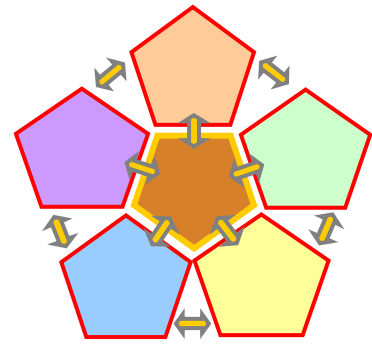




**APPENDIX 3**



**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT  
FRAMEWORK**

**School Review Report**

Prepared for

St Mary's Swan Hill  
2009

School E Number	E2040
Principal	Paul Bissinella
Canonical Administrator	Father Peter
School Reviewers	Pam Burton
Signed By Reviewer	_____
Dates of Review	September 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup>
Date of this Report (Final Version)	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2009

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The review process identified a high level of teacher, parent and student satisfaction with the learning experiences, spiritual growth and social interaction provided by St Mary's, Swan Hill. The community holds the school in high esteem and recognises the school's connection to its parish and wider community. Students are well connected to one another; enjoy school and the relationships they share with their teachers.

It is important to acknowledge the significant positive characteristics and strengths that can further enhance and support school improvement in the next planning period.

- The School Board provides the school with outstanding guidance and support and its individual members are committed and proud of the school. A very clear learning improvement focus and faith development philosophy drives the Board to constantly add value to the school.
- The new school Principal is focused on learning and teaching within a Catholic community and there is a new and well intentioned Leadership team that is still in the process of developing a shared leadership vision and moral purpose to accompany the newly revised school vision. The school is fortunate to have a committed Deputy Principal who is well respected, connected and concerned about student learning.
- St Mary's is recognised for its Catholic School Culture which underpins the strategic direction of the school and the relationships shared between students, teachers, leadership and the wider community. It is a school of compassion which nurtures the spiritual and emotional life of all members of its community. The Awakenings curriculum has been embraced by teachers who are in the process of learning how to implement authentic Shared Christian Praxis. Leadership of this sphere is committed and in tune with the parish and school's spiritual path. Prayer is becoming a feature of life at the school and the children and their families are well prepared for the sacraments. Teachers are positive role models and the children participate in celebrations according to liturgical seasons and special events in the Church and community calendar. Social Justice is embraced by the students and staff; however, it would appear that there could be more explicit connections made between the social justice initiatives taken by the school and how this relates to our Catholic values and traditions.
- A young, enthusiastic staff makes up the majority of classroom teachers, many of whom have fewer than three years teaching experience. They provide the school with energy and enthusiasm. On the other side of this it means that leadership needs to strategically guide teachers to strengthen their pedagogy using data, action research and effective coaching, mentoring and modelling to effect improvement in the key

areas of literacy, numeracy and Inquiry Learning. Currently, Professional Learning Teams are more like professional development sessions but without the collegial discussions and action research needed to embed PLT's as effective learning meetings

- The school has skilled literacy and numeracy leaders who have the capacity to mentor, model, coach, observe and support teachers to enhance their efficacy. These experienced teachers must lead the school to improved Literacy and Numeracy outcomes. The school is in the early stages of using data effectively to monitor and plan for student learning
- In terms of Literacy and Numeracy outcomes, the school has experienced some variable results in recent years, possibly due to the regular turnover of staff and the youthfulness and inexperience of many new teachers. There are some positive signs emerging with some upward trend for Literacy and Numeracy in some year levels and an emerging understanding of the value that data can offer teachers in terms of planning, monitoring and guiding explicit learning and teaching
- Inquiry Learning is an accepted and valued learning and teaching process at St Mary's. It is used to encourage children to question, think and learn about the world. It is evident, however, that a more consistent approach to completing the inquiry cycle would strengthen the children's engagement in the process
- A vibrant and engaging Creative Arts program has been introduced to the school with much acclaim and general enjoyment. Programs such as these add vitality, enrichment and community connectedness to the life of the school.
- Contemporary pedagogy recognises the value of digital technologies as a means of making meaning, exploring the world and stimulating student interest in learning. St Mary's students and teachers can benefit from more consistent use of technologies to strengthen student engagement and learning within the classroom, particularly at the senior level.
- The special needs program is effective and valued by students, parents and teachers. Teacher aides are highly skilled and provide outstanding academic and social/emotional support for funded and un-funded students with particular learning needs.
- Restorative Practices underpin the school's student management process. Students and teachers recognise the value of this approach and see that it is in alignment with the school's vision and values. Feedback and data from students and teachers suggests, however, that there is some inconsistency of understanding and practice of the protocols that guide Restorative Practices.

- Student wellbeing is core to the strength of St Mary's. Students are well connected to each other and the school through some key school initiatives including, school camps, Peer mediators, Revved Up for boys, Empower Girls, Restorative Practices, Brain Gym, Personal Development program, Year 6 Drug Education, and Year 4 Personal Safety Success Training. Leadership of this sphere is strong and supportive of teachers and staff.
- Student leadership is effective and the children value the opportunities that they have to act as role models to their peers and influence the school in its social justice and community initiatives. The school could further strengthen this aspect of the school by considering a portfolio approach to leadership.
- There has been a strengthening of relationships and transitions between the Catholic College and the school which adds depth to community relationships. The contributions of the Mac Killop students to St Mary's sporting program are greatly appreciated.
- Parents are encouraged to participate and attend a wide range of parish and school learning, sporting and social activities. Parents feel welcomed to the school and appreciate the opportunities they have to be a part of their children's educational experiences. Parents see the school as approachable; they are however seeking further ways of providing the school with input around decision making which is recognised by the school.
- St Mary's community is strong and open to new ways of learning and working together for the good of their children and the wider community. It is proud of its traditions, is resilient and committed to providing a powerful spiritual and educational experience for the children of St Mary's Swan Hill.

**Where does improvement need to be focussed? In light of the overall analysis the reviewer suggests that the school consider the following learning outcomes:**

#### **Catholic Culture**

- To increase the importance of our Catholic Culture in the lives of the students, staff and parents
- That teachers strengthen explicit Christian Praxis in their teaching

### **Learning and Teaching**

- That student achievement in mathematics is improved P-6
- That student achievement in Literacy is improved P-6
- Enrich the classroom environment and teacher practice to improve stimulating learning
- That there are clear links between Inquiry learning and Shared Christian Praxis

### **Student Well-Being**

- That students see themselves as behaving more positively in the classroom
- That students are more confident and resilient
- That students are more involved in decision making across the school

### **Leadership and Management**

- That there are effective teams operating across the school
- That leadership is supportive and facilitative for teacher learning and empowerment
- That teachers are committed to and involved in powerful professional learning

### **School Community**

- That there is a strengthening of involvement by parents in student learning and faith development
- That School /Parish and Community partnerships are improved, particularly through CESH

### **Key improvement strategies**

- Build a shared sense of moral purpose that aligns with the St Mary's vision and mission statement
- A commitment to improving teacher efficacy and student learning – thorough and explicit pedagogy leading to deeper teacher understandings
- Clearly articulate and create ownership about our priorities – ensure follow-up – sustained attention to ongoing implementation

- Create a whole school approach to shared leadership with particular attention to middle leadership
- Develop a shared understanding and valuing of the use of data to monitor, plan and direct student learning
- Create a shared understanding of the purpose and use of assessment FOR, AS and OF learning
- Embed ICT as an engaging learning and teaching tool

## • 2 METHODOLOGY

A preliminary visit was conducted by Pam Burton who was accompanied by Chris Robarts from the Northern Zone of the Ballarat Diocese, in preparation for the school review.

Discussions were held with the Principal on the School's Self Reflection Report, the format of the review days and the composition of the key focus groups and the review panel. The reviewer was taken on a tour of the school and the reviewer met staff and students.

The review program began on the evening of September 8<sup>th</sup>, beginning with a meeting with the School Board followed by September 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>. On days one and two the reviewer met with a number of individuals, teams, focus groups and visited a range of P-6 classrooms observing Numeracy, Literacy and Inquiry Learning.

- Board Meeting
- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Special Needs Leader
- Numeracy Leader
- Literacy Leader
- Inquiry Leader
- Wellbeing Leader
- REC
- Teachers
- Teacher Aides
- Specialist teachers
- Fr Peter
- Parent representatives
- Student focus group
- Classroom visits

On the second day the reviewer worked through all the data with a representative panel comprising

Father Peter Hudson	Parish Priest
Mark Burns	Community Representative
Paul Bissinella	Principal
Ginny Gook	Deputy Principal
Mardi Hall	Religious Education Leader
Mandy Hinton	Literacy Leader
Chris Mitchell	Numeracy Leader

Grace Scalora	Wellbeing Leader
Pam Burton	School Reviewer
Chris Roberts	CEO Ballarat Education Consultant

Key Data sets used in this review included:

Aim and NAPLAN data, SRC Insight Data -Staff Survey, CEVN, Student Attitudes to School Survey, Parent Surveys, Catholic Culture Survey, School Curriculum documentation and the School Self Reflection Report

The group considered the context of the school and feedback from the focus groups and used research around the factors that enable and maintain school improvement. This was followed by in-depth analysis of the School's Self Reflection Report and relevant school data.

As a result of this exercise the group prepared a list of suggested outcomes for the next developmental phase of the school.

The review report was presented to the school staff and School Board.

### 3 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary's Swan Hill has been in operation since 1919 and was opened by the Josephite Sisters. In 1996 the school moved to its current site that has outstanding facilities and is set in beautifully maintained grounds. St Mary's is a parish school that serves the local community and is under the governance of Fr. Peter Hudson, Parish Priest of St Mary of the Assumption, Swan Hill.

Demand for places at St Mary's has been strong with a current enrolment of 508 and a Prep intake of 65 in 2009. It is expected that in 2010 the Prep intake will be slightly lower due to a number of factors, most notably the impact of the drought on the Swan Hill community.

EMA is currently 23% and 23 children are funded through the LNSLN program.

#### Contextual Matters

- Swan Hill is relatively remote rural community which impacts on teacher turnover and reduces the school's capacity to recruit highly experienced teachers. Consequently St Mary's has a high number of young and enthusiastic teachers with most of the experienced teachers in positions of responsibility and usually out of the classroom
- There is great community pride in the school which is directly linked to the school's Catholic values and quality learning reputation combined with its exceptional physical resources and well developed and maintained playing surfaces.
- St Mary's is supported by a committed, enthusiastic and generous School Board that recognises the importance of quality education, spiritual growth and community relationships. Strong relationships exist between the parish and the Catholic secondary school which serve to strengthen the community.
- The school is currently looking forward to a new school gymnasium to complement the multi-purpose room, library, computer lab, canteen, administration centre and classrooms.
- St Mary's student population is a vibrant mix of cultures including indigenous students and students from Sudan, Egypt, Hong Kong, Fiji, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Papua New Guinea and South Africa. Many students travel long distances usually by bus to reach the school each day stretching from Tooleybuc in the north, Lalbert to the south, Sea Lake to the west and Moulamein to the east.
- 66% of students belong to Catholic families and the remaining 34% are from Christian faiths. St Mary's has a long and recognised Christian tradition in the Swan Hill community

- 2008 brought a leadership change to the school, with a new principal taking his place at the helm of the St Mary's school community. This has led to new systems and operations which are based on distributive leadership principles. The leadership team works closely with the principal to drive the recently revised vision of the school. Staff works cooperatively to ensure that St Mary's school is a vibrant and active community.

**iv. Are the school's practices reflective of the school's Vision?**

St Mary's school, Swan Hill lives its vision at all levels of its community. The school vision of *preparing today's children spiritually, socially and intellectually to shine in tomorrow's world* is central to the Catholic School Culture that embodies the school. In all aspects of learning and teaching their vision **shines** through the emphasis placed on integrating the spiritual, social and intellectual elements to maximize learning outcomes for each child. The Wellbeing philosophy is further evidence of St Mary's capacity to put their children first in order to achieve resiliency and positive social relationships. Leadership and management hold firmly to the vision and mission of the school as they work together to forge an agreed strategic direction. The community is proud of the vision they have recently helped to develop and the interactions and relationships they have built through parish, school and the wider community bear testimony to their commitment to preparing their children spiritually, *socially and intellectually to **shine** in tomorrow's world.*