



## **Agnew School Incorporated**

### **Cyclical Review Report**

**2012**

#### **Introduction**

Agnew School is a co-educational multi-campus school offering Years Three to Twelve. The school was established by the Brethren in 2003 and now has six campuses located in Brisbane (Wakerley), Warwick, Toowoomba, Nambour, Maryborough and Bundaberg. Currently, the campuses serve 355 students (135 primary in Years 3-6 and 220 secondary in Years 7-12).

Throughout 2012, Agnew School conducted a comprehensive assessment of its performance against the accreditation criteria as part of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board's cyclical review program. The assessment was carried out in accordance with the cyclical review plan that Agnew School submitted late in 2011 and which was subsequently endorsed by the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board in November 2011. The cyclical review commenced in February 2012 and was completed in September when the Review Panel met with an External Validator.

The Review Panel included the School Administrator, the Head of Education and members of the governing body as well as parents and staff representing different sectors of the school community. In addition, the School Administrator invited a senior educator from the Uniting Church Schools' Commission to be the External Validator for the Review Panel. A former independent school principal was engaged by Agnew School as its 'facilitator' for the cyclical review program and the Review Panel meeting.

The following Cyclical Review report addresses the accreditation criteria and the evaluation questions set out in the cyclical review plan.

#### **Conclusion**

The Cyclical Review report concludes that Agnew School is complying with the requirements for ongoing accreditation. It therefore recommends that the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board endorse the contents of the report.

## The Accreditation Criteria

### Governance and Administration

- ***How does Agnew School ensure the suitability of its governing body in relation to the statutory requirements?***

Agnew School is fully owned and operated by Agnew School Incorporated, a not-for-profit Incorporated Association registered under the Associations Incorporations Act 1981. All members of the Management Committee of the Association are Directors of the Governing Body and Board of Agnew School and hold current suitability cards for child related employment from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. The school's Office Manager maintains a central register of suitability cards numbers and expiry dates on behalf of the Board of Agnew School to facilitate the renewal of cards. Additionally, the Board has a Directors' Handbook and induction procedures to ensure that all new board members are aware of, and comply with, the requirements relating to suitability cards.

Agnew School has established Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for its operations and these are reviewed regularly at the local level and by OneSchool, the national advisory and support body for Brethren schools. OneSchool has developed a model to guide the operations of the Brethren schools in Australia and New Zealand. The KPI's cover a range of matters including governance, finances and budgeting, staffing levels and staff professional development, provision of facilities, administration guidelines, quality control and so on.

The Board of Agnew School has clear guidelines for dealing with arrangements with external for-profit entities through such matters as policies on tendering and signing of contracts. By way of example, Agnew School has been successful with a number of applications to the Queensland Independent Schools Block Grant Authority for capital funding and each of the resulting building projects has been managed in accord with this policy.

Similarly, the Board has a Conflict of Interest policy and this is included in the Directors' Handbook and as part of the induction process for new members. It is also considered from time to time at regular board meetings to ensure that members understand their responsibilities in this area.

### Financial Viability

- ***What indicators are there that Agnew School will have access to adequate financial resources for its viable operation for at least five years?***

The Board of Agnew School undertakes a systematic approach to ensuring that it has the information it needs to guide and manage its finances and budgets. The Board receives income and expenditure reports, a balance sheet and cash flow forecasts at each meeting.

The Review Panel sighted a letter from the school's auditor, Audit Solutions Queensland, with the appropriate qualifications as set out by the *Corporations Act 2001* confirming that Agnew School has access to an adequate level of finance to ensure that it will be viable. The audited accounts for 2011 were also sighted and attest to this situation.

The Board provides quarterly financial reports to OneSchool and the school has a robust budgeting process that is also monitored by OneSchool to ensure that the Board is well informed about the impact of its budget on the processes of the school.

In addition, the Board confirmed that it has access to resources from within the Brethren community to support the school's needs for its projected enrolment for the next five years.

History has shown that the school has always had significant financial support from the Brethren community for both planned developments and for unforeseen events and the Board of Agnew School is confident that this commitment will continue. In addition, the Board has a very good understanding of the school's enrolment projections for up to five years and this knowledge has been valuable in assisting the school to accurately plan its staffing and capital needs.

### **Philosophy and Aims**

- ***How does Agnew School's statement of philosophy and aims comply with the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians?***
- ***How does the Melbourne Statement guide Agnew School's education and organisational practice?***

The philosophy and aims of Agnew School are contained in the Parent Handbook and on the Agnew School website which was sighted by the Review Panel. The Review Panel was also briefed on the significance of the Agnew Systems Manual (ASM) an online database that contains all curriculum documents, work programs for teachers, school policies and procedures with reference to the Melbourne Declaration. The Melbourne Declaration document is also included within the ASM.

It was clear to the review panel that the school's statement of philosophy and aims does:

- Drive strategic and operational planning;
- Guide and support teachers and the board;
- Form the basis for curriculum development, teaching and learning in accord with the Queensland Studies Authority and ACARA syllabus requirements;
- Inform parents, students and teachers about Agnew School's values and aspirations.

To further test this the Cyclical Review committee conducted a survey across all parents, staff and secondary students asking for responses to a range of statements dealing with the school's ethos, curriculum offerings, staffing levels, facilities, behaviour management, communications. The responses to this survey, conducted in August 2012, confirmed that there is a high level of satisfaction within the school community about the education offered by Agnew School. The survey also highlighted some areas, which the Board and staff will address, including issues with communication, student subject choice and the implementation of the behaviour management policy.

Similar surveys were conducted in 2008 and 2010 and the results of these were tabled for the review panel.

The Head of Education addressed the review panel on the education program of Agnew School and confirmed that this year the school has implemented the Australian Curriculum in English, Maths, Science and History in Years 3-10. Planning for the implementation of Phase 2 of the Australian Curriculum Years 3-10 and Phase 1 for Years 11-12 is currently underway.

The Review Panel is of the view that Agnew School's statement of philosophy and aims reflects the Melbourne Declaration on National Goals for Young Australians.

## Educational Program

- ***What processes are in place to ensure that the curriculum offered by Agnew School addresses the needs of its students and the aspirations of its community?***
- ***To what extent has Agnew School differentiated the curriculum to cater for varying abilities?***
- ***How does Agnew School ensure that its education program meets the national and state standards?***

Agnew School serves a relatively small student population across six campuses. Therefore, the school has adopted a pedagogy that includes video conferencing alongside the traditional classroom approach to teaching. The Video Conferencing approach, or VC, enables the school to deliver the curriculum to quite small cohorts spread over several campuses. The school uses a common timetable so that a teacher on one site can teach a class which is scattered over four or five campuses. Currently, there are three subjects being delivered in this way. The model has been refined in recent years and quite sophisticated, but robust technology, has been installed at each site. Even so, some students with quite specific subject needs make use of the services offered by Brisbane School of Distance Education with on-site support and supervision from Agnew School staff on their respective campuses.

The review panel noted that the introduction of the VC has resulted in a higher level of participation in some subjects and that student performance as independent learners has increased. It has also provided more learning pathways than would otherwise be practical for a relatively small cohort.

The combination of 'normal' classroom teaching, video conferencing and distance education has meant that the majority of Agnew School students are able to pursue their chosen pathways at the senior school level with minimal impediment. In fact, Agnew School students have achieved excellent results with their OP scores for several years in succession and the school has been 'named' in the press as having had 100% of its OP eligible cohort achieving within the OP range 1-15.

Across the school campuses there are 17 teachers identified as 'Leading Teachers' in both the primary and secondary sectors with the necessary experience and qualifications to develop curriculum and support teaching in other campuses. Again, this model reflects the approach by the board to ensure that each campus can offer a quality education program even though there might be a small number of students and staff in each subject area.

Overseeing the development of the curriculum is a Head of Education who is well versed in the national curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements as well as those of the Queensland Studies Authority. The Head of Education meets regularly with the Leading Teachers and Campus Coordinators to ensure they are well supported in their work.

Interestingly, Agnew School, along with its partners in OneSchool, holds regular national workshops for curriculum leaders and board members where significant matters relating to the introduction of the national curriculum are addressed. There have been two such workshops this year and the Agnew School team has been a major contributor to these events, particularly in the areas of staff development, appraisal and the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. At these meetings, the work programs and unit plans developed for the Australian Curriculum by Agnew School were shared with the other OneSchool partners.

Agnew School ensures that standardised testing outcomes such as NAPLAN and QCS are analysed and used to drive future planning and professional development needs. The analysis of NAPLAN data, for example, is distributed to the Leading Teachers and Campus Coordinators. Whole of staff planning days are held every semester so that gaps in the teaching and learning processes can be identified and addressed. QCS practice and NAPLAN data is also analysed by a consultant engaged to look at trends within each cohort over time and this information is used to inform the teaching and learning process.

In addition, student work in the primary years is moderated across the campuses using QCATS. Similarly, samples of the work completed by secondary students is sent to other campuses during the non-reporting periods (end of first and third terms) and cross-marked by teachers to ensure consistency and provide feedback to teachers. All Year 11 and 12 work is moderated across the campuses.

The review panel sighted several teaching programs across the primary and secondary sectors. Unit plans and assessment pieces were examined in detail on Moodle which is an electronic repository and information exchange for all teaching and learning at Agnew School. It contains lesson plans, resources and assessment tasks. The school also uses a TASS module, WebBook, to report student achievement and overall outcomes at the end of each semester. Student reports are mailed to parents and there is a follow-up program of parent-teacher interviews.

Teachers use the school calendar module in TASS to plan the assessment time-lines and parents are encouraged to access this via 'parent lounge'. This was commented on quite favourably in the recent community surveys, and some students suggested that it would be a good idea for them to be present during the parent-teacher interviews.

### **Students with a Disability**

- ***How are students with disabilities meeting the goals set out in their individual education plans?***

Agnew School has a well-documented approach to meeting the needs of students with disabilities. The school regularly consults with officers of Independent Schools Queensland to ensure that it is abreast of the services and funding available. The national body, OneSchool, also has guidelines for its member schools and Agnew makes use of this service. When deemed necessary, external consultants are engaged to assist staff to assess learning needs and develop Individual Education Plans (IEP) for students who are 'verified' eligible for funding support. This targeted funding is used to engage support staff, obtain specialized resources and provide professional development as needed.

IEP's are reviewed every semester and from these reviews strategies are developed to ensure that the learning needs of the particular student are met. Parents are engaged in this process and the school has developed a Learning Support Tracking Form to inform all personnel involved with the student on an IEP.

The school also has processes in place, through assessments and referrals, to address the learning needs of students not eligible for targeted funding. These students have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) which is developed in consultation with their classroom teachers, the learning support staff and parents. Students with an ILP are given particular consideration with assessment tasks including modified tasks and extensions to time-lines. Their progress is recorded and monitored via the Learning Support Tracking Form.

## **Flexible Arrangements**

- ***How does the board ensure that Agnew School is complying with flexible arrangements in accordance with legislated requirements?***

Agnew School values the diversity of its students and considers their specific educational needs. The school assists the participation of students in programs supplied by other organizations by:

- (i) Consulting with the student and parents to make well-informed decisions about the student's education program.
- (ii) Making adjustments in modifying, substituting or supplementing curricula, course work requirements, timetables, teaching methods and materials and assessment procedures to meet the needs of students undertaking flexible arrangements.
- (iii) Facilitating options and pathways for students wishing to take advantage of flexible arrangements.

The Board has approved a policy, which is designed to ensure that Agnew School meets its obligations with respect to the legislation dealing with flexible arrangements (*Education General Provisions Act (2006)*). Under this policy and its associated procedures, the Board of Agnew School has delegated authority to the School Administrator to manage the flexible arrangements in place.

Presently, Agnew School has flexible arrangements in place for: students who are involved with traineeships with recognised providers; students taking Years 11 and 12 over three years; and students who are on an accelerated program. These programs are well documented and monitored, to ensure that the individual needs of the students are being met and that the school has the appropriate records for each student and the relevant authorities.

## **Workplace Health and Safety**

- ***What structures has Agnew School in place to ensure continued compliance with workplace health and safety legislation?***

Agnew School has engaged a consultant (Qual Safe) to undertake annual site audits and advise both the board and the Workplace Health and Safety Coordinator on each campus. The review panel sighted the most recent audit (5/09/11) and noted that matters from previous audits had been addressed.

Agnew School has a comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety manual, which has been developed through OneSchool and includes a risk management policy for all areas of its operations. The review panel noted that Agnew School has not been issued with any notices under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act* during the past three years.

Matters relating to workplace health and safety are also addressed with staff at the whole of staff meetings held every semester when all staff from the six campuses meet.

## Student Welfare

- ***Do students feel safe in Agnew School?***
- ***How effectively does Agnew School monitor the physical and emotional well-being of its students and staff and ensure that the school's environment is safe?***
- ***Has Agnew School consistently met the legislated requirements for reporting student harm over the last five years?***
- ***What procedures are in place to ensure that these requirements will be met over the next five years?***

The recent survey of parents, staff and students addressed this matter, with the students being asked to respond to a statement *'I know what to do if I do not feel safe at school'*. In all, 82% of the 169 student respondents agreed that they 'know what to do'. A further 14% were 'undecided' about what to do or 'did not know' what to do in the event of feeling unsafe. This suggests that Agnew School needs to continue to work with its staff and students to ensure that the concerns of all its students are met. The Review Panel also noted that Agnew School has procedures in place, including notices placed in public areas informing students that particular staff members are available to assist them. These matters are also addressed in Home Group sessions and assemblies from time to time.

The same survey indicated that 82% of the students are 'happy' at Agnew School while 14% were 'undecided' about this matter. This suggests that further research is needed and the Review Panel noted that Campus Coordinators intend to address this in the near future.

The Parent Survey showed that 68% of the 60 respondents agreed that the school *'had strategies to counter bullying'*. A further 20% were 'undecided' and 12% of the group disagreed with the statement. The Review Panel noted again that this matter will be investigated further and that the Campus Coordinators will address this with their respective staff teams.

Earlier this year the board initiated a review of the Child Protection Policy to ensure compliance with the changes to the Queensland Government legislation effective July 2012. The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about the health and safety of Agnew School staff and students and about the appropriate conduct of staff and students. This policy applies to staff, students and volunteers at Agnew School and covers information about the reporting of harm and likely sexual abuse.

Following the review and consultation phase with staff, the board adopted the new policy and this has now been presented at staff meetings. It will be an integral part of the induction process for new staff and will also be re-visited annually at the whole of staff meetings.

The Review Panel noted that Agnew School has not received any reports of student harm in the last five years.

## Staffing

### ***What processes are in place to ensure that Agnew School has a staff profile capable of effectively delivering its educational program?***

Agnew School has a strong leadership model with five experienced educators serving as the Campus Coordinators for their respective campuses (The Campus Coordinator for Toowoomba also manages the primary-only Warwick campus).

The Head of Education is based at the Brisbane Campus, but meets with the Campus Coordinators, the campus-based Leading Teachers and wider body of teachers on a regular basis. The Head of Education is the curriculum leader of Agnew School and has an excellent understanding of the ACARA and QSA requirements and processes.

Each campus has a range of specialist staff including a learning support teacher who is guided by a Leading Teacher and a consultant engaged by Agnew School to assist with the more specialised needs of some students.

Staffing levels are based on benchmarks developed by OneSchool and the Board sets the actual staffing level for each site in conjunction with the Campus Coordinators to ensure the effective delivery of the school's program.

All teaching staff are registered with the Queensland College of Teachers and a register of current certificates is maintained. All non-teaching staff hold current suitability cards for child related employment. A register of blue card currency is maintained and monitored by the Office Manager.

Future enrolment projections are based on an understanding that the majority of the children in the Brethren community will attend Agnew School. As a consequence the Board has been able to plan for its staffing needs with a high level of certainty.

Agnew School has a well-documented model for recruiting and selecting its staff and the 2011 Annual Report indicates that 76% of the 2010 teaching cohort was still teaching at the school in 2011. Of these, 40 out of a total of 55 teachers held more than one tertiary qualification related to their teaching areas and 11% have a Masters Degree.

Agnew School has a pro-active approach to professional development and the average expenditure per teacher for PD in 2011 was \$649. In addition, the school provides a minimum of twelve non-teaching days for internal planning and professional development. PD activities included Australian Curriculum workshops, QSA workshops, interactive whiteboard training to support the introduction of these devices across the school, Moodle training sessions, video-conferencing courses, bullying solutions workshops and health and safety inductions.

In addition, teachers engaged in a wide range of activities relevant to their specific areas of teaching with ISQ, QSA and many other providers.

This year the Agnew School Board endorsed a teacher development initiative to be known as the School Continuous Improvement Plan or SCIP. SCIP, which was developed by the Head of Education, is based around the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*. This framework identifies the processes needed to build an effective performance and development culture within the school. Agnew School staff will use SCIP to develop an annual 'action plan' which encompasses the 'domains of teaching' and the recognised 'national professional standards' and each teacher's professional career goals.



SCIP was introduced at a whole of staff meeting recently and will be fully implemented in 2013.

Overall, the Review Panel concluded that Agnew School has a sufficient number, and appropriate types of staff necessary for the effective delivery of the educational program. It also endorsed Agnew School's approach to continuous improvement in the area of professional development as a strategic means of ensuring the effective delivery of the educational program.

## **Land and Buildings**

### ***How does Agnew School's built infrastructure compare with the established industry benchmarks?***

During the course of the cyclical review a consultant experienced in assessing school facilities inspected the buildings and facilities on each campus. In addition, photographs from the campuses were tabled during the review and at the meeting of the Review Panel.

Agnew School has excellent, well-maintained facilities with an appropriate range of specialist teaching spaces on each campus. The school has made use of advances in information technology to ensure that there is a high level of connectivity between the campuses such as teaching with video-conferencing and on-line access to the central library catalogue. Students have good access to computers, both in the classrooms and in the library areas.

The most recent addition has been the construction of a new library on the Brisbane campus (opened in 2011) with funding from the Building the Education Revolution. This library is designed to complement the work of the smaller library areas on each outlying campus and there is a good system of distributing materials for students and staff on these sites.

The regional campuses have facilities well suited to their smaller cohorts with ample playing space and covered areas. For example, the Bundaberg campus, which is on the site of a former state primary school, has attracted BGA funding to convert facilities for the library and manual arts. It also has a multi-purpose hall for indoor sport, drama and assemblies. The other campuses have been purpose built and reflect both the local decisions about building design and materials as well as the policies of the Board as measured against the recommendations of OneSchool and organisations such as the Block Grant Authority.

## **School Improvement**

### ***How effective is Agnew School's reporting of its achievements against its strategic plan?***

### ***How do the parents rate Agnew School's performance in this area?***

### ***How does Agnew School use the information published in its Annual Report to enhance compliance with the accreditation criteria?***

The recent parent surveys indicated that up to 20% of the parents who responded were 'uncertain' or 'did not know' about a range of matters covered in the survey. On the other hand, the parents indicated a high level of satisfaction with what is happening in the school with most of the survey statements being supported by more than 80% of the respondents (12 out of 18 scores were between 82% and 100%). The statements in the survey covered a wide range of matters relating to the strategic plan including curriculum, staffing, facilities, student achievement and the school environment.

Nevertheless, this is an area where more work will be needed. From here the Board and staff will consider how best to ensure that there is more opportunity for the community to be involved in the strategic planning process through special information sessions and focus sessions.

The 2011 Annual Report was tabled for the Review Panel and it was noted that it is both comprehensive and informative. However, at Agnew School the Annual Report is more a means of informing the wider community about the school's achievements than a tool for ensuring compliance with the accreditation criteria. Presently, the Board and the staff make use of the 'compliance' chart adopted by Independent Schools Queensland and the frameworks from OneSchool as a way of ensuring that it is on track with respect to the requirements of the external framework of government legislation.

### **The Cyclical Review Process at Agnew School**

The Cyclical Review Committee comprising staff members and board members met on a monthly basis from March to August 2012 to consider each of the major statutory requirements of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board. The meetings were chaired by an 'external facilitator' engaged by the board for this purpose. The facilitator is a retired independent school Principal who also currently serves on the Boards of Moreton Bay College and The Lakes College.

The Review Panel met in September to consider the evidence amassed by the Cyclical Review Committee over the course of the year. The External Validator, Mrs Elaine Rae, who is the Executive Officer of the Uniting Church Schools' Commission, and an invited group of Agnew School parents also considered this evidence. The External Validator's report is included with this Cyclical Review Report.

The Review Panel comprised:

Mr Ross Sanderson	Board Chairman: Agnew School Incorporated
Mr Norm Sharples	School Administrator (Principal); Board Member Agnew School Inc.
Mr Paul Kirkpatrick	Member of the Board
Mrs Vicki Cameron	Head of Education
Mrs Bev Hume	Campus Coordinator, Maryborough Campus
Ms Terri Wessels	Leading Teacher (Primary), Nambour Campus
Mr Geoff Iles	Resource Management
Mrs Rebecca Shepherd	Administration Officer
Miss Mary Vellacott	Finance Officer
Mrs Rae Gorrington	Office Manager
Mr and Mrs Archer	Brisbane Campus parent representatives
Mr and Mrs Woodford	Brisbane Campus parent representatives
Mrs Elaine Rae	External Validator Executive Officer of the Uniting Church Schools' Commission

Mr Michael Millard	Facilitator engaged by Agnew School Incorporated to conduct the cyclical review program  Retired Principal (Calvary Christian College) and member of the Queensland Independent Schools Block Grant Authority; Board member of Moreton Bay College and The Lakes College.
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