Peer Review Report Summary

Executive Summary

2.1 School Context

Torquay College, (TC) is located approximately 20 km from Geelong. TC was a Year P – 9 school and following the establishment of Surf Coast Secondary College in 2012, converted to a Year F – 6 school with 840 students. The school has expanded to 1040 students and retained an SFO of 0.261 indicating the school’s socio economic profile is higher than state mean. Enrolments are predicted to grow to 1130 students by 2019.

Staffing profile of equivalent effective full time (EFT) 54.1 teachers include three Principal class, and EFT 34.5 experienced teachers who have additional responsibilities including developing collaborative teaching teams focusing on curriculum and digital technologies. There are EFT 16.6 Education Support Staff who work in classrooms and administration areas supporting students and staff.

The College structure is based on year level classes in Years F – 4, and multi-age pods in Years 5 – 6. Teaching and learning spaces are constructed to provide opportunities for flexibility in teaching; for example, team teaching and small group focus work. Digital leveraging is supported with one to one devices provided in Years 4 – 6 classrooms and shared devices Years F – 3. All teaching areas have access to interactive whiteboards, flip cameras, and other audio visual equipment used as teaching and learning tools.

Student support and extension programs are in place across the school, including Reading Recovery, Multi-Lit and Reading Rocks. Additional support is provided through the School Chaplain, integration aides, parent volunteers and outside agencies. The College values of ‘Respect’, ‘Friendship’ and ‘Doing our Personal Best’ underpin the College culture with strong community support evidenced through communication.

English and Mathematics knowledge and skills provide the basis for successful learning and as such, these curriculum areas are prioritised in daily timetables. Curriculum inquiry units, developed within teaching teams, are implemented across the school. ‘New Pedagogies of Deep Learning’, embraced in 2013, has had a major impact on improving teaching practice in classrooms through the focus on the six Cs of collaboration, communication, citizenship, critical thinking, creativity and character. Specialist programs operate for Music, Visual Arts, Indonesian Language, Physical Education and Environmental Science. Students are provided with a range of extracurricular activities such as Circus Troupe, bands, choir, art and dancing.

TC engages with the community in learning, for example in Environmental Studies, and has established partnerships with local business and not for profit organisations. Community groups share the College stadium. As part of the LOTE program, the College links with countries overseas. For example, sister schools and exchange visits to China. The impact is students and the school are recognised by the community and students are provided with authentic learning opportunities.

Extensive grounds and facilities provide interesting play spaces and equipment. They include a harmony and indigenous garden, chicken yard, native bird aviary and environmental centre. A stadium located on site, comprise two basketball courts, performance stage, dance studio and classroom spaces and offices.

The College operates an Out of School Hours program from 7am until 6.15pm for up to 150 children.
2.2 Summary of the School’s Performance

2.2.1 Summary of the School’s Performance against the Previous Strategic Plan

**Achievement**

Achievement of the targets from the previous Strategic Plan (SP), 2013-2016, were variable. NAPLAN data at Year 3 indicated growth in all areas of Numeracy, Writing and Reading. However, although the target of 10% growth in the top band was met only in Writing, results were consistently greater than state and region means. The panel attributed this to initial embedding of writing programs in the junior section of the school. Year 5 growth was not as strong, with NAPLAN data, although mostly above state and region means, not meeting target. Relative growth data, 2015, did not meet statewide benchmarks with more students demonstrating low growth than the 25% benchmark. The panel considered the SP targets aspirational as baseline data indicated significant numbers already achieving results in the top two bands. Results were mostly above state and region means. AusVELS data indicated all students achieved at least one year’s growth for one year’s learning in literacy and numeracy.

Comparison with similar schools in the same high socio economic profile as TC indicate the school is performing at levels similar to other schools in NAPLAN Numeracy and Reading in 2015. The review panel discussed the positive impact of intervention such as Reading Recovery at Year 1 and implementation of whole school approaches to teaching and learning such as Writing and involvement in New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) which enhance students understanding at a deeper level than before.

**Engagement**

Attendance targets of maintaining absences below state mean over the review period were met in all years of the SP except in 2015 when average absences were 15.71 days compared to state mean of 14.66 days. TC leadership and staff were proactive in tracking and monitoring individual student attendance which has positively impacted attendance data. Most absences were due to parents/carers taking their children on holiday during term.

TC has strong transition practices into and out of the school with students provided with many opportunities to experience the ‘next level’. However parent perceptions through the Parent Opinion survey have declined and at the 28th percentile have not met target of 75th percentile. Parents both on the review panel and through the Self-evaluation process were unable to explain this variance. The panel discussed the transition point between Year 4 – 5. Students move from a more traditional teaching environment to open learning in ‘pods’. Initially students feel a little anxious and this is reflected, particularly in the Year 5 Attitudes to School Survey data. Follow up interviews with students in both Year 5 and 6 were able to alleviate any concerns. Students indicated they felt confident and motivated in their learning following an initial period of transition.

2.2.2 Summary of the considerations for the next Strategic Plan

**Achievement**

Continuing focus on strengthening staff capacity to effectively implement agreed whole school strategies around curriculum and instruction is future work. Using the Victorian curriculum, staff teams working together, will ensure documentation of essential learnings across Years F – 6, and high level implementation. A range of data, is currently collected. However there is further work in using data sources that provide increased preciseness and staff confidence in giving accurate feedback about student learning.

**Key improvement strategies**

- Strengthen teacher capacity to provide a student centred, collaborative learning environment using data and feedback.
- Embed a whole school approach to instructional practice and curriculum delivery.
- Strengthen collaborative team processes to improve teaching and learning.
Engagement

The panel discussed implementation of strategies to further involve and connect parents/carers with TC. For example, communication through ‘Sentral’ student management system. Student voice and agency in learning, is apparent particularly at Years 5 – 6 but not as evident across other years. Building staff capacity to provide student centred classrooms with engaging and rich tasks is future work. TC has excellent processes to support transition into and beyond the school which will be continued and consolidated. Information could be gathered from students at important transition points. In particular, transition from Years 4–5. Whilst absence data has been equal or slightly above the State mean over the review period, the panel supports TC in continuing a proactive approach in encouraging attendance.

Key improvement strategies

- Enhance the partnership between school, students and parents/carers with a shared language, expectations and processes relating to student outcomes.
- Strengthen staff capacity to support students to become independent and curious learners.
- Strengthen transition practices into, through and out of the school.

Wellbeing

The current Engagement and Wellbeing policy will be updated and incorporate current and valid wellbeing programs. As well, the panel discussed the importance of continuing to foster and enhance relationships, with parents/carers and community. The three school values of ‘Respect’, ‘Friendship’ and ‘Doing our Personal Best’, will continue to be used as common language to acknowledge and reward behaviours. Restorative Practices will continue to provide the language to build, maintain and restore relationships.

Key improvement strategies

- Strengthen a whole school community focus on positive relationships, inclusion and resilience, building on the school values.

Productivity

Continued attention in resourcing building of staff and leadership capacity is required for optimising student outcomes. Incorporated, is collaborative professional learning and staff teams, led by school leaders, so that staff are provided with ample opportunities to learn from each other. Continuing to enrich links and partnerships with families, educational providers and community will further improve student outcomes. TC is a well-resourced school, with currency in digital technologies, ample classroom teaching resources and well maintained grounds and buildings. Evidence suggests that the available resources will continue to be directed appropriately toward school priorities.

Key improvement strategies

- Continue to invest in leadership development and staff professional learning as a priority.
- Ensure that knowledge transfer and succession planning are built in to leadership development and professional learning processes.

2.2.3 Next steps

There is a productive, cohesive partnership between the principal team, staff, parents, school council and community, conducive to a learning environment at Torquay College where student outcomes are prioritised. A solid foundation for student achievement is provided through curriculum documentation, whole school teaching approaches underpinned by the philosophy of deep understanding, and an agreed values system. Strong staff capacity provides quality learning and a safe and secure environment for students.