

Varsity College

Executive Summary





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1. Introduction

This report is a product of a review carried out by a review team from the Education Improvement Branch (EIB) at **Varsity College** from **6 to 10 September 2021**.

The report presents an evaluation of the school's performance against the nine domains of the [National School Improvement Tool](#). It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to implement in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The report's executive summary outlines key findings from the review and key improvement strategies that prioritise future directions for improvement.

Schools will publish the executive summary on the school website within two weeks of receiving the report.

The principal will meet with their Assistant Regional Director (ARD) to discuss the review findings and improvement strategies.

For more information regarding the EIB and reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the EIB [website](#).

1.1 Review team

Shona McKinlay	Internal reviewer, EIB (review chair)
Ray Bloxham	Internal reviewer
Paul Robertson	Peer reviewer
Michael Ward	Peer reviewer
Raelene Fysh	External reviewer



1.2 School context

Location:	Varsity Parade, Varsity Lakes	
Education region:	South East Region	
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12	
Enrolment:	3363	
Indigenous enrolment percentage:	2.1 per cent	
Students with disability:	Education Adjustment Program (EAP) percentage:	3.5 per cent
	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) percentage:	16.1 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	1064	
Year principal appointed:	Term 4, 2018	



1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Executive principal, four Heads of School (HOS), eight deputy HOS's, director of corporate services, operations manager, Information Technology (IT) manager, finance manager, human resources manager, two human resources officers, primary inclusive education Head of Special Education Services (HOSES), four guidance officers, 15 Heads of Department (HOD), four secondary deans, primary dean, primary wellbeing coordinator, 119 teachers, three Support Teachers Literacy and Numeracy (STLaN), two senior computer assistants, computer technician, events coordinator, multimedia developer, five schools officers, four cleaners, canteen convenor, uniform shop convenor, 14 teacher aides, five administration officers, three preservice teachers, 146 students, 60 parents, Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) president and six school council members.

Community and business groups:

- Corrective Reading, Robina Lions Club and Varsity Lakes Community Limited.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- Deputy Principal of Robina State School.

Government and departmental representatives:

- Councillor Division 11 City of Gold Coast City and ARD.

1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

Investing for Success 2021	Success Strategy 2020-2023
School budget overview	School Data Profile (Semester 1, 2020)
OneSchool/TrackEd/SORD	Headline Indicators (October 2020 release)
School improvement targets	Continuous Improvement Model
School pedagogical approach P-12	Academic Data Implementation Plan 2021
Data Informed Practice P-12	School newsletters, Facebook and website
School Opinion Survey (2019)	Student Code of Conduct (2020-2023)
Continuous Improvement Model (College AIP)	Professional learning plan 2021 Secondary Campus
Professional learning plan 2021 Primary Campus	Corporate Services Strategic and Operational Plan 2020-2023
Curriculum planning documents	



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

A palpable collegial culture is a strong feature of the college and is highly valued by all.

A strong culture of collegiality exists amongst staff members. Staff describe a working environment where they support each other in a range of ways. Staff members are committed to the college and universally articulate they are happy to be working at the college. Staff speak positively regarding the informal collegiality and support they receive within their faculties and teams. Teachers work in a spirit of openness and informal sharing of resources, ideas and expertise. Professional and personal support is delivered in a range of formalised wellbeing programs and through informal staff networks. A significant number of staff invest their time voluntarily to deliver extracurricular activities and additional experiences for students outside of the regular college working day. College leaders are committed to developing collaborative opportunities to further enhance effective pedagogical practices within teaching teams to maximise student learning.

A deep commitment to catering for the individual needs of the full range of students is apparent.

Staff members articulate the belief that every student is capable of successful learning when motivated, and provided with appropriate learning sequences and timely support. Staff acknowledge that students are at different stages in their learning and recognise the importance of differentiation to ensure students are appropriately engaged and challenged. College staff are committed to diversity and value the intention and goals of inclusive education. Students speak with confidence regarding their learning, and that their learning needs are addressed through current classroom practices and the range of extracurricular and enrichment offerings provided.

College staff recognise the important role leaders play in supporting staff and setting the tone of the college.

The college vision states that 'We are committed to high expectations, academic excellence and every student striving towards success through a positive school culture'. College priorities and the work of staff are focused on achieving this vision. Many teachers comment on the benefits and complexities that come with being part of such a large organisation. There is a desire expressed for greater alliance between college leaders and staff in creating strong relationships and a more united approach. Staff across both campuses express a desire for college leaders to have a higher profile in classrooms and the playground to support and enhance their work. Staff indicate a desire for greater consistency in the role and the degree of involvement that leaders at all levels undertake in monitoring and quality assuring curriculum, and teaching and learning.

**The college community outlines the importance of developing a P-12 culture.**

The college has developed corporate services and teaching and learning organisational structures, whole-college meeting schedules and a range of staff groups to progress college priorities. Staff from both campuses comment on a desire for closer alliance across the four sub-schools. A leadership charter provides a general overview of the work of college leaders. Some leaders reflect that a review of P-12 organisational arrangements, structures and alignment of processes and practices across the college is the next step in developing achievable levels of 'P-12ness'.

Documented roles and responsibilities have been developed to establish line of sight in the implementation of school priorities.

The four-year strategic plan, Success Strategy, is a collaboratively developed document that guides the strategic work of college leaders. The college 'we are' statements relate to the success strategy and are statements of shared vision for all staff. The success strategy document includes the Varsity Continuous Improvement Model 2021 (VCIM). The VCIM outlines three actions of data, differentiated teaching and learning, and feedback as the Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA). The VCIM articulates 'I am' statements to outline the work of teachers in the classroom. Knowledge and implementation of data, differentiation and feedback priorities vary across phases of learning and individual understanding. Leaders outline some variability in line management practices within sectors and across the college. Some college leaders reflect upon the importance of transparency in the accountabilities of college leaders to ensure consistent leadership and Quality Assurance (QA) in the enactment of the EIA. An organised, aligned, agenda-driven and quality assured line management structure based on the accountabilities of leaders, leadership plans and the EIA is yet to be enacted across all levels of leadership in the P-12 setting.

College leaders and staff are committed to providing a quality teaching and learning environment through their professional practice.

There is a documented pedagogical approach based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). The college has employed the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) pedagogical approach as a key practice over many years. The leadership team has partnered with the region and other schools to engage in practices associated with Sharratt's research-informed 'Clarity'¹ approach and this work is emerging across the college. Some staff have begun to supplement GRR with elements of Sharratt's Clarity approach. This has included a renewed focus on the use of learning intentions and success criteria. Dedicated agenda time devoted to pedagogy in forums such as 'Power Hour' in primary school meetings and faculty meetings in secondary is apparent. Most teachers and students are able to articulate some core elements of pedagogical expectations. Leaders outline that development of a consistent language and clarification of pedagogical expectations are a priority for the future.

¹ Sharratt, L. (2019). *Clarity: What matters most in learning, teaching and leading*. Corwin.



Leaders and teachers recognise the importance of building teacher capability through coaching, mentoring, observation and feedback.

Teachers acknowledge the value of a continuing focus on teaching practice to improve engagement and learning outcomes for students. Some staff engage in peer observation through accessing Watching Others Work (WOW) time. Primary campus teachers are able to access the Building Teacher Capacity (BTC) program to focus on specific developmental preferences. Similar learning that informs pedagogy occurs informally on a regular basis across the college through collegial relationships. Some teachers express a desire to access more targeted Professional Development (PD) opportunities to allow them to build their repertoire of pedagogical practices towards more precise work with data, differentiation and feedback. It is acknowledged that significant potential exists for leaders at all levels to share their experience and knowledge with teachers by modelling and providing feedback that is linked to college priorities and expectations.

College leaders highlight the importance of the effective allocation of human, financial and physical resources to meet the identified teaching, learning and wellbeing needs of all students in a large college.

The college resource model is strategically structured and managed to address the use of resources in teaching and learning programs in conjunction with corporate services teams that include operations and facilities, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), human resources and finance. The college leadership team prioritises the learning needs of students through the targeted allocation of human and physical resources. Provision of college-wide programs and strategies is aligned to the 2021 priorities of data, differentiation and feedback. The corporate services teams work across P to 12 to ensure program and curriculum priorities are well supported and aligned to the college's values of *'Wisdom, Integrity, Courage, Compassion and Citizenship'*.

Many staff acknowledge the value of working within teams to share resources and teaching strategies.

Teachers and leaders use data strategically as a college priority. Through consultation the secondary campus is implementing a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model to build staff professional knowledge and practices with data, curriculum and pedagogy. The primary campus has focused discussions on student data, curriculum, moderation, assessment and planning through the scheduled Power Hour. PLCs and Power Hour are opportunities for staff to build their skills to address the needs of individuals and groups of students. Teachers articulate their appreciation of scheduled opportunities that allow them to engage with colleagues and discuss strategies for the continuous improvement of student outcomes.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

Review leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to build the profile of all leaders in supporting staff, and monitoring and quality assuring teaching and learning across the college.

Undertake a review of organisational structures, processes, practices and documentation to further develop achievable P-12 alignment and college responsibilities.

Further develop a structured, agenda-driven and quality assured line management process aligned to college priorities, leadership plans and accountabilities.

Collaboratively review, refine and monitor the implementation of an agreed pedagogical approach in order to provide clarity, a common language and established P-12 expectations.

Further develop teacher capability through structured observation and feedback processes that involve ongoing support from instructional leaders.