

COLLEGE PRIORITY REVIEW SUMMARY 2016

Executive Summary

2.1 School Context

Tyrrell College, a Prep to Year 12 school, is located in the small Mallee town of Sea Lake which is about 400 kilometres North West of Melbourne. The closest rural centre of significant size is Swan Hill (75 kilometres). The community is mainly farm based and the area is well known for its rich grain farming. The local economy and demography is affected by the range of factors that impact on farming, including extremes in climate and the consolidation of farms into larger scale operations in contexts of increased use of technology and economies of scale.

The College enrolments have slightly declined over the past four years. Currently 165 students are enrolled. The school attracts about 60% of district preschool children and typically all of Grade 6 graduates from the local Catholic primary school. The College traditionally has four primary classes – Prep, and Grades 1/2, 3/4, and 5/6. Each Year level from 7 to 12 is comprised of one class of students. VCE classes operate with one class per study. Student cohorts in each Year level can differ markedly over time. In 2015, primary levels averaged 9 students and secondary levels averaged 16.5 students.

The current Student Family Occupation (SFO) index is 0.64 indicating a range in family socio – economic circumstances. There are no students with a language background other than English. Frequent exposure of students to other school communities is limited due to location.

The College is organised on a traditional model of primary and secondary schooling with opportunities for the two cohorts to integrate and interact together at various times over the year. There is an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and on integrated personal development. The AusVELS and VCE curriculum inform curriculum delivery and organisational structures for student learning. VCE, VCAL and VET are offered as senior pathways programs. VET subjects offered include Agriculture, Engineering (unscored) and Music. In 2016 both VET Hospitality and Community Services are offered as alternatives and the College has some Distance Education classes running and some Polycom classes within the Mallee Cluster. The College is advancing its digital teaching and learning profile.

The small student numbers provide a platform for relationship building between students and between students and teachers. Teachers have opportunities in this small school context to know students well, to spend more individual time with students, and to personalise learning for very student.

Students participate in an extensive range of cultural, academic and sporting activities including visiting performances, drama workshops, College productions, camps and excursions, public speaking and inter college sports.

The College has excellent facilities set in a large, well maintained precinct. A community complex on site provides for sporting and cultural activities and a new Building the Education Revolution funded primary wing is an outstanding facility. The College has, over some years, had a strong focus on agricultural opportunities for students. In 2011 the school was recognised for its achievements and forward thinking with a National Australia Bank Schools First National Award (\$500 000). Through this program the College is agricultural manager of two land holdings of 60 and 70 hectares on different sides of Sea Lake with VCE students having opportunities in food and livestock production with some related opportunities for elective studies in Years 8 and 9.

2.2 Summary of the School's Performance

2.2.1 Summary of the school's performance against the previous Strategic Plan

Student learning

The goal for student learning in the 2012 – 2015 School Strategic Plan (SSP) was to improve student learning outcomes, particularly in literacy. Learning targets were nominated only for NAPLAN learning growth. Other targets related to improvement in the Years 5 – 6 Student Attitudes to School Survey (SAtSS) outcomes for some of the teaching and learning factors including Teacher Empathy, Teacher Effectiveness, Stimulating Learning and Learning Confidence.

The proportions of students demonstrating high growth in Year 3 to 5 in Numeracy, Reading and Writing trended down over the Years 2013 – 2015 with no student achieving high growth in any of these domains in 2015. The declining trend in this period was also evident in the high growth data for Years 5 to 7 in Writing and Numeracy, and in Reading to a lesser extent. Reading and Numeracy remained above the benchmarks in 2015, but not Writing. The high growth data for Year 7 to 9 for each of the three domains was below benchmarks in each case with low level, flat level performance in Numeracy, and higher proportions in the low growth categories for both Reading and Writing.

There was mixed performance in outcomes for the SAtSS targets. The targets were surpassed except for Learning Confidence. However, no outcomes were above the State benchmarks.

Student engagement and wellbeing

The goal for student engagement and wellbeing was to improve student connectedness and engagement with school and its learning culture. Evidence of goal achievement was associated with improving student absence data and nominated SAtSS outcomes: Peer Connectedness and Classroom Behaviour for Years 5 and 6; Learning Confidence and Classroom Behaviour for Years 7 – 12.

Student absence targets were not met and by 2015 the average of days absence for students Prep to 6, and Years 7 – 12 had increased. The SAtSS data for Year 5 – 6 student relationships targets – Classroom Behaviour and Peer Connectedness were not met. Years 7 – 12 data for confirmed an improving trend for student relationships and wellbeing outcomes with the five factors, including Classroom Behaviour, posting means above benchmarks in 2015. The Learning Confidence target was not achieved in either survey with outcomes well below benchmarks.

Among the range of initiatives the College has identified in its recent planning for a strong improvement agenda is renewal in relation to the Home Group model with planning and future implementation tasked with improving student connectedness and engagement P – 12.

Student pathways and transitions

The goal for student pathways and transition was about improving transition into relevant pathways across the school, including transition into, through and on exiting the College. The targets related to Real Retention Years 7 – 10 and Years 7 – 12; knowledge of destinations of students who exit the College; and VCAL participation.

The College has effective transitions for students entering key stages of Preps and Year 7, and for supporting senior students in their pathways into further education and training, or employment. For students enrolling at different Year levels there is planned support and induction to make the transition as seamless as possible. College planning in relation to developing a whole school approach to the effective use of student learning achievement data is significant in building and sustaining effective transition.

The College typically has strong retention of students with outcomes better than state-wide benchmarks and are targets comfortably met. Knowledge of what happens to students who exit the College is sound with destinations known for all students who completed Year 12 in 2014 and for most Year 10 and 11 students who left during or at the end of 2014. The target for 15% VCAL participation was well exceeded in 2015.

2.2.2 Summary of the review findings against the Terms of Reference

- 1 *The extent to which instructional practice is consistent with a whole school commitment to differentiation in teaching and learning supported and informed by:*
 - *the effective collection and use of data to inform planning to address planning for point of need teaching and learning for every student*

- *curriculum scope and sequence and related documentation to guarantee a viable curriculum*

The 2012 – 2015 SSP documented a clear commitment to differentiation in teaching and learning. The School Self Evaluation (SSE), and feedback to the review from staff including leaders, indicated the alignment between the intention for a whole school differentiation commitment and the eventual practice was work in progress. Consistency in planning and support for building differentiation capacity has been less evident than intended. A reason for this has been the absence of a defined and agreed teaching and learning framework, or instructional model, featuring explicit and continuous action support for the differentiation commitment.

The SSP identified key elements in determining the quality of differentiation including:

- a well-developed data culture across the whole school where teachers have high level knowledge of the learning growth and needs of their students through the collection, analysis and effective use of data plan for point of need teaching
- enhanced curriculum documentation in terms of scope and sequence, content, concepts, skills, and assessment

These elements have had variable attention over the period of the SSP. More recently they have been the focus of planning related to a range of leadership team targeted Professional Learning Team (PLT) based action projects that are now well established with clear implementation targets in 2016.

- 2 *The extent to which the school's suite of engagement and wellbeing programs are appropriately focused, sustainable, and responsive to student voice.*

The student wellbeing context of the College is well established and provides comprehensive support for student needs, and promotes student leadership. The portfolio of extra-curricular opportunities is broad and mindful of the need to support student interests and experiences that are sometimes less accessible in the context of small rural communities some distance from major centres.

Recently framed and implemented PLT action projects emphasise a focus on ensuring a sustainable context for student engagement through enhanced curriculum planning and implementation, and teaching and learning practice that includes the influence of feedback from students. These actions, in implementation, represent the important elements in practice the College expects to underpin an engaging learning environment that is consistently positive, challenging, orderly and well supported.

- 3 *The extent to which the school's leadership team and structures are effective in supporting capacity building leadership development for staff.*

For a significant portion of the current SSP period the College did not have the stability in leadership across a number of levels and roles to progress SSP goals, target achievement, and intended KIS and actions to best effect. This included developing a broader (distributed) leadership capacity to support full SSP implementation and achievement.

- 4 *The extent to which a school wide culture of high expectations for every student exists and is pursued.*

Recent leadership changes and restructuring have elevated planning and action to ensure that the culture and practice associated with high expectations is well established across the school community. There is College agreement that achievement of vision and values is very much a factor of non-negotiable and sustainable high expectations of, and for, all stakeholders. Further development and implementation in this area has been targeted to build an explicit and implemented high expectations profile with school-wide agreement.

- 5 *The extent to which professional learning develops and sustains quality teaching and learning.*

Implementation of the SSP planning for professional learning has been variable with some intended actions and initiatives not occurring, or not occurring at the level or with the consistency needed. For example, the professional learning focus for developing a data culture, consistency in curriculum planning and organisation, and skills to underpin an expanded profile for differentiated teaching and learning was less evident than intended through the SSP.

2.2.3 Key findings

- There is no effectively implemented instructional model/teaching and learning framework developed and agreed upon, as a whole school initiative. This context was not consistent with establishing a whole school commitment to differentiation.
- Attempts through the SSP period at enhancing curriculum documentation in terms of content, concepts, skills, and assessment and the quality of scope and sequence have been inconsistent and produced variable outcomes in terms of a guaranteed and viable curriculum across the College.
- The quality of the data culture and related practice is variable across the College and has, until more recently, limited development as a whole school priority.
- The development and incidence of student voice is less evident in the College with minimum formal focus.
- For a significant portion of the current SSP period the College has not had the stability in leadership across a number of levels and roles to progress SSP goals, target achievement, and intended KIS and actions to best effect.
- There is no explicit, cohesive school-wide agreement about the nature of high expectations in various contexts and, similarly, no evidence of an agreed approach to sustaining a culture of high expectations and related practice.
- Implementation of SSP planning for professional learning was variable with some intended actions and initiatives not occurring, or not occurring at the level or with the consistency needed.

2.2.4 Next steps

Tyrrell College is well prepared to implement a strong, well founded improvement agenda. The evidence of the 2016 Annual Improvement Plan (AIP) reflects considered and strategic improvement intent in teaching and learning based on purposeful thinking and planning, and action. The review identified a high level of optimism in the College community in a context of new and renewed leadership roles and purpose with a focus on developing a collegial, engaged learning community that consistently demonstrates practice associated with 21st century teaching and learning.