

Teachers indicated that the College does things "*pretty well and a few things very well*". They do believe the LEAP program can be more effective. There was some discussion about the College benefitting from stronger strategic connections with other schools. School officers are very proud of the school and are very willing to support the classroom pedagogical renewal presently underway.

The student group reported that they enjoy their time at the College and that they feel safe and supported. Students believe that they have encouraging and motivating teachers and that they receive consistent support from them. They did find the ongoing changes to the College's learning management systems frustrating. They valued the role of a

'teacher learning mentor' who met with the students at the end of each term in Year 11 to review their progress. They were happy with the range of pathways offered at the senior level and indicated that there were positive views held by students as to whether a student took an academic or vocational pathway in Years 11 and 12.

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.

B.1 Effectiveness of School Cyclical Review

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

College leadership and staff are commended for their faithful engagement in the cyclical review process over the last five years. Leadership, resources and time were allocated to the process and there has been over that time a more effective balance of top down and bottom up leadership and engagement in the process. Staff cyclical review meetings and ongoing specific reviews of curriculum, Information Technology, the College RE program and the significant work on better articulating College charism have provided both forums and evidence for the cyclical review process.

The College provided the panel with records detailing the school's previous five-year engagement with cyclical review. Twenty component review records detailing effectiveness ratings, areas of strength and areas for improvement were noted by the panel. The quality and depth of these reports varied with more recent reporting (2016/17) being more explicit about commending strengths and identifying weaknesses. There was a narrow spread for the component ratings, which were either designated at a level 6 or level 5 effectiveness.

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

Teachers have used online surveys to provide input into the cyclical review process. The P&F and College Board also have engaged the cyclical review process and discussion of school annual goals and future directions. More recently a major student wellbeing and engagement video was produced. Further use of student feedback has the potential to improve student-learning engagement.

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

The panel sighted as a SPARROW printout the 2017 school strategic renewal and annual plan. The major focus of planning was directed towards pedagogical renewal, staff and student welfare and support and implementing processes around the new Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance system. Annual principal reports provided some evidence of achievements realised against these plans. Significant professional learning has been undertaken by the staff, principally in areas relating to pedagogical renewal and the use of student learning data.

The panel suggests that a more effective focus and alignment of strategic and annual plans with the College Learning Growth Plan are needed. Such focus and alignment can then be used to communicate and visualise a consistent message around improvement goals, targets and achievements. This will also facilitate transparent reporting against plans and targets.

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

The College uses the following learning data to inform and analyse the effectiveness of teaching and learning at the College:

- Student Reporting Standard data across the five levels of achievement A-E (SRS)
- ACER PAT-R data
- NAPLAN Year 7 and Year 9 data
- Writing Analysis Tool data
- Queensland Core Skills Test
- QCAA Year 12 Outcomes and Year 12 transition data.

The above data is stored in and made accessible through the Brisbane Catholic E Business Intelligence (BI) tool. A data wall has been established in the staffroom to display, monitor and promote collaboration concerning the writing performance data. The panel heard reports of a growing capacity among teachers to effectively access and utilise this data. There is evidence that the data is being used progressively to inform unit planning. Analysis of student performance at every QCS internal school testing juncture continues to inform the *LEAP* program.

In the recent past learning data was used to revise the content of the College's LEAP program and is presently used by core class teachers in the collaborative team meetings previously noted. On Wednesdays and Fridays professional learning '*pop-ups*' have been used to grow the data literacy skills among teachers. A '*review and response*' process has been used with teachers focusing on Year 8 writing data from 2016. In 2017 College middle leader role descriptions were modified to focus more on the leading of literacy improvement.

This year the College developed and implemented a SMART goal of improving academic writing skills, nominating a target of a 30% improvement in the number of Year 7 and Year 8 students reaching the BCE target in writing. Sustained silent writing has been introduced as a consistent college practice to support improved writing.

College leadership recognises that there is scope to improve both NAPLAN and the Year 12 outcomes data, particularly for higher ability students. The panel notes that the proportion of College students achieving an OP between 1–5 is significantly below the state mean but roughly comparable to other Brisbane Catholic Education school performance. In 2013, 28 students from Year 9 achieved an '*upper band*' NAPLAN result but only four of those same students achieved within the 1-5 OP band in Year 12 (2017). Research indicates that a stronger conversion rate from high performing Year 9 NAPLAN students to 1-5 OP band achievement is warranted. The proportion of students achieving an OP 16–25 is much smaller and therefore more preferable than the state and Brisbane Catholic Education schools' performance in those bands.

The proportion of Year 12 students exiting the school with a QCE qualification averages around 92%, a figure that is comparable to both the state and BCE schools mean proportion. In the most recent data available (2016), 46.5 % of students undertaking a VET course through the College achieved a Certificate 111 or 1V outcome with the remaining proportion achieving a Certificate 1 or 11. Some students who achieved a VET certificate also achieved an OP.

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 panel notes a number of renewal initiatives undertaken by the College over the last five years. In particular the panel commends the following:

- Significant development and enhancement of the College charism and a plan to strengthen Catholic identity and the way it is articulated
- Development and introduction of the eight College pedagogical principles
- Introduction and embedding of Visible Learning language such as in the use of learning intentions and success criteria across all classrooms
- Increasing student learning support through an increase in school officer time in classrooms, the addition of a speech pathologist, the increase in counsellor provision and introduction of an indigenous school officer
- Creation of a middle leader role to analyse learning data and to use insights to inform teacher practice
- Introduction of the Student Mentor Learning Program
- Introduction of a student data wall, learning walks and talks and review and response strategies
- Establishment of collaborative teams for each cohort of core teachers to develop collaborative teaching strategies in response to student learning data.

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	
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-	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 (<i>Yes for 2016 and 2015</i>)	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:

The panel noted and discussed the documentation of the evidence audit of accreditation regulations conducted on the 15/9/2017. The College strategic and annual implementation plan for 2017 was noted. Principal reports noting achievements for 2016 was supplied.

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.

An extensive report provided to the panel detailed a comprehensive summary of the Religious Education (RE) program, its delivery and monitoring and the religious life of the school. The religious context of the College indicates that 53% of students identify as Catholic with a very small number of families being regular attendees at Church. Religious literacy and appropriate liturgical and Eucharistic engagement are key areas that the College addresses particularly in the Year 7 RE program.

Significant work has been undertaken in the renewal of the College charism and staff spiritual formation. A recent staff pilgrimage to France and Italy and engagement with the *BCE Catching Fire* program have been two major initiatives. In recent years, the death of two staff members and of a student has tested the staff in many ways.

Each year each cohort attends a spirituality day(s), either as a camp or a retreat. These events have a focus on student spiritual growth and wellbeing. Each term 'student house groups' participate in the parish Friday 9am Eucharistic celebration.

The College has had from its earliest days a Chapel that can seat up two to three classes. It is mainly used for prayer and reflection. Occasionally it is used for other gatherings. An exclusive focus on prayer and worship for this space and further liturgical refurbishment might be considered to enhance this unique place in the college

The College has a strategic and pastoral alignment with the Surfers Paradise Parish. Fr Peter Dillon PP met with the panel and is very supportive of the College. He looks for ways in which students might be better engaged in Parish life. He has a positive perception of the College. He noted that the House Masses are well prepared but would like to see more students assisting with and participating in these liturgical events. The parish has traditionally supplied a College Chaplain but frequent changes in the role have limited the capacity to develop relationships with staff and students.

The College has successfully developed, and had validated the College Religious Education program. The panel noted a professional and well-organised approach to the teaching of RE and the professional capacity-building of RE staff. Regular schedules and documentation supporting RE professional learning were evident. There is a good culture of RE staff sharing professional insights and learning gained from RE in-service. The panel recognises the significant contribution of the APRE who is retiring at the end of this year.

Key development areas being addressed within RE department include:

- The effective use of inquiry-based learning
- The embedding of college pedagogical practices inclusive of
 - (i) The consistent use of learning intentions and success criteria and their alignment to the Archdiocesan RE Curriculum achievement standards
 - (ii) The consistent use of college unit plans and assessment tasks that provide for differentiation of learning particularly for higher ability students
- Encouraging new teachers into the professional learning of RE teachers and the teaching of religious education

- Addressing and supporting the gaining of accreditation to teach RE for all RE teachers. There are presently 17 teachers of RE at the College, the majority of whom teach more than one RE class. All teachers of religion are Catholic, and the large majority have either accreditation or interim accreditation. Some teachers have completed some RE studies and a few have had many years of teaching RE at the College but do not have the formal qualifications for accreditation.

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.

Panel feedback is noted after each College key direction (italicised)

- *Literacy Improvement in Year 7/8.* This is a key direction to be pursued, and college numeracy outcomes can also be part of a strategic focus. The use of relevant achievement and growth indicator data with appropriate targets for selected cohorts should be considered to help focus and develop the aspirations of students and the collaborative work of teachers in the junior years. Year 9 NAPLAN data can also inform such a strategic focus. Networking with relevant Catholic primary schools to explore insights from the Year 7 NAPLAN testing and identify the most effective Year 5–7 pedagogical strategies is worthy of exploration.
- *The embedding of Excellent Learning and Teaching (ELT).* The panel commends the significant work undertaken by the College in the last three years in relation to the development and implementation of the College's eight pedagogical principles, Visible Learning language across classrooms and the increasing use of high yield ELT strategies.

As would be expected there remains an ongoing need to continually synthesise and communicate the 'why' of any expected pedagogical practice and to transparently review the effectiveness of classroom implementation using student feedback, student learning data and collaborative dialogue among teaching staff. The continuing use of the Collaborative Learning Teams can be a valuable forum for such review.

- *Implementing the new Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance System.* As with all secondary Colleges in Queensland this major change has added extra work and organisational anxiety to the renewal process. The College is making sure it is ready to implement the new external assessment processes, new ATAR arrangements and the appropriate vocational pathways that contribute to the ATAR. Networking with other Catholic secondary colleges remains critical to maintaining an informed dialogue. The relevance of these senior school assessment changes for middle school assessment is also important.
- *Differentiation of teaching strategies for multi-ability classes.* This is a key strategy for promoting the best possible outcomes for all students and building a culture of independent learners who have aspirations for achieving their best. The consistent and effective use of subject unit plans that identify deep learning, assessment criteria sheets with relevant rubrics aligned to achievement standards, and targeted student feedback will be key considerations in implementing such a strategy.
- *Focus on developing self-directed and responsible learners.* This strategy is not only relevant to the college's pedagogical processes but also to the culture of learning in the College. The naming and ritualization of this key outcome in College documentation (viz. mission statement), marketing and communications and College gatherings need consideration. The further integration of academic achievement within the relational and supportive college culture has already been noted by the CLT. Naming, building and affirming such a cultural change that supports and engages parents, students and staff on the journey will be a key leadership challenge.

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

The following panel recommendations are noted for the consideration of the College:

- Continue to articulate, communicate and embed an understanding of the key elements of the College pedagogical framework amongst staff, students and parents and refine processes in place to gather and review teacher, student and parent feedback, and student learning data to evaluate the effectiveness of the framework
- Develop a five-year College strategic plan that clearly identifies (within the system priority of 'Excellent Learning and Teaching') the key strategies that will drive student-learning improvement. Consider in the implementation of the key strategies the use of collaboratively developed and supported ancillary targets (extra to that of the agreed BCE whole school target) that might provide a focus for literacy and numeracy improvement in the junior school years

- Review the implementation of the College LEAP program to better focus and align its effectiveness in light of student learning data, student feedback and the developing of a culture of self-directed and responsible learners
- Review the College mission statement and key College communications to promote a better integration of the pursuit of academic achievement and the provision of student support and their well-being.

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 thanks the College staff for their preparation for this external review and the open manner in which they could improve, and all stakeholder groups reflected on their areas of effectiveness and areas where they can improve. The College has a good standing in the local community, with good relationships among teachers, students and parents, and this provides a wonderful foundation for continuing to address student-learning improvement.

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 7, 9 NAPLAN data, Year 12 QCS data, Year 12 QSA exit data and Year 12 (Next Steps) transition data from the BI tool
-	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, College Leadership Team, Middle Leaders, Teachers and School Officers and conversation with them on school improvement (See schedule for the day)
-	Meetings with Parents, students and the Parish Priest
-	Learning walks around the school (including visits to learning spaces)

Other experiences as noted:

Panel Chair Signature:	<i>A. T. Harkness</i>
Date:	1/12/2017