



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA

SCHOOL RENEWAL REPORT

St Pius X College

Chatswood

8 - 10 March 2016







Visit Details

Pre visit date	20 October 2015
Renewal Team visit dates	8 – 10 March 2016
School Renewal Identity Team	Mr Chris Smith, EREA National Director Identity and Liberating Education (Leader) Mr Brian Roberts, EREA Director Regional Support, Eastern Region Dr Tony Bracken, Catholic Schools Office, Broken Bay

Introduction

School Renewal is an ongoing process of reflection on authenticity as a Catholic School in the Edmund Rice Tradition. The reflections by the school are validated during the visit of the School Renewal Identity Team conducted over three days and outcomes of the Renewal visit are incorporated into ongoing renewal and planning. Successful renewal leads to accreditation as a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition.

The last School Renewal Identity Team visit to St Pius X College was in 2012. This 2016 Renewal was brought forward by one year at the request of the College so that it linked more closely to the timeline for the next Strategic Plan.

Context

The College began on the 12th September 1936 when the Archbishop of Sydney, Bishop Kelly, placed and blessed the memorial stones of the Brothers' house and school. The official opening and blessing ceremony of the College took place on Sunday afternoon, January 17th 1937.

On the first day of school there were 147 boys present, and at the end of the first week the numbers grew to 175. By the end of the First Term 210 pupils had enrolled and when school closed in December the number on the roll was 234. In 2016 with the theme of Inclusive Community the College commenced the year with 1154 students praying at the opening school Mass.

The first Principal was an Irish Christian Brother, Brother Quirke. In 2011 Mr John Couani began as the College's first lay Principal.

There has been a Christian Brothers community attached to the College since its inception in 1937 but unfortunately the Brothers will leave the Chatswood community after Easter, 2016. This occasion will be marked with great significance and importance recognising the service and Ministry of the Christian Brothers and ensuring that their legacy remains.



There are 3 Year 5 classes and 4 Year 6 classes. At the commencement of 2016, the total enrolment is 1154. There are 224 students in the Junior School (Years 5-6) and 930 students in Years 7-12. There has been an increase in the number of students in Year 11 and 12 due to the requirement for students to remain in school until age 17. The current Year 12 is the largest Graduating class on record.

St Pius X is located on a very restricted site bordering the Chatswood CBD with a primary school and the parish as adjoining neighbours. The College has an extensive facility located at Oxford Falls with modern facilities and used for inter-school sports competitions, sports days, study days, retreats, sports trainings and other special events.

The Catholic enrolment of the College has increased to 89% in 2016 from 85% in 2012. The Junior School has increased to 91% from 90% and the Secondary School has increased to 88% from 83% in 2012.

Overview

The last School Renewal report in 2012 spoke of a "confluence of energies" arising from new leadership, a 75th Anniversary celebration and the commencement of a new strategic plan in 2012, so it was interesting for this Renewal Team to observe where the College is now positioned. So positive was the last report, and so consistent were the high levels of satisfaction from all groups as measured by independent data, that there could easily be a sense of complacency. The actuality is far from this potentiality.

This is a College where a clear vision, shared by a revitalized Leadership Team, is the catalyst for continual reflection and improvement. There is a strong sense of team at the Leadership Team level, something stated by team members and other staff. The team models an energetic, positive and inclusive approach to educational leadership. All at St Pius X, whether individuals or teams, are encouraged to give of their best in an environment that recognizes and appreciates the efforts of all. Whilst appreciative of the positive momentum of the school, some staff and Board members spoke of a concern for the wellbeing of leadership and staff when there is a constant focus on improvement. These staff expressed a desire for a time of consolidation. Whilst change cannot, and should not, cease in schools it is important that leadership take heed of this concern in its ongoing planning.

The community has a confidence in its identity as a proudly Catholic boys' school with a rich history. One interviewee spoke of the 'many carriers of culture at all levels of the College'. There is a strong sense of appreciation by staff of this workplace and by students of the opportunities presented for them. As one primary boy stated, 'my favourite bell of the day is the first, the one I dislike most is the bell at the end of the day!' Other students of all ages whilst not using the same words, clearly expressed their enjoyment of their time at Pius X.

Relationships are key to the culture of St Pius X. Staff and students spoke of the strong and mutually respectful relationships between them. Boys feel safe in the College and know that any relational issues will be dealt with effectively. Staff feel valued and respected by leadership; there is a clear sense of rich community which transcends any barriers that could potentially exist between teaching and support staff; parents feel welcomed and included.



Relationships beyond the school walls have been the subject of much work in recent years. The Parish Priest, when asked about the relationship between the College and Our Lady of Dolours Parish, stated it 'couldn't be better.' He feels well informed and included in the life of the College. A cooperative venture for the joint employment of a Youth Minister has been rewarding for Parish and College, with one concrete outcome being a generous response by students and families to the invitation for attendance at World Youth Day by students from the College.

The College has a supportive presence at diocesan events and regularly invites Bishop Peter Comensoli to the College. Relationships with Parish primary schools are positive, helped by the Principal's readiness to ensure where possible secondary places to boys who choose to stay for the upper primary years at their current diocesan primary school. There is also a close and collaborative relationship with the Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office.

As noted, St Pius X has a very high Catholic enrolment, however, this alone does not define its Catholicity. Prayer has a prominent place in the life of the College. There are regular opportunities for students to attend the parish Mass with all classes attending once each term. The Religious Education program is supported by a strong team of teachers and the Renewal Team commends the strategic intent to continue recruiting more specialists in the area. There is a structured complementarity between the Religious Education program, the reflection day structure and the social justice program. The presence of rich iconography and sacred spaces further reinforce a Catholic environment.

An energetic and engaging Mission and Identity Team in the College works effectively with leadership in enhancing the Catholic and Edmund Rice culture of the College.

There is a commitment to formation at all levels with a structured approach to ensuring attendance at all EREA programs. The College is encouraged to ensure that support staff, especially those who have first point and regular contact with families, can attend. The College Board puts a high priority on reflection and formation and the existence of an Identity and Governance subcommittee of the Board ensures that this dimension of the College is an important part of the ongoing Board agenda.

The Charter and Touchstones are well known and embedded in the life and lexicon of the College. The practice of focusing on one touchstone each year (in 2016 that Touchstone is Inclusive Community) leads to a deepening of the understanding of each and an opportunity for all levels of the College to engage in bringing that particular touchstone to reality in their area. In 2016 the year 12 leaders have been instrumental in challenging the College around Inclusive Community. There has also been work done in embedding the touchstones in the curriculum.

The development of a prayer for each Touchstone is commended, as is the way in which the four touchstones and the four values of the College (Faith, Excellence, Respect and Opportunity) are shown together in a Celtic cross symbol on display throughout the College. The Renewal Team expressed concern, however, about the real potential of ambiguity when there is perceived correspondence or equivalence between the touchstones and the values, as was evident in some publications. The suggestion of such a relationship does an injustice to the richness of both.



The College achieves sound academic results and the learning environment is cooperative and effective despite the limitation presented by a crowded site and very dated and inflexible facilities in many areas. There is an increasing breadth of curriculum and pathways although there is still potential for greater diversity to meet the differing needs, capacities and interests of students. The introduction of Drama has been well received and has significantly complemented an already well subscribed and expansive music, choir and band program.

There is a very strategic approach to building a cultural amongst teachers of self-reflection where observation and professional discussions on practice become the norm. Significant professional learning opportunities are available to staff. The authentic integration of technology continues to be a hurdle for some staff and continued focus here is encouraged.

The team affirms and encourages the intended development of a learning framework across the College to ensure consistency of contemporary approaches to learning and encourages the College to foster the development of independent learners, supported by collaborative professional dialogue and learning, as a high priority for any such framework.

Outreach is a very significant dimension of the educational experience at St Pius X College. There is a strong commitment to social justice and the launch of a College Social Justice Statement on Founders Day 2015 following work by student leaders, Edmund Rice Society members and staff speaks volumes of the way in which social justice is integral to the educational, faith and community experience at St Pius X. The publication *Through Faith and Respect: Social Justice at St Pius X* and the appointment of a Social Justice Coordinator ensure a significant profile at the College. There are partnerships in place with indigenous schools St Mary's at Bowraville and St Joseph's at Walgett. Along with these, partnership with Callan Services in PNG also provides opportunities for immersion and cultural exchange. The College also has supportive relationships with St Edmund's Wahroonga and the Savio and The Haven annexes at St Dominic's Penrith and St Edward's Gosford respectively. There is a community service program for years 10 and 11 and the College supports a wide range of causes through visits (such as the Matt Talbot Hostel) or fundraising. The Renewal Team commends such a high level of engagement by students and staff while at the same time alerting the College to concerns expressed by some about 'fatigue' in the areas of outreach, especially when different fundraising causes appear to occur frequently.

The College is located in a well established and reasonably affluent area so there will always be a challenge in ensuring a range of enrolments from across socio economic groups. It is hoped that the College will always be alert to the challenge of its affordability for lower and middle income families and, as requested of all schools by the EREA Board, address such a situation strategically. The College is in a very sound financial position and whilst recent fee increases have been within the acceptable range they have been above the average for EREA schools. The College is asked to question itself about the need for this.

There have been Christian Brothers co located on the site since the commencement of the College. The Brothers who are currently resident feel welcomed and included in the College and appreciate the way in which their presence is valued. Within a few months the Brothers will be moving offsite. It is hoped that the College will continue the efforts to acknowledge the significance of this step in the



history of the College and continue to honour the lives of the individual Brothers and ensure that strategies are in place to for ongoing positive relationships, active involvement and presence.

The student leaders were impressive and spoke highly of their connection to the College, their pride in it and their relationships with teachers and their own peers. They have provided strong leadership in the area of social justice and inclusivity and are commended for the model of servant leadership they are presenting. It is recommended that there be a more direct link established between this group and the College Leadership Team. The Renewal Team also noted that there are no structures for leadership and representation within lower grades in the school and wonder if such opportunities would further enrich the quality of leadership density generally and at the year 12 level.

There are many other areas when the College has proactively approached issues in a way which demonstrates congruence with the EREA Charter. There is now much greater gender equity in representation at the Leadership Team and Board level. There are beginning steps being made in the area of environmental stewardship with the development of a College Environmental Plan on the 2016 action agenda. The communication with parents is very good, illustrating a respect for their role in their sons' education and a desire to fully embrace them in the life of the College. The newsletter *Woodchatta* is a particularly effective document as a source of information and, most importantly, as a significant instrument of formation for parents about faith, charism and Church.

The College has ensured that the Mind Matters program is well embedded throughout and many spoke of its impact on student resilience, particularly through the promotion of a sense of connectedness.

Significant commendations arising from this School Renewal are:

- the high profile of the Charter and Touchstones in the life and culture of the College
- the effectiveness of the culture of the College Leadership which provides a clear shared vision and leads by example when striving for high standards and ongoing improvement
- the Board approach and focus of ensuring that mission and charism are understood and supported
- the energetic and cohesive Mission and Identity Team
- the strong academic emphasis and the continued broadening of pathways to meet the needs of more students
- the coordinated approach to Religious Education and faith development through strong links between curriculum, pedagogy, reflection liturgy and service
- the effectiveness of iconography and spaces in creating a sense of Catholic identity
- the strong sense of community, care and mutual respect throughout the College
- the very positive relationships with Parish, the Diocese, the Catholic Schools Office and local Catholic schools
- the supportive and engaged relationship with the Christian Brothers
- the mutually supportive partnerships with a number of schools and ministries
- the strong commitment to the social justice dimension of Catholic education, including through the Edmund Rice Society.



Some recommendations include, to:

- continue to develop a school wide learning framework that encourages independent learners and shared professional practice;
- ensure that the true meaning of the Touchstones is not limited by too close a correlation with the College values;
- be conscious of the pressure on staff of constant change, however positive and necessary it may be;
- ensure that the identity of the College is effectively communicated in signage, website and other publications;
- continue to support the Christian Brothers in a significant time of transition;
- consider ways to ensure the affordability of the College to an increasing range of families;
- review the level of support for students with special learning needs in light of the increasing enrolments in this area;
- assess the provision of student leadership opportunities throughout the College and ways in which their voice can be heard by the Senior College Leadership.



Touchstone - Liberating Education

We open hearts and minds, through quality teaching and learning experiences, so that through critical reflection and engagement each person is hope-filled and free to build a better world for all.

Commendations

- 1.1 The effective way in which the recommendations of the 2012 School Renewal have been addressed.
- 1.2 The restructuring of senior leadership to bring a team that is high functioning with a shared vision and a common language.
- 1.3 There are high expectations of all members of the community and these are modelled by leadership.
- 1.4 There is a clear mindset evident of continuous improvement by individuals and by the College.
- 1.5 The College has strong academic results.
- 1.6 Students feel that teachers have genuine concern for them and that the classroom reflects the benefit of good relationships and mutual respect.
- 1.7 The establishment of Drama and growth of Performing Arts to further enrich the holistic and cultural nature of the Pius education experience.
- 1.8 Independent data collection consistently reflects a high level of satisfaction by all areas of the College community.
- 1.9 The progress being made towards the development of a learning framework.
- 1.10 The structured and generous approach to the provision of professional learning.
- 1.11 The cohesive energy and initiative evident in the Mission & Identity Team.
- 1.12 The commitment to building a concentrated team of qualified and passionate teachers of Religious Education and the progress made thus far.
- 1.13 The creative and effective use of a very restricted and inflexible site with its serious limitations in buildings and space.
- 1.14 The existence of an Identity and Governance Subcommittee of the Board.
- 1.15 The embedding of Mind Matters throughout the College and its impact upon student resilience and a sense of connectedness.



Recommendations

- 1.1 Continue addressing the challenge of providing further academic and non- academic pathways for students.
- 1.2 The panel encourages the collaborative development of a school wide learning framework as a reference for teacher reflection on practice. This framework should recognise the importance of developing independent learners.
- 1.3 Continue to explore the ways in which technology is embedded as an integral tool for effective learning.
- 1.4 Clarify how the Charter Touchstones and College Values are interrelated, with particular focus on ensuring that the understandings of each are not compromised by a suggestion of equivalence.
- 1.5 Be alert to the impact of ongoing change and the call by some parts of the community for a time of consolidation.
- 1.6 Review the way in which new understandings of the Edmund Rice story are communicated in word and print.



Touchstone - Gospel Spirituality

We invite all people into the story of Jesus and strive to make his message of compassion, justice and peace a living reality within our community.

Commendations

- 2.1 The Heart, Head and Hand approach to Religious Education and faith development is enhanced by a team which ensures that the links are effectively made through curriculum and pedagogy.
- 2.2 The place of prayer within the College at all levels.
- 2.3 The frequent attendance by classes at local parish masses.
- 2.4 The writing of a prayer used for each Touchstone.
- 2.5 The commitment to supporting World Youth Day 2016.
- 2.6 The ways in which *Woodchatta*, the newsletter, is used as a formative document for parents in the areas of charism, mission, faith and church.
- 2.7 The Board is committed to reflection and its own formation.
- 2.8 The rich iconography and provision of faith and identity related spaces such as the entrance to the College and the Prayer Garden help create an environment that is clearly Catholic and charism inspired.

Recommendations

- 2.1 Review the provision of EREA formation opportunities for support staff, particularly for staff who may be first point of contact such as Principal's Assistant, Registrars and office staff.
- 2.2 View the website through the lens of someone looking for details about the faith formation at the College and ensure that this dimension is very overt.



Touchstone - Inclusive Community

Our community is accepting and welcoming, fostering right relationships and committed to the common good.

Commendations

- 3.1 The boys are proud of their College and appreciate the opportunity to be part of such a vibrant community.
- 3.2 The boys feel a strong sense of belonging to the College and expressed how they appreciated the way in which they were welcomed into it.
- 3.3 Parents feel welcome and involved in their sons' education. They are very positive about the communication between them and the school, particularly the portal and *Woodchatta*. They commented on the good communication when students are having difficulties.
- 3.4 The pastoral care evident throughout the community as shown by strong relationships and supportive structures.
- 3.5 Boys feel safe in the College and know that there are effective measures in place to address any social problems that might arise.
- 3.6 The support given to the Christian Brothers and the many ways in which they are invited to be part of the community.
- 3.7 There is a strong sense of unity and connectedness amongst all staff, whether teaching or support. There is a mutual respect and all feel valued and appreciated.
- 3.8 The commitment to providing hardship scholarships or bursaries to families.
- 3.9 The very close and positive relationship with the parish and Parish Priest.
- 3.10 The supportive presence at parish and diocesan events.
- 3.11 The good relationships with the Catholic Schools Office, local Catholic primary schools and other colleges.
- 3.12 The employment of a Youth Minister who helps the connection between parish and school.
- 3.13 The Old Boys feel a strong connection with the College and seem confident in the direction in which it is heading.
- 3.14 The commitment to gender equity in leadership and governance and the significant progress made.



Recommendations

- 3.1 In light of the focus on affordability of EREA schools, review the ways in which the College can strategically support enrolments from a broader range of the community including minimising as far as possible the impact on parents of fee increases.
- 3.2 Continue to seek ways to invite Christian Brothers into the College so that the current rich relationship may continue after the physical presence of the Brothers living on site has ceased.
- 3.3 Review the adequacy of the provision of learning support in light of the increase in those with special learning needs.
- 3.4 Ensure that external signage is in line with EREA Guidelines. Also look for ways to use “A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition” more prominently in places such as the prospectus and the webpage.
- 3.5 In the area of student leadership, consider a more direct connection between the Year12 Leaders and the College Leadership Team.
- 3.6 Consider ways in which there can be more formal leadership opportunities lower down the school.



Touchstone - Justice and Solidarity

We are committed to justice and peace for all, grounded in a spirituality of action and reflection that calls us to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised and the earth itself.

Commendations

- 4.1 There is a strong commitment to the social justice dimension of an Edmund Rice inspired education. This is highlighted in the production *Through Faith and Respect: Social Justice at St Pius X* and by the appointment of a Social Justice Coordinator.
- 4.2 The inspiring and challenging Social Justice Statement developed by the College.
- 4.3 The founding of the Edmund Rice Society and its culture of modelling from older to younger students.
- 4.4 The range of causes supported by the College.
- 4.5 The partnerships with St Mary's Bowraville, St Joseph's Walgett and Callan Services in PNG including immersions and cultural exchanges.
- 4.6 The commitment to the indigenous education program and the celebration of significant reconciliation events.
- 4.7 The support for the broader EREA and Christian Brother ministries.
- 4.8 The Board has a very clear commitment to the mission of the College and to the integral place of a strong social justice emphasis in a Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition.
- 4.9 The Community Involvement Program for Years 10 and 11.
- 4.10 The beginning steps taken in environmental stewardship and the intention to develop a College Environmental Plan in 2016.

Recommendations

- 4.1 Be conscious of the possibility of 'social justice fatigue' if demands on students and families are made too frequently.
- 4.2 Review the selection processes for immersion experiences in light of some concerns expressed about equity of access.



Conclusion

Renewal is designed to be a shared reflective process. Schools are asked to reflect on their own culture in light of the Touchstones of the Charter. It was very clear to the visiting team that there had been extensive and rich consultation in this case, with all staff having access to the reflective report from the College for comment before it was sent. The time commitment given by the Principal and Leadership Team leading up to and including the visit was greatly appreciated. There were detailed materials provided and a genuine openness to the team engaging broadly.

The Renewal visit aimed to validate the reflection of the College and to encourage discussion with a wide range of community members either individually or in small groups. It was immediately evident that this is a proud community that has a deep understanding of, and engagement with, the Charter and Touchstones. More importantly it is easy to see how the Touchstones are embedded within the culture, language, visual identity and culture at St Pius X. This College is proudly Catholic and embraces all that is inherent in being a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition.

The inclusivity of the College may be challenged by its socioeconomic environment and its cultural mix but there is a genuine strategy to grow in understanding and connection with indigenous culture including through practical partnerships and immersion opportunities for students and staff. St Pius X, through its leadership, also works hard to include itself in the wider Catholic education and diocesan context and is commended for showing how relationships must be approached consistently and with respect. Ensuring that the College is an affordable option for more families is a necessary focus.

The Leadership of the College is committed to reflective practice; there is a constant striving to improve. A sense of definite direction has built a parallel sense of confidence and positive morale within the staff; parents feel that the College is the right place for their boys.

This report has a number of recommendations and, based on the response to the 2012 Renewal, the Renewal Team is confident that these will be addressed effectively. Some are around identity, some around the educational provision, others are around community. The challenge will be for the College to find the right balance between the energy generated by change and the need for fallow times to allow for consolidation and reflection.

This is a very positive report for a College that reflects good leadership and strength of community. St Pius X is asked to report regularly to its community and EREA on how recommendations are being addressed and will be supported in this undertaking by the Director Regional Support.



Visit Program

FIRST DAY, Tuesday 8th March (Day 2)				
Time	Name		Venue	Notes
8.30am	School Renewal Identity Team (SRIT)		Board Room	A Brady
8.57am	Principal – perspective and tour of the College		Board Room/Tour	J Couani D Dempsey Yr 6 & 11 students (see attached list)
10.43am	Morning Tea with the Staff (Team introduced)		Staff Common Room	J Couani
11.03am	SRIT meets with the College Leadership Team (includes Principal)		Board Room	J Couani M Casey A Damo D Dempsey S Brannan SJ Grove T Long
11.56am	Mission & Identity Team		Board Room	
12.49pm	Lunch		Board Room	A Brady
1.29 pm– 2.22pm	Students SRIT Team A Board Room	Students SRIT Team B “Club Med”	Students SRIT Team C Learning Support Rm	M Casey
2.25pm	Leadership Team Members (without Principal) SRIT Team A	Leadership Team Members (without Principal) SRIT Team B	Board Room (A) “Club Med” (B)	
(2.40pm)	Chinese Cultural	Immersion	Jnr School Playground	
3.15pm	SRIT		Board Room	
6.30pm for 7.00pm	College Board		Board Room	J Couani P Hughes



SECOND DAY, Wednesday 9th March (Day 3)				
Time	Name		Venue	Notes
8.15am	Parent Representatives		Board Room	M Casey
8.57am Period 1	Middle Leadership Team A See attached list	Middle Leadership Team B See attached list	Board Room (A) "Club Med" (B)	M Casey
9.50am Period 2	Teaching Staff Team A See attached list	Teaching Staff Team B See attached list	Board Room (A) "Club Med" (B)	M Casey
10.30	SRIT		Board Room	
10.43am	Morning Tea		Board Room	A Brady
11.03am – 11.45am Period 3	Teaching Staff Team A See attached list	Teaching Staff Team B See attached list	Board Room (A) "Club Med" (B)	MCasey
11.45am – 12.30pm	Administration or Support Staff Team A See attached list	Administration or Support Staff Team B See attached list	Board Room (A) "Club Med" (B)	A Brady
12.30pm	SRIT Discernment & Draft Report (Includes lunch)		Board Room	A Brady
2.00pm	Preliminary Feedback – Principal		Board Room	J Couani
3.00pm	SRIT		Board Room	
				C Jennings



FINAL DAY, Thursday 10 th March (Day 4)					
Time	Name			Venue	Notes
8.30am	School Renewal Identity Team (SRIT)			Board Room	A Brady
9.00am – 9.50am	Team A Fr Paul Finucane (Parish Priest)	Team B (Old Boys)	Team C (<i>Parents</i>)	Board Room (A) “Club Med” (B)	S Brannan
9.50am – 10.43am	Team A Year 12 Leaders		Ann Brady	Boardroom	
10.43am – 11.03am	Morning Tea			Boardroom	A Brady
11.03am - 11.56am	Classroom Visits (See attached list)				M Casey 4 students
11.56am – 12.49pm	Edmund Rice Society			Board Room	David Blake
12.50pm	Lunch and Report Writing			Board Room	A Brady
2.20pm – 3.15pm	SRIT with the College Leadership Team for feedback			Board Room	J Couani M Casey A Damo D Dempsey S Brannan SJ Grove T Long (Abs.)