

Catholic Education Office Melbourne

School Review Report

Prepared for

Assumption College Kilmore

2009

- **School E Number** **E1016**
- **Principal** **Michael Kenny**
- **School Reviewers** **Pam Burton/Geoff McPherson**
- **Dates of Review** **24 & 26 August 2009**
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assumption College is recognised by its community as the school of first choice, an enviable reputation that attracts students from a wide community base. The relationship with the school often extends through many generations of families, day students and borders. The long held traditions of the College and relationships with former students who value and celebrate the school's proud history are vital to the school's identity and are embedded in the College culture.

The review reveals a number of **positive factors** that provide the college with capacity for continuing improvement in this next phase:-

- The outstanding facilities development that has occurred in the last 3-4 years to place the school in a very strong position to deliver contemporary curriculum and pedagogy, especially the recently completed science and technology centre.
- The well ordered and purposeful learning environment. Students are very well behaved and the tone and atmosphere of the college is very settled and secure for students. The student uniform is worn with pride by students. Students in focus groups were very impressive in terms of their respect of each others' views and their courtesy to one another. Students represent their school with pride at social and sporting events.
- The growing impact of the Marist Charism as integral to all activity in the college.
- The richness of the college curriculum and extensive range of sporting and other opportunities that the college offers.
- The creation of leadership positions to drive change and improvement.
- The shift to a focus on learning outcomes and the commitment and hard work of the majority of staff to lift standards.
- The excellent support for underachieving students through the Learning Enhancement Centre
- The high regard for the college in the wider community.
- The potential of the new vertically structured house system to grow community and enable students to develop the values, attitudes and competencies to become well rounded and socially responsible young people.

Evaluation of Performance

Education in Faith

Assumption College is proud of its Marist heritage and proclaims the values and traditions of St Marcellin Champagnat. These values are visibly present in all areas of the school, in the grounds and in the interior of all buildings. The College Chapel set midst the Prayer Garden is a focal point for school's religious celebrations and a sacred space for quiet reflection. The Religious Education classroom based program based on *Coming to Know, Worship and Love* is gradually being embedded into the curriculum. The review identifies a need to ensure shared teacher understanding around the inquiry based teaching philosophy and practice. Social Justice is inherent in the school's St Marcellin Champagnat Charism and through the Christian Service program reaches out to support communities in need. The Five Pillars *Presence, Simplicity, Family spirit, Love of work and the Way of Mary* thread their way through the faith life of the College.

Learning and Teaching

AIM and NAPLAN data indicate sound levels of performance in literacy and numeracy overall with some evidence of improvement over the review period. NAPLAN data for Year 9 2008 [students who had been at Assumption for over 2 years] indicate Assumption College being above the state mean for Reading, and whilst Writing and Numeracy were indicated as lower than Reading these results still matched the state mean. However, more detailed analysis against the expected standards of the VELs reveals that there are very marked differences in performance in Writing and Numeracy compared with Reading. A larger proportion of students achieve well above the VELs standards in Reading than in Writing and Numeracy. Conversely a larger proportion of students are indicated as being significantly below standard in Writing and Numeracy – perhaps as high as 50%.

The college achieves well at VCE with an All Studies mean similar to or slightly above the state mean. However, there is evidence of a declining trend between 2006 and 2008 and a lower proportion of 40+ scores. The College is to be congratulated on its ever widening range of post-compulsory pathways available to students. VCE, VET, VCAL and School Based Apprenticeships offer multiple choices to assist students with their ultimate career choices. It is worth noting that the school is consciously seeking to change student and community perceptions around VCE alternative study options to a more contemporary view that recognises the benefits in each of the alternatives, depending on student career interests. The reviewers commend the college on taking this initiative

Student Wellbeing

The student survey indicates that this is an area of relative strength for the college and data suggest that the large majority of students have positive feelings about their relationships with each other and feel safe at school. The overwhelming impression of the college to the external visitor is that students are very settled in their relationships with each other and with staff, that behaviour is of a very good standard and the overall atmosphere of the college is orderly and purposeful. This is a view of the school that is well supported by staff and parents who see Assumption as having a safe and friendly atmosphere. Students in focus groups were very impressive in terms of their respect of each others' views and their courtesy to one another. Attendance is very good with average absences only about 7 days per year, well below the state average.

In this context it is significant that actual *Student Morale* variable places the college around just the 22nd percentile compared with other Victorian school. On other relationship variables the college was around the 50th percentile or even higher. The analysis suggests that whilst students' attitudes to school are quite positive overall and they enjoy their friends, there is a deeper level at which school does not provide a sufficiently strong sense of connectedness which impacts on their general sense of wellbeing at school.

Leadership and Management

The leadership of Assumption College is to be commended for its commitment to improvement, and over the last 3-4 years significant changes have been made to enable the college to better meet the educational needs of students and the expectations of families. It was also evident that leadership is concerned to build the capacity of the college to deliver better student outcomes through changes to teaching practice and structures. The Review finds that there is a lack of positive staff climate to assist in driving this change and that there is significant disconnection between leadership and staff that seriously impedes the capacity of the college to transform its learning culture in the way that has been envisaged. In comparison with other Victorian schools responses on the staff survey place Assumption at the lower end of the bottom 25% of schools, The variables indicated as requiring most improvement were *Supportive Leadership* [Empathy], *Engagement* [Teamwork, Ownership, Empowerment] and *Staff Learning* [Appraisal & Recognition/Professional Growth].

Community

Assumption College has long and substantial relationships with its parish, local and wider community which has evolved over the years and developed a unique characteristic that defines the nature of the school. It is complex and expansive, reaching out to the wide spread local community and embracing sister schools interstate. Central to the College community are the century old Marist relationships, upon which the college was founded. Parents are welcomed into the school and given many opportunities to participate in the sporting, cultural and social life of the College. Despite these

opportunities, Insight SRC Parent Survey data place the school in the lower 25% of Victorian Schools for Parent Input. The review identifies improving opportunities for parent input as a focus.

The direction for Improvement

It will be evident from this overall summary that in each sphere the school has some significant achievements and these have been recognised through the review. At the same time there remain some significant challenges, not only in terms of **better outcomes for students**, but also in **leadership and staff culture** as well as **improved teaching practice**. The reviewers offer the following framework to assist in shaping the new School Improvement Plan for this next period.

	ADVICE ON BROAD GOALS	INTENDED IMPROVED OUTCOMES.	KEY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES
Education in Faith	A goal that features Students actively embracing the Marist Charism in term of social justice, relevant, meaningful prayer and religious studies	That the importance of the Marist Charism will strengthen for students, staff and parents.	<p>Ensure that Marist Charism and its inherent Catholic tradition are at the centre of all aspects of the school's life.</p> <p>Build leadership capacity across the school to ensure strong and distributed leadership.</p> <p>Clearly articulate and create ownership of our priorities, ensuring there is follow-up and sustained attention to ongoing implementation</p> <p>Build a shared vision for teaching and learning for Assumption College that is student centred and clear about moral purpose.</p> <p>Build a culture of high expectations by enabling and requiring all teachers to implement focussed and explicit teaching in all learning areas.</p> <p>Increase teachers' understanding of learning data and how to use it to plan purposeful classroom teaching.</p>
Learning and Teaching	A goal that sets high expectations for student achievement 7 to 12 and that seeks to value all post compulsory options	That there will be improved student outcomes in:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Literacy 7-10 with a focus on Writing across the curriculum. ▫ Numeracy 7-10 ▫ All senior certificates i.e VCE, VET and VCAL 	
Student Wellbeing	To provide an environment where student wellbeing is the integration of the academic, social and religious dimensions of our school's energy so that an atmosphere of care prevails within all aspects of the school community.	That students' connectedness to school will improve.	
Leadership and Management	To ensure a work environment that is characterised by shared vision, a strong sense of team work and a focus on continuous improvement	That staff culture will improve.	
School Community	The School Self Reflection Report states <i>To explore ways of welcoming parents and making College activities more accessible to parents particularly our boarding community considering their geographic disadvantage</i>	That the engagement of parents and the wider community in the college will be strengthened.	

Recommendations for CEOM school review reports 2008

The reviewer offers the following advice in relation to school planning in the sphere of *Education in Faith*

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN				
ANNUAL ACTION PLAN				
Developing the broad goal[s] for this sphere.	Intended outcomes [Specific areas for improvement]	Setting targets	Key Strategies [High order approaches that may be applicable to the achievement of more than one goal]	Examples of actions that may assist the school in the implementation key strategies in this sphere, and the achievement of intended outcomes.
<p>A goal that features students actively embracing the Marist Charism in terms of social justice, relevant, meaningful prayer and religious studies</p>	<p>That the importance of the Marist Charism will strengthen for students, staff and parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current score for Student Importance on the Catholic Culture Survey is around 45 it would be expected that a ranking of at least 55 be achieved • Current score for Teacher Importance on the Catholic Culture Survey is around 58 it would be expected that a ranking of around 70 could be achieved • Current score for Parent Importance on the Catholic Culture Survey is around 76 it would be expected that a ranking of around 85 could be achieved 	<p>Ensure that Marist Charism and its inherent Catholic tradition are at the centre of all aspects of the school's life.</p> <p>Build leadership capacity across the school to ensure strong and distributed leadership.</p> <p>Clearly articulate and create ownership of our priorities, ensuring there is follow-up and sustained attention to ongoing implementation</p> <p>Build a shared vision for teaching and learning for Assumption College that is student centred and clear about moral purpose.</p> <p>Build a culture of high expectations by enabling and requiring all teachers to implement focussed and explicit teaching in all learning areas.</p> <p>Increase teachers' understanding of learning data and how to use it to plan purposeful classroom teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include questioning about Marist Charism in performance management. • Consult the community to clarify and reaffirm the importance of the Marist Charism • Seek advice and additional involvement from the Marist community • Increase the % of teachers accredited to teach RE • Review RE PLT organisation and operations including expectations around attendance and participation • Seek ways to increase student participation in preparing and leading prayer • Identify ways of strengthening student leaders involvement in active participation in faith development and expression • Consult students to identify meaningful social justice actions

Recommendations for CEOM school review reports 2008

The reviewer offers the following advice in relation to school planning in the sphere of *Learning and Teaching*

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN				
ANNUAL ACTION PLAN				
Developing the broad goal[s] for this sphere.	Intended outcomes [Specific areas for improvement]	Setting targets	Key Strategies [High order approaches that may be applicable to the achievement of more than one goal]	Examples of actions that may assist the school in the implementation key strategies in this sphere, and the achievement of intended outcomes.
<p>A goal that sets high expectations for student achievement 7 to 12 that seeks to value all post compulsory options</p>	<p>That there will be improved student outcomes in:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Literacy 7-10 with a focus on Writing across the curriculum. ▫ Numeracy 7-10 ▫ All senior certificates i.e VCE, VET and VCAL 	<p>NAPLAN at Year 9</p> <p>In Writing and Numeracy to reduce the proportion of students who are 12 months or more behind the expected standard to no more than 20%</p> <p>Increase the proportion of student who are 12 months or more ahead to at least 30%</p> <p>Other targets</p> <p>Set targets for progress of at least one full VELs level over two years, using NAPLAN and On Demand Testing.</p> <p>Teacher assessments against the VELs to indicate at least 80% of students achieving a C or better.</p> <p>VCE</p> <p>An All Studies median of 33 by 2013.</p>	<p>Ensure that Marist Charism and its inherent Catholic tradition are at the centre of all aspects of the school's life.</p> <p>Build leadership capacity across the school to ensure strong and distributed leadership.</p> <p>Clearly articulate and create ownership of our priorities, ensuring there is follow-up and sustained attention to ongoing implementation</p> <p>Build a shared vision for teaching and learning for Assumption College that is student centred and clear about moral purpose.</p> <p>Build a culture of high expectations by enabling and requiring all teachers to implement focussed and explicit teaching in all learning areas.</p> <p>Increase teachers' understanding of learning data and how to use it to plan purposeful classroom teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use professional learning teams as a process to extend and improve teaching strategies. ▪ Embed formative assessment practices in all learning areas. ▪ More rigorous use of data at all levels of school operation including individual teachers using it to plan purposeful teaching. Use the expertise that some teachers already have to skill others. ▪ Develop a system for tracking student learning outcomes – needs to be uncomplicated, up-to-date and accessible. ▪ Systematic, rigorous and constructive performance appraisal. ▪ Make use of the P-10 English Continuum and Maths Continuum as a framework for planning in literacy and numeracy. ▪ Implement systematic performance planning, drawing on the elements of Performance and Development Culture. including planned professional learning. ▪ Prepare an ICT plan that includes laptops for all teachers and a program to build skills and infrastructure. ▪ Teach study skills. ▪ Redesign curriculum 7-10, ensuring that it that embeds VELs at a deep level.

Recommendations for CEOM school review reports 2008

The reviewer offers the following advice in relation to school planning in the *sphere of Student Wellbeing*

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN		ANNUAL ACTION PLAN		
Developing the broad goal[s] for this sphere.	Intended outcomes [Specific areas for improvement]	Setting targets	Key Strategies [High order approaches that may be applicable to the achievement of more than one goal	Examples of actions that may assist the school in the implementation key strategies in this sphere, and the achievement of intended outcomes.
<p>To provide an environment where student wellbeing is the integration of the academic, social and religious dimensions of our school's energy so that an atmosphere of care prevails within all aspects of the school community.</p>	<p>That students' connectedness to school will improve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Survey.... a score of at least 80/100 on <i>Student Morale</i> • Parent Survey a score of at least 80/100 on <i>Connectedness to School</i> • Staff survey - -- a score of at least 60/100 on <i>Student Motivation</i> 	<p>Ensure that Marist Charism and its inherent Catholic tradition are at the centre of all aspects of the school's life.</p> <p>Build leadership capacity across the school to ensure strong and distributed leadership.</p> <p>Clearly articulate and create ownership of our priorities, ensuring there is follow-up and sustained attention to ongoing implementation</p> <p>Build a shared vision for teaching and learning for Assumption College that is student centred and clear about moral purpose.</p> <p>Build a culture of high expectations by enabling and requiring all teachers to implement focussed and explicit teaching in all learning areas.</p> <p>Increase teachers' understanding of learning data and how to use it to plan purposeful classroom teaching.</p>	<p>The School Self Reflection pp.21-22 includes a number of actions that are appropriate to improvement in this sphere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed a whole school approach to pastoral care. in the implementation of the vertical house system. • Sustained implementation of Restorative Practices. • Ensure that student voice is considered in school planning and decision-making. • Ensure that the Personal Learning domain of the VELS is developed and strengthened in curriculum planning. • Engage students in the development of a student leadership plan to expand opportunities for students to undertake meaningful leadership roles. • Engage students in thinking through processes that affect their learning. • Student mentoring program. • Make clear links between student wellbeing and learning and teaching practice. • Enable all staff to extend their repertoire of student management strategies. • Reinstatement of academic affirmation. - Celebrating success of students – school colours. • Review boarding practices - relationships. – communication between day school and boarding supervision.

Recommendations for CEOM school review reports 2008

The reviewer offers the following advice in relation to school planning in the sphere of Leadership and Management

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN				
ANNUAL ACTION PLAN				
Developing the broad goal[s] for this sphere.	Intended outcomes [Specific areas for improvement]	Setting targets	Key Strategies [High order approaches that may be applicable to the achievement of more than one goal]	Examples of actions that may assist the school in the implementation key strategies in this sphere, and the achievement of intended outcomes.
To ensure a work environment that is characterised by shared vision, a strong sense of team work and a focus on continuous improvement	That staff culture will improve.	Given the overall low levels of satisfaction demonstrated in the staff survey, it is suggested that the college aims to ensure that all <i>Staff Climate</i> variables [Empathy, Clarity, Engagement and Learning] will move to at least 70 on the 100 point scale	<p>Ensure that Marist Charism and its inherent Catholic tradition are at the centre of all aspects of the school's life.</p> <p>Build leadership capacity across the school to ensure strong and distributed leadership.</p> <p>Clearly articulate and create ownership of our priorities, ensuring there is follow-up and sustained attention to ongoing implementation</p> <p>Build a shared vision for teaching and learning for Assumption College that is student centred and clear about moral purpose.</p> <p>Build a culture of high expectations by enabling and requiring all teachers to implement focussed and explicit teaching in all learning areas.</p> <p>Increase teachers' understanding of learning data and how to use it to plan purposeful classroom teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Prepare and implement a leadership development plan that includes quality leadership training for the whole team and individual members. ▫ Expand leaders' knowledge and effective uses of the full range of leadership competencies i.e. change leadership behaviours. ▫ Ensure the overall leadership plan includes the development of staff in key "middle level" positions of responsibility ▫ Develop and implement an agreed protocol for staff professional practice and behaviour that reflects college values. ▫ Seek external support to assist in leadership coaching to develop leadership behaviour. ▫ Leaders to be a presence in classrooms and other learning contexts. ▫ Use time and organisational structures to optimise achievement of core purpose. ▫ Affirm and celebrate success – a positive approach to build pride in the school. ▫ Revise and clarify decision-making and communication, particularly to ensure that processes for input are clearly understood and implemented.

Recommendations for CEOM school review reports 2008

The reviewer offers the following advice in relation to school planning in the *sphere of School Community*.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN				
ANNUAL ACTION PLAN				
Developing the broad goal[s] for this sphere.	Intended outcomes [Specific areas for improvement]	Setting targets	Key Strategies [High order approaches that may be applicable to the achievement of more than one goal]	Examples of actions that may assist the school in the implementation key strategies in this sphere, and the achievement of intended outcomes.
<p>The School Self Reflection Report states <i>To explore ways of welcoming parents and making College activities more accessible to parents particularly our boarding community considering their geographic disadvantage</i></p>	<p>That the engagement of parents and the wider community in the college will be strengthened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering the low levels of parent input on the Parent Survey and the intention to engage parents more in the life of the college a target that moves the Parent Input from 60 to 70 on the Parent Opinion Survey would be appropriate 	<p>Ensure that Marist Charism and its inherent Catholic tradition are at the centre of all aspects of the school's life. Build leadership capacity across the school to ensure strong and distributed leadership. Clearly articulate and create ownership of our priorities, ensuring there is follow-up and sustained attention to ongoing implementation Build a shared vision for teaching and learning for Assumption College that is student centred and clear about moral purpose. Build a culture of high expectations by enabling and requiring all teachers to implement focussed and explicit teaching in all learning areas. Increase teachers' understanding of learning data and how to use it to plan purposeful classroom teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways of connecting with former collegians to strengthen student connections with community Conduct parent and student focus groups to source ways of including parents in the life of the college Contact local community organisations such as Rotary and the Lions Club to identify possible joint projects Contact local shire council, particularly youth workers and community project managers to identify possible joint projects Review and strengthen current interactions with the Kilmore parish Work with the College Board and Parents and Friends organisation to seek ways of engaging with parents and wider community