Putting Them in the Hands of God: A Successful Christian School in Australia

James Bertrand Twelves

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Department of Education Policy and Management
The University of Melbourne
Abstract

This research is a single case study based on one successful Australian Christian school, Sandford Christian College. The research objectives were, firstly to quantify the degree of success of Sandford Christian College’s education by applying the School Development Review methodology of the Office of Review of the Victorian Department of Education. Secondly, to describe an ‘exemplary’ Christian school and finally, to describe the impact of Sandford Christian College on the lives of the students. The significance of the research was to understand the central meaning and essence of one school community in the context of these three research objectives.

In order to meet these objectives, the study comprised three areas. The first area was the largely quantitative application of the School Development Review, which provides comparative benchmarks from government schools, against which to measure Sandford Christian College’s performance. The second area was a qualitative grounded theory approach, centred on in-depth interviews and focus groups. Finally, there was an historical aspect to the study, represented by the Past Student Survey that sought to assess the impact of the College on its students.

Sandford Christian College is an excellent school. Compared to government school benchmarks, on all measures it is above the state average. It has achieved excellent academic results motivated by leaders who were described as approachable and outstanding by staff who had inspired high morale and unity within the College community. The aims and objectives of the College had been achieved to a large degree; for example, there was a demonstrable promotion of the Christian faith.

The essence of the College was illustrated by the staff’s appreciation for their founders, the significant role of their principal of over 15 years, and the calling of their staff into Christian, as opposed to secular, ministry. They championed their Christian objectives while still achieving excellent academic outcomes and the active creation of a distinctive school ethos.
The oversight church’s Senior Minister’s vision for the College graduates was that he did not want them going out into *little Christian ghettos*, destined for mere survival. His vision was that they might *engage their culture* to the extent that they change their world for good. The Past Student Survey found that they were achieving very encouraging results, but at 21 years old the College was still too young to be able to generate sufficient data to adequately quantify their past students’ outcomes into adulthood.
Declaration

This is to certify that the thesis comprises only my original work, due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used and the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, references and appendices.

Signed:
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to my wife, Gill Twelves, who has always believed in me and encouraged me to keep going especially during the hard times.
Contents Table

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ i
Declaration.................................................................................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements.................................................................................................................... iv
Dedication..................................................................................................................................... v
Contents Table ............................................................................................................................ vi
Table of Tables ............................................................................................................................. xi
Table of Figures ........................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter 1 Putting Them in the Hands of God: A Successful Christian School in Australia

1.1 Background to the Study ................................................................................................. 1
1.2 Research Objectives ...................................................................................................... 3
1.3 Significance of the Research ....................................................................................... 5
1.4 Conceptual Framework............................................................................................... 7

Chapter 2 Literature Review .................................................................................................. 13

2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 13
2.2 The new Christian schools.......................................................................................... 14
   2.2.1 Some Facts........................................................................................................ 14
   2.2.2 Some Roots of the Movement ..................................................................... 16
2.3 The Governance of the new Christian schools ..................................................... 21
   2.3.1 Sometimes Seriously Dysfunctional......................................................... 21
   2.3.2 Seriously Functional Governance............................................................ 28
2.4 Leadership in Christian Schools ........................................................................... 32
   2.4.1 What is Leadership? ............................................................................... 32
   2.4.2 Some Leadership Themes....................................................................... 36
   2.4.3 Christian School Leadership................................................................. 43
2.5 Building School Culture ......................................................................................... 46
   2.5.1 Defining School Culture......................................................................... 47
   2.5.2 The Ingredients of School Culture....................................................... 48
   2.5.3 Christian School Cultures.................................................................... 51
   2.5.4 The Maintenance of Christian School Cultures................................. 53
2.6 Successful Christian Schools................................................................................... 54
Chapter 1: Introduction to Successful Christian Schools

2.6.1 Attempts to Define Success ................................................................. 54
2.6.2 Prerequisites for Success ................................................................. 58
2.6.3 Successful Christian Schools ......................................................... 60
2.7 Case Studies ....................................................................................... 66
2.7.1 The Scope of the Case Studies ....................................................... 66
2.7.2 God’s Choice: The Total World of the Fundamentalist Christian School - Alan Peshkin, 1986 ................................................................. 68
2.7.3 Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America - Susan Rose, 1988 ................................................................. 71
2.7.4 The Development of Themelic Schools in Australia - Robert Long, 1996 ................................................................. 75
2.7.5 Leadership and Management in Three Exemplar Non-Government Australian Christian Schools - James Twelves, 2000 ......................................................... 78
2.8 Summary ............................................................................................ 80

Chapter 3 Methodology ........................................................................... 81

3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................... 81
3.2 Methodologies .................................................................................. 81
3.2.1 Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed Methods? ............................... 81
3.2.2 Pre-understanding and Grounded Theory ...................................... 84
3.2.3 Ethnography ................................................................................. 88
3.2.4 Hermeneutic Phenomenology ...................................................... 91
3.2.5 Case Study Design ................................................................. 92
3.2.6 Selection of Case Study ............................................................ 94
3.3 Research Methods ........................................................................... 96
3.3.1 Access and Gatekeepers .............................................................. 96
3.3.2 Accountability Framework of the Schools of the Future .............. 97
3.3.3 Sandford Christian College’s School Development Review ......... 106
3.3.4 The Past Student Survey ........................................................... 115
3.3.5 Analysis of Qualitative Data ....................................................... 116
3.4 Delimitations and Limitations ....................................................... 127
3.4.1 Trustworthiness ........................................................................ 130
3.4.2 Ethical Considerations ............................................................. 133
3.5 Conclusions .................................................................................... 135
Chapter 4 Sandford Christian College Development Review and Past Student Survey .... 137

4.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 137

4.2 Sandford Christian College Development Review ........................................ 137
   4.2.1 Full Diagnostic Staff Opinion Survey ..................................................... 137
   4.2.2 Documentary Analysis ........................................................................... 150
   4.2.3 Student Opinion Survey ......................................................................... 171
   4.2.4 Parent Opinion Survey ......................................................................... 177
   4.2.5 Summary of the College Development Review ....................................... 184

4.3 Past Student Survey ......................................................................................... 187
   4.3.1 The Early Years 1978 - 1990 ................................................................. 187
   4.3.2 The Recent Years 1992 - 1999 ............................................................... 193
   4.3.3 All Years 1978 - 1999 ......................................................................... 198

Chapter 5 Results of the In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups ......................... 205

5.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................... 205

5.2 Christian Foundations ..................................................................................... 207
   5.2.1 Origins of the Vision for the College .................................................... 207
   5.2.2 Passion for Christian Education ............................................................ 208
   5.2.3 Prayer .................................................................................................... 212

5.3 Growth and Change ....................................................................................... 214
   5.3.1 Growth and Problems with Growth .................................................... 215
   5.3.2 Creating a Community Culture ............................................................ 221
   5.3.3 A United Community Culture .............................................................. 227

5.4 Leadership Styles ........................................................................................... 230
   5.4.1 The Senior Minister of Sandford Christian Fellowship ....................... 233
   5.4.2 Sandford Christian College Council .................................................. 235
   5.4.3 The Principal ...................................................................................... 237
   5.4.4 Senior Management Team ................................................................. 240

5.5 Management ................................................................................................... 244
   5.5.1 Effective Management ....................................................................... 244
   5.5.2 Ineffective Management ..................................................................... 247

5.6 Teaching and Learning ................................................................................ 249
   5.6.1 The Students ..................................................................................... 249
   5.6.2 The Teachers ...................................................................................... 253
Chapter 6 Discussion - The Nature of Success ................................................................. 273

6.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................... 273

6.2 The degree of Success of Sandford Christian College’s education.................. 273
  6.2.1 Leadership ................................................................................................. 274
  6.2.2 Management .............................................................................................. 275
  6.2.3 Aims and Objectives .................................................................................. 276

6.3. The Essence of Sandford Christian College .................................................... 278
  6.3.1 The Origins and Vision.............................................................................. 279
  6.3.2 The Principal’s Leadership........................................................................ 281
  6.3.3 The Teachers’ Christian Ministry..............................................................284
  6.3.4 Christian Objectives above the Academic................................................. 285
  6.3.5 The Creation of a Distinctive Community Culture ................................... 287

6.4 The Impact on Past-Students ............................................................................ 288

6.5 Summary of Discussion - The Nature of Success ............................................ 293

6.6 Suggestions for Further Study .......................................................................... 294

6.7 Reflections on the Study................................................................................... 295

Chapter 7 Deeper Deliberations........................................................................................... 297

7.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................... 297

7.2 The Culture of the School in Action................................................................. 297
  7.2.1 Vision, Synergy and Buildings................................................................. 298
  7.2.2 How Christian was their Culture? ............................................................. 300
  7.2.3 Some Reflections on their Educational Operation .................................... 302

7.3 The Anatomy of Successful Leadership in this School compared with the
  Anatomy of Successful Leadership in Non-Christian Schools......................... 305
  7.3.1 Successful School Leadership Literature Review ..................................... 305
  7.3.2 The Anatomy of Successful Leadership of Sandford Christian College... 311
Table of Tables

Table 3.1 Predispositions of the Quantitative and Qualitative approaches (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Gummesson, 1991: 153). ................................................................. 83
Table 3.2 Some Keys to Successful Themelic* Schooling (Twelves, 2000: 88-89)...... 87
Table 3.3 Case Studies Strengths and Weaknesses (Johnson, 1994: 20-24).............. 93
Table 3.4 Adaptation of the Triennial Review to Sandford Christian College’s School Development Review (Gurr, 1999: 35)................................................................. 104
Table 3.5 Key In Depth Interview Questions................................................................. 109
Table 3.6 Anticipated Focus Group - Key Question Areas........................................... 113
Table 3.7 Examples of Focus Group Questions Used - Primary Students............... 113
Table 3.8 First Stage Coding Categories..................................................................... 118
Table 3.9 Second Stage Coding - The establishment of Sub - Themes....................... 121
Table 3.10 Sample of Analysis Matrix......................................................................... 123
Table 3.10 Sample of Analysis Matrix (continued)..................................................... 125
Table 4.1 Comparison of College Scores with 1997-2000 State Benchmarks.......... 138
Table 4.2 Comparison of College Scores with 2000 State Range Benchmarks........ 139
Table 4.3 Comparison of Scale Scores and State Benchmarks................................... 139
Table 4.4 Like School Comparison for VCE 2000 - Ranked by Study Score............ 152
Table 4.5 Like School Comparison for VCE 2000 - ranked by Improvement Index... 155
Table 4.6 Like School Comparison VCE 2000 - by Tertiary Preparation Index ....... 156
Table 4.7 University of New South Wales - Educational Testing Centre Results 1991 - 2000.................................................................................................................. 159
Table 4.8 Percentage Time Allocation for KLAs Prep - Year 8................................. 162
Table 4.9 Enrolments 1996 - 2000............................................................................... 167
Table 4.10 Mean Student Absence by Year Level 2000............................................. 169
Table 4.11 Number of students completing the student survey by year level ......... 171
Table 4.12 Primary (Y5&6) Variable & Question Means & Percentage Distribution.................................................................................................................. 172
Table 4.13 Secondary (Y7-12) Variable & Question Means & Percentage Distribution.................................................................................................................. 173
Table 4.14 Parent Survey Question and Variable Scores ......................................... 179
Table 4.15 Parent Opinion Survey - Comparison with State Benchmarks 2000.....180
Table 4.16 Early Years 1978 - 1990, results of the survey on the College Aims......190
Table 4.17 Recent Years 1992 - 1999, results of the survey on the College Aims.....195
Table 4.18 All Years 1978 - 1999, results of the survey on the College Aims..........199
Table 5 Coded Themes from In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups.........................206

Table of Figures

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework ................................................................. 9
Figure 3.1 Inductive Spiral (Hurworth, 1999) .................................................. 86
Figure 3.2 The Research Cycle of Ethnography (Burns, 2000: 400) ................. 90
Figure 3.3 The Accountability Framework (Office of Review, 1997: 8).......... 99
Figure 3.4 School Review (Gurr, 1999: 34) ................................................. 101
Figure 3.5 Types of Interview (Burns, 1997: 328) ....................................... 108
Figure 4.1 Comparisons of Scale Scores with State Benchmarks ................. 141
Figure 4.2 Percentage Time Allocation for KLAs Prep - Year 8 .................. 163
Figure 4.3 Mean Student Absences by Year Level 2000 ............................ 169
Figure 5 Leadership Styles......................................................................... 231
Chapter 1 Putting Them in the Hands of God: A Successful Christian School in Australia

1.1 Background to the Study

The new Christian schooling movement of low-fee protestant schools was described by Long (1996a) as the fastest growing non-government schooling system since the 1960s. In 2004 the Australian Association of Christian Schools’ (AACS) home page reported that:

AACS represents at the national level two group members, namely Christian Schools Australia (130 schools) and Christian Parent Controlled Schools (85 schools) as well as 39 independent Christian schools1 (AACS, 2004).

The vision for and the establishment of these schools reached Australia in the 1950s from the United States and Western Europe (Magill, 1986: 59). The most rapid period of growth was from the mid-1970s until the late 1980s. It is a schooling system that has received little study and consequently is arguably little understood (Long, 1996a: 12). This study sought to understand the central meaning and essence (Creswell, 1998: 32) of one successful Australian Christian school.

The inspiration for this study came from Rose’s seminal 1988 study - Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America - based on research in two contrasting growing Christian schools in upstate New York which clearly portrays the American mores of the time as sheltering their young from the broader societal influences regarded by their parents as evil. In contrast, this study - Putting Them in the Hands of God: A Successful Christian School in Australia - depicts a more confident, progressive and outward looking tradition and also seeks to address the lack of evaluation of this approach in Australian research.

1 Substantial direct quotations in this study are presented in italics as a discrete paragraph. Phrases or words that are direct quotations incorporated in the text are indicated by italic font.
Though the title of this study was based on Rose’s work it has been more closely modelled on Peshkin’s research titled *God's Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School* (1986). His work, like Rose’s, was also undertaken in the United States and focussed on an in-depth study of one successful Christian school sponsored by a Baptist church. There has not been a comparable study in Australia other than the researcher’s Masters thesis that examined the leadership and management in three successful Australian Christian schools (Twelves, 2000). This current research project has attempted to redress this imbalance further with a single case study of one successful Australian Christian school.

Peshkin stressed the *total world*, signifying the all-consuming nature of the life of those in the community he and his associates had studied. In Australia, this study has attempted to uncover the central meaning or essence of Sandford Christian College\(^2\) to the extent that the researcher *could pass as an insider* having internalised the cultural features of the setting (van Manen, 1990: 177-178).

The College Principal’s Newsletter weekly proclaimed in the words of Isaiah 54: 13, *that all your children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of your children* (Principal’s Newsletter, 1\(^{st}\) December 2000). The College’s first stated faculty outcome was to *demonstrate the love of God and teach Biblical truths*, while the first stated student outcome, was to *develop in students the desire to serve God and society, and the skills to exercise leadership* (Appendix 4). Further, their first headmaster stated that the College’s objective was to:

*train Christian youth to the height of individual, God-given abilities, responsibilities, and citizenship with integrity and self discipline and to do all this for the greater glory of God* (Deuteronomy 6: 5-7\(^3\), College Handbook, 1981).

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\(^2\) Sandford Christian College is a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the participants.

\(^3\) The style employed throughout this thesis has been based on Snooks (2002).
The researcher’s previous experience included serving as a deputy principal and later as a principal in Australian Christian schools. During this period he began to see how the model of the new Christian schooling movement could fulfil the students’ expectations, the parents’ aspirations and fundamentally impact society for good. This could be achieved by working with local churches and local families in the all round education of their children. This period in his life ignited a passion for Christian Education that has sustained and directed him through this research project (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 14). Essentially, the researcher’s passion for Christian Education is aligned with the goals expressed in the American context by Parsons:

- **Short-term purpose** - to give youth a moral as well as an academic education
- **Long-term purpose** - is to ultimately change the state of health of the republic (Parsons, 1987: 6)

In order to collect the data, the researcher attended *Sandford Christian College* for approximately two days per week for the second semester of 2000. He went into the community to see how a successful Christian school functioned daily, but with no preconceived ideas as to why it was successful. He was simply determined to understand, from a grounded theory perspective, the nature of the success of this rapidly growing, medium sized, church sponsored, co-educational, kindergarten to year 12 school.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 14) advocate that the researcher needs a passion for what they study and enough motivation to carry them through the process. This can often be in the realm of the researcher’s customary work place. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 35-36) claimed that the criterion of personal experience could often be a good indicator of the potential for a successful research enterprise. This research topic was inspired by the researcher’s experience as an Australian Christian school principal. The search for success in Christian schooling was both an interest founded in the researcher’s professional experience, and an important area for research.
The objectives of this research were a logical extension and adaptation of Peshkin’s unanswered research questions (1986: 13-15). Peshkin wanted to:

a) Measure the impact of the school he was studying and to do so he recognised that he had to examine the students that had left the school, settled into activities (work, marriage, post school friendships and child rearing etc), which would characterise their lives as adults but he recognised that the school he was considering was too new to support such a measurement.

b) Examine the relationship between the school’s religious doctrine and its educational practice, in essence to compare the ‘God-centred’ Christian school with the ‘man-centred’ public school.

c) Make clear what an ‘exemplary’ Christian school is like, of the variety that is Independent Baptist and affiliated to the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS).

d) Conduct a personal field trip to discover another culture.

Nearly two decades later in the Australian context, this study, entitled Putting Them in the Hands of God: A Successful Christian School in Australia, aimed to gain an understanding of the College’s unique features, its impact on past and present students and the perceptions of success by members of its own community. Peshkin’s study described the success of Bethany Baptist Academy in the words of one of their 14-year-old students:

Everybody I know knows that I go to this school. If they see me doing something wrong, they’ll think, ‘Well, why pay so much to go to a school when it does not make you a better person?’ (Peshkin, 1986: 179).

Sandford Christian College’s declared aim was that all their children should be taught of the Lord (Principal’s Newsletter, 1st December 2000). The aim of this study was to
measure their achievements and to understand their success. In order to address these questions the following research objectives were developed:


2. To describe what an ‘exemplary’ Christian school is like of the variety that is non-denominational, co-educational, church sponsored and affiliated with the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS).

3. To describe the impact of Sandford Christian College on the lives of the students who have left the school and settled into activities (work, marriage, post school friendships and child rearing etc) which characterise their lives as adults.

1.3 Significance of the Research

This study has combined both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methodologies in a single case study school that had been nominated as successful by a panel of experts. The significance of the research was not to debate the meaning of successful Christian education, but taking that as a prerequisite, to understand the central meaning and essence of one school community in the context of the three research objectives presented in the previous section.

The study has been divided into three broad areas. First, the largely quantitative School Development Review was applied to Sandford Christian College. This Victorian government school review mechanism has enabled the school community to obtain some objective measurement of their performance against state benchmarks. The second element in the research design focussed on qualitative grounded theory that sought to see new understandings emerge as the research progressed. Finally,
there was an historical aspect to the study, represented by the Past Student Survey that sought to assess the impact of the College on the student who had passed through into adulthood.

This research is expected to benefit the community by adding to the understanding of Australian Christian schooling, providing a description of success through the measurement of achievement on key indicators, a comparison with a large government school system and by providing insight for future policy makers in education:

1. The research sought to fulfil the primary recommendation of Long’s (1996a) work that more detailed research was required of Australian Christian schooling.

   There has been very little research or other material published on the fastest growing system of non-government schooling in Australia since the 1960s. What research that has been done has been largely done by post-graduates and that has been rarely taken up by the established scholars (Long, 1996a: 12).

   It is hard to credit that so little research has been published on such a significant development of schooling in Australia, a movement of schools that is larger than the department of education in the Northern Territory or the ACT. At its current growth rate of 8.5 per cent per annum this system of schools will be larger than the Tasmanian government system by 1997 (Long, 1996a: 19).

2. The study aimed to establish the degree of success of the school. A range of school performance and opinion data generated from Sandford Christian College have been compared with publicly available benchmark data from Victorian government schools (Office of Review, 1997: 14).

   A benchmark is the point of comparison for a school. A benchmark enables the school to compare its own performance to the performance of other groups of
schools and to establish its own relative standard of performance level (Office of Review, 1997: 6).

3. One of the objectives was to understand the essence of the success of the school. A range of qualitative data has been used, including individual and group interviews. This study has provided rewarding insights into the factors associated with the success of the College. Tensions and problems have also been highlighted and the College's responses to them have been explored in Chapter 6.

Success has been defined as the extent to which the schools' stated aims and objectives had been achieved in the several phases of the schools' history (Chen, 1972: 3).

4. It was anticipated that the research would assist future policy makers in understanding the impact of Christian schooling on a specific section of society (Peshkin, 1986: 13).

The most meaningful impact of schooling is best measured when students have left school and settled into their activities (work, marriage, post school friendships, child rearing etc.) which will characterise their life as adults, but Bethany Baptist Academy is too new to support such measurement... Since the school had only graduated three classes of seniors at the time of this study, I thought it untimely to do a full-scale study of the impact of Christian Schooling on its graduates (Peshkin, 1986: 13, 167).

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 depicts graphically the areas of study and the relationships between them (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 18). This framework is both descriptive and causal in nature, designed to provide a rationale for the research design, which is presented in Chapter 3.
The framework is divided into three parts. There is a central axis that runs from bottom left to top right across the whole framework. Below this and to the right there is a clockwise revolving circle, which in addition to articulating with the central axis in the centre of the framework, focuses upwards to the same objective as the axis. Finally, above and to the left of the central axis is a further clockwise revolving circle, which also articulates with the central axis in the centre of the framework. It also has a focus upward and to the right, on the same objective as the axis.

The central axis itself comprises two elements. The central shaft of the arrow depicts the passage of time from the school’s foundation in the bottom left, to the time of the study in 2000 at the top right. The arrowhead represents the past student survey (4) with its retrospective perspective, reflecting on past performance in order to improve the future. In the centre of the shaft, there is a rectangle that depicts the School Development Review (2) derived from the Accountability Framework employed in government schools in Victoria.

This review depicted a snapshot of the history of Sandford Christian College. It was an opportunity for the school to take stock and compare its performance with that of the government schools’ benchmarks. This was the central feature of the research design. What follows is a more detailed consideration of the parts of the model.

The two circles either side of this central axis represent two balanced supports. The bottom right circle (1) depicts the initial stage of the study design process. This begins with the formulation of the research objectives, followed by the design for the data collection. A mixed methods approach was employed. That is, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to collect the data and, finally, they were analysed with the application of Department of Education software. The study design established the framework for the conduct of the School Development Review. The majority of the data presented in the review were derived from quantitative methods and are presented in Chapter 4.
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
The top left circle (3) represents the qualitative study stage that was conducted subsequent to the first two elements in the conceptual framework. Here, the outcomes from the in-depth interviews and focus groups were subjected to a deeper analysis aimed at the identification of the essence of the community of Sandford Christian College. The data in this stage were largely qualitative and are reported in Chapter 5.

Both circles of study (1 and 3) focus towards the top right of the conceptual framework, illustrating their part in the final outcome of the study design, namely Chapter 6, the Discussion, which develops a synthesis between the quantitatively and qualitatively derived research findings. Chapter 6 also attempts to address the three research objectives in the context of the literature already presented in Chapter 2.

The Past Student Survey (4) completes the conceptual framework. The survey provided a consideration of change in the College since its foundation and an examination of the outcomes of the College’s education in the adult lives of past students. This survey identified two phases in the College’s history, namely the Early Years 1978-1990 and the Recent Years 1992-1999. The results of this survey are reported in the second part of Chapter 4 following the School Development Review.

Finally, Chapters 4 and 5 represent the bridge between the theory and current practice of Chapters 2 and 3 and the findings of this research in Chapter 6. The School Development Review and the Past Student Survey results are presented in Chapter 4 and the findings of the qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups are presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The establishment of a parent-controlled school in Kingston, Tasmania in 1962 heralded the birth of the Australian new Christian schooling movement (Magill, 1986: 59). These schools are distinctive in that they all seek to put their children in the hands of God in addition to providing a broad-based education that will equip them for adult life.

Chapter 1 outlined the aims of this research, namely to understand the nature of the success of one case study Christian school. This chapter will seek to survey the literature in areas that will be examined in specific detail in succeeding chapters. The background to the Australian new Christian schooling movement is reviewed followed by an examination of the governance practices of these schools. The key function of leadership is considered, culminating in a detailed assessment of the role of the school principal.

The next section seeks to understand the process of building a school culture followed by the main section in this literature review, namely, an investigation of the concept of successful Christian schooling. It is envisaged that successful Christian schooling will be the outcome from the foundation of a new school, through the establishment of sound governance practices, the institution of a distinctive leadership style and the building of a unique culture.

Finally, a number of case studies will be reviewed from both the United States and Australia in order to establish the context for this case study of a successful Australian Christian school that claims to have been putting their children in the hands of God.
2.2 The new Christian schools

2.2.1 Some Facts

A definitive definition is very hard to find as these schools vary a great deal, however most writers do agree that there is a distinct group of schools that make up the new Christian schools. They are found in most Western nations, but they have local variations. In the Australian context, Long describes them as a new kind of conservative low-fee Protestant private school (1996b: 5). He goes on to say that they wish to be more distinctively Christian than the older more traditional Christian schools. Evangelical churches notably the Baptists, Church of Christ, Reformed Church of Australia and Pentecostal Churches often sponsor them (Long, 1996b: 7).

Again, in the Australian context, Hill (1991: 146) described these schools as comprising three sub-groups:

1. individual schools each controlled by a local church
2. a few instances of inter-denominational schools controlled by a local consortia of churches
3. a number of parent-controlled schools often Presbyterian, Reformed or using the American Accelerated Christian Education curricula or Life Packs

From a broader perspective, the definitions of Christian Education encompass parental assertive action (De Ruyter, 1999: 214; Weeks, 1988: 6), the practice of assisting children to acquire and deepen Christian beliefs and attitudes (De Ruyter, 1999: 217) and the idea of the school being an organism more than an organisation (Kew, 1993: 76). The definitions frequently emphasize the spirit and purpose of the community with which they wish to impact the lives of the students in terms of their Christian character (Chen, 1972: 68).

The new Christian schools are much more ubiquitous in the United States than in Australia. In the mid-1980s, one eighth of American children attended private
schools. Twenty per cent of these schools, more than 15,000, were described as fundamentalist or evangelical Christian schools, with a total estimated enrolment in excess of one million students (Parsons, 1987: x; Rose, 1988: 1). Bollar Wagner reported that estimates of enrolments in the new Christian schools doubled between 1965 and 1975 and had reached 1.5 million children in up to 18,000 – 25,000 schools by the late 1980s (Gangel, 1984: 106; Bollar Wagner, 1990: 8).

In Australia, Magill estimated that there were more than 200 new Christian schools with more than 20,000 students enrolled in the mid-1980s (Magill, 1986: 59). The Australian Association of Christian Schools’ records claimed to represent 250 Christian schools at the national level in 2004 (AACS, 2004).

A further characteristic of the new Christian schools has been their remarkably rapid period of growth in the second half of the twentieth century:

*Christian Schooling was the fastest growing segment of Education in America at the start of my study. Such schools were growing at a rate of two or three and even four a day, partly due to the fundamentalist resurgence and also due to political changes* (Peshkin, 1986: 24).

The largest new Christian school umbrella organisation in the United States, the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) began in 1972 with 125 member schools and 25,000 students and by 1982 there were 1000 schools and 150,000 students (Peshkin, 1986: 35). However, some of these growth statistics need to be studied in more detail as many of these schools had very small enrolments, with totals as few as 30 spread over seven grades (Smith, 1984: 155).

The growth in the Australian schools is following a similar trend. Following small beginnings in the 1960s in Tasmania, the period of most rapid growth was from the mid-1970s till the late 1980s (Long, 1996c: 21; Magill, 1986: 59). Not surprisingly, one of the largest new Christian schools umbrella organisations in Australia, Christian Community Schools Limited (CCSL) saw its most rapid growth during this period. Since then there has been a marked slow down in the foundation of new schools;
however, the size of the existing schools has continued to grow strongly (Kew, 1993: vi).

One of the indications that the Australian new Christian schools have some of their roots back in the United States is illustrated by the fact that between 1977 and 1978 more than 110 new schools were established in Australia based on Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), an American curriculum. ACE was probably the most widely used curriculum in the new Christian schools on both sides of the Pacific during the period of rapid growth (Smith, 1984: 157). It began in Texas in 1970 with 45 students, and by 1980 there were 275,000 students worldwide. It was ideal for the rapid establishment of new schools as it relied heavily on works books prescribed individually to students for them to study alone, bridging the divide between the Home Schooling Movement and the new Christian schools (Rose, 1988: xiii). Notwithstanding the ACE schools’ significance in the growth of the Australian new Christian schooling movement, those schools that have retained ACE into the mid-1990s have tended to remain relatively small, as evidenced by the fact that they only account for eight per cent of the students (Long, 1996a: 20).

2.2.2 Some Roots of the Movement

The new Christian schooling movement has received comparatively little research (Kew, 1993: 93; Long, 1996a: 12; Riding, 1997: 7) and within this research the consideration of its roots has usually only been very cursory with the exception of some of the studies from the United States (Gilling, 1993: ix). The movement’s roots can be considered from a variety of perspectives. There are basic philosophical positions, local and international stimuli and push and pull factors. This section will attempt to provide a broad international perspective as it tries to tease out the essential motives and aspirations of those who have birthed the movement.

John Calvin, believing that education should be a ministry of the church, founded the Geneva Academy in 1559 and his ideas made their way to the New World with the Pilgrims and the Puritans (Gangel, 1984: 103). This church basis for education has
been carried right up to the present day with the colonisation process (Long, 1996a: 22). For example, the Dutch migrants to Australia, who knew Christian Schooling in their motherland, founded the Christian Parent Controlled Schools in Australia in the 1950s (Magill, 1986: 59).

A mobilisation of parent power has been one of the key local factors in the founding of the new schools. They have exerted their constitutional rights to send children to the schools of their choice (De Ruyter, 1999: 214), and acted together to achieve what they could not do alone (Norman, 1980: 6; Wackes, 2001: 1; Weeks, 1988: 6). The parents had understood that the responsibility for the nurture and education of their children rested with them and that the school’s role was to support them (Magill, 1986: 58). However, their motivation was often not a cry for Christian schooling on religious grounds per se, but a reaction to their perception of moral decline in existing schools. They were seeking an alternative to the exposure to drugs, sex, violence and a lack of discipline (Norman, 1980: 5; Rose, 1988: 26, 33).

In Australia, Long has arguably conducted the most exhaustive work on the origins of the movement. He cites the work of Brodinsky in the United States who concluded that parent’s perceptions of the local need for change was the overriding factor (Brodinsky, 1977, cited in Long 1996c: 24):

1. An emphasis on the 4R’s, reading, writing, arithmetic and religion,
2. In secondary schools an emphasis on ’traditional subjects’ taught from clean texts,
3. No nonsense approach to teacher directed activity,
4. A methodology that includes drill, recitation, daily home-work and frequent testing,
5. Report cards that carry traditional marks and numerical values,
6. Strict Discipline, with Corporal punishment accepted,
7. Promotion and graduation dependent on mastery of skills and knowledge shown in tests,
8. Elimination of ‘frills’, non-traditional sports and sex education,
9. Emphasis on ‘fact’, not ‘concept’ and
10. Emphasis on the basic curriculum e.g. no driver instruction or drug education.
Long’s summary of the Australian factors show many similarities to the American scene, emphasising parents’ perceptions of the need for change coupled with a number of local factors (Long, 1996c: 23):

1. **Funding associated with the Karmel Report 1973, enabling the non-government sector to grow,**
2. **Anxiety over communism and teacher strikes, particularly in Victoria in late 1960s and early 1970s,**
3. **The move in the government sector towards comprehensive schools,**
4. **Increased moral permissiveness in society,**
5. **Changes in the government sector, e.g. the move to indirect teaching methods**
6. **The drive to outlaw corporal punishment in schools,**
7. **The decline in the strength of the church and its inability to successfully lobby to halt change and**
8. **The move in several states to discontinue Religious Education in government schools.**

While Norman (1980) and Rose (1988) both disparage the religious grounds for starting the new schools, a number of other writers have demonstrated that the parental concerns cited above do have their roots in the parents’ deeply held Christian values. This can be encapsulated by the concern for coherence between the nurturing environment of the home and the school on the one hand (Coleman, 1987: 5; Kew, 1993: 76; De Ruyter, 1999: 223), and between the church, the home and the school on the other (Rose, 1988: 26; Bollar Wagner, 1999: 106). Clearly, it is the parents’ desire that their children will be trained under the same values system and in the same culture as their home.

One of the features frequently highlighted in church sponsored schools by the administrators and church staff has been the desire to establish a Bible-based, Christ-centred curriculum (Ballweg, 1980, cited in Rose 1988: 34). The aim is not to simply add a subject, Christianity, into a secular curriculum but rather to create a whole Christian ethos where every subject and every policy is Bible-based and Christ-centred (Gangel, 1984: 89, 90; Magill, 1986: 58; Riding, 1997: 6). The leadership in the
Christian schools claim that the state schools indoctrinate by default, by avoiding the consideration of religious issues, while the Christian Schools provide a broad education that includes a sympathetic inspection of the Christian faith and expression. This leaves the students genuinely free to choose whom they will worship and serve (Hill, 1982: 6).

The logical progression from this position is theological fundamentalism, namely a desire for schools which model Biblical order and a tangible separation from the rest of society. Some of the literature implies that this is the key distinctive and central aim of the new Christian schools, however, the research implies there has been much compromise with modern cultural norms in many of the schools (Bollar Wagner, 1990: 104). It is Long’s belief that the rhetoric and ideology of theological fundamentalism is the most distinctive hallmark of the movement, much more so than any uniformity of style or structure (Long, 1996a: 13). A revival of fundamentalism across the churches in the latter part of the twentieth century coinciding with increasing parental dissatisfaction with state and private schools may more accurately describe what some have called the desire for theological fundamentalism (Jones, 1983: 93). Certainly schools have used the goal of theological fundamentalism as the battle-line in disputes with government authorities (Parsons, 1987: xvii; Bollar Wagner, 1990: 119; Weeks, 1988: 55). All this seems to suggest that there may be more in the rhetoric than the reality, because sadly in some schools, theological fundamentalism may have merely surfaced internally to stifle individuality, thought and healthy development rather than provide the ethos of the parents’ dreams (Parsons, 1987: 135).

Some writers seem to have dug even deeper than theological fundamentalism in their search for the origins of the movement. They say that the new schools are being set up to counter the philosophy of secular humanism (Jones, 1983: 93). The tenets of secular humanism are explained in the Humanist Manifesto, which was first published in 1933 and updated in 1973. The central features of which include atheism, a belief in evolution, no life after death, ethics are personal and situational and an abolition of the ideas of good and evil as relics of Biblical faith (Brinton, 1989: 5). John Dewey, a philosophy professor of Columbia University in New York was the principal author of the 1933 edition of the Humanist Manifesto. He used the American public schooling
system to advocate secular humanism and by his death in 1952, the overpoweringly Protestant character of the early public schools was barely visible (Gangel, 1984: 105; Weeks, 1988: 50).

A subtext to the cause against secular humanism is to seek to provide the children in the new Christian schools with frameworks within which they can form their own identity in the wider society that offers such a myriad of choices and experiences. As the children are educated in schools with the same values and norms as the home, this will increase their sense of stability and is defensible in a pluralistic society as long as the school endorses liberal democratic values as well (De Ruyter, 1999: 215).

What about the motivation, depth of feeling and level of commitment of the parents and teachers? Surely without this, no high minded philosophising will actually build one new school. Naturally, this is difficult to measure, but a consideration of parent attitudes to fees and teachers attitudes to wages, may be a useful mirror. Some parents who can barely meet their mortgage payments view Christian schooling as an essential for their children (Parsons, 1987: xviii) and some teachers get lower pay than their counterparts in the state systems (Gangel, 1984: 149; Weeks, 1988: 59). The new Christian schools’ philosophy seeks to provide schooling to all levels in society, hence most of them would be described as low-fee, however in this context, one example from the United States was known to charge no fees at all. Instead, it required a tax-deductible donation to the church of roughly $80 per month per child, claiming that it was not a private school but a ministry of the church (Parsons, 1987: 24). In order for the schools to survive and grow they must be able to generate a growing enrolment that reflects a continuing passion for their ideal education.

To conclude this review of the factors that have stimulated the growth and development of the new Christian schools, it is appropriate to consider the most radical goal of all. Some have emphasised the historical link between the church and education and say the present movement is merely redressing the balance. Others focus on the impact of a cohesive group of parents who are willing to pay fees they can barely afford while exerting their constitutional rights in a pluralistic society to have a school of their choice for their children. Church and school leadership often
emphasise firstly, the conformity between the home, church and school and secondly, centrality of Bible-based, Christ-centred education. They also champion their cause with the rhetoric of theological fundamentalism and the war against secular humanism. However, over and above their desire to provide today’s youth with moral and academic education, they ultimately seek to impact and transform the state and health of society at large as more and more students pass through their gates (Gangel, 1984: 89, 106; Peshkin, 1986: 167; Rose, 1988: 2; Twelves, 2000: 89).

Christian Schools were producing patriotic young people who had good character, a real difference from what the public schools of the country were producing (Peshkin 1986: 4).

2.3 The Governance of the new Christian schools

2.3.1 Sometimes Seriously Dysfunctional

The literature contains numerous references to internal conflict within the new Christian schools. This section will explore some examples with a view to possibly identifying some of the root causes. The following section will consider some of the developments of school boards that are beginning to make a difference to this situation.

Peter Cameron’s story, while not in a Christian school environment, nevertheless clearly illustrates a number of pertinent themes. He arrived from Scotland in 1991 to take up his appointment as Principal of St. Andrews College, University of Sydney. It was a traditional all male residential college riddled with problems, financial uncertainty and secret agendas. The governing council was a self-perpetuating body, with an average age of sixty, average length of service of fifteen years, no women, predominantly business backgrounds and no academics (Cameron, 1997: 39, 90).

In the mid-1980s, an appointment had been made of an operations manager who was to be directly accountable to the college council; so much so that on Peter’s arrival as
the new principal, he soon found that he was actually only responsible for student affairs, everything else came under the operations manager (Cameron, 1997: 97-98). Despite the college council’s desire to maintain the traditional character of the institution at all costs (Cameron, 1997: 193), Peter set about trying to modernise the place and save it from financial collapse. His primary objective was to restructure the college council and introduce female students making it a coeducational institution in order to generate sufficient income to guarantee survival (Cameron, 1997: 103-133).

Needless to say, the council did not take kindly to the new principal’s ideas and methods and soon sought unorthodox ways to remove him. Peter gained the impression that the oblique way of deposing those who stand in disagreement is more common in Australia than reasoned argument and debate (Cameron, 1997: 193). Peter also noted that even though he had received hundreds of letters of support, almost no one at all defended him in his unfair dismissal trial or his subsequent appeal. He noticed that there was a tendency for a herd instinct where individuals seemed paralysed or disinclined to work things out for themselves. He also found that loyalty to ones mates or the institution seemed to be more prevalent than the importance of individual merit or creativity and he aligned this with the tall poppy-syndrome and the general desire to see an egalitarian society. Despite all his efforts, he failed to bring positive change to St. Andrews or to save his position (Cameron, 1997: 194-195). Eventually, he resigned as he had lost drive for the fight and being disliked by people at such close quarters (Cameron, 1997: 180). Ironically, since Peter’s departure in the mid-1990s, St. Andrews has become financially secure, has admitted women and begun to break with some of the traditions of the past.

In the new Christian schools context of 1980s United States, Rose reported on a sponsoring Baptist church having had four pastors and its school having had three principals in ten years (Rose, 1988: 115). In this case, the church supplied the buildings and the heating and the school provided the remainder of the running costs. Church problems resulted in a high turnover of pastors and a halving of the congregation and the tensions obviously spilt over into the school. The church culture did not encourage overt discussion about authority. Consequently, when conflicts did
erupt, they tended to be quite volatile and threatened the community’s very survival (Rose, 1988: 116).

Again in the 1980s, Parson’s four-year study of the emerging Christian Schools of the United States found much evidence of discord within the schoolhouse. He observed that the internal difficulties increased as the number of students increased and with increasing maturity of the schools. Parsons quoted one educator as saying, *Christian Schools may be God’s School System, but they still must be operated by humans. This necessary human element can lead to doctrinal disputes and school rifts* (Parsons, 1987: 127-135).

Parsons, using actual names, unlike this study that uses pseudonyms, outlined two particular conflicts associated with Christian High in El Cajon, California, a ministry of Scott Memorial Baptist Church. Tim La Haye was the senior pastor and founder of the school. Tom Barton, one of the principals appointed by La Haye, objected to the overtly political stand the school was making in the community and also upset the board over a discipline issue. In response, La Haye called a special school board meeting, to which Barton was not invited, and there he proceeded to describe Barton as a poor leader, a liar and an individual who lacked emotional control and as a result the board voted 10:1 to dismiss the principal immediately. Barton left quietly after the school board agreed to pay him his salary and benefits until the end of the school term. At least five teachers resigned in protest but there was no school wide split. Soon after this, Tim La Haye left Scott Memorial Baptist Church to take up full time work with Family Life Seminars Ministries. La Haye was asked if the Christian School communities should not expect more harmony on account of the operation of their Christian faith in action. His response was that public schools have problems too and we Christians are not infallible (Parsons, 1987: 126-132).

Barton’s successor was Bob Olson but after two years, he too was fired. Parsons reported that the blame this time was laid at the feet of the new leader of the church, the Reverend David Jeremiah, on account of his authoritarian leadership style. Olson’s comment to Parsons, with a sigh, was: *Well it happens! The average life of a Christian School principal is less than three years. You ought to find out why.*
After studying new Christian schools in thirty states, Parsons concluded that essentially pastors are authoritarian by nature, and that fundamentalist pastors, in particular, expect to run their new schools like their churches and that conflicts with the way that career educators are accustomed to operating (Parsons, 1987: 132).

It is evident from the examples of conflict quoted above that each case is unique and that the individual players in each community would see their problem as a major mountain that obscured any objective assessment of the bigger picture. Therefore, it is not surprising that the same type of conflicts continually recur. Laffin (1995: 2), commenting on the Australian new Christian schools, observed that there is evidence, which suggests that tension and conflicts between boards and their principals is frequent and sometimes seriously dysfunctional (Laffin, 1995, cited in Beavis 1997: 290).

While most of the literature merely describes the dysfunctionality, some have attempted a more comprehensive examination of the issues. Maslin-Ostrowski (2000) provides a physiological examination of the individuals concerned; Cunningham (1994) offers a model of organisational development to aid understanding and Long (1996a,b,c, 1997) offers some remedies.

Maslin-Ostrowski examined the stories of school leaders who have experienced serious conflict, dilemma or critical events in their leadership practice that has profoundly affected or wounded them in a similar way to an illness with characteristics such as loss of control, predicability and functioning as well as disassociation, fear and anger. She went on to report that the astounding numbers of school leaders who have experienced serious conflict, dilemma or critical events should constitute, in their own right, a previously poorly researched branch of leadership. The fact that they are centre stage in the spotlight provides them with a perfect platform to lead but also to be vulnerable. She found that some of the wounded leaders interviewed used the difficult circumstances to transform themselves into better leaders. She also found that the telling and retelling of the story provided structure and order for what had happened and the chaos of the crisis could eventually be translated into a recognisable form.
(Maslin-Ostrowski, 2000: 216). This positive perspective offers hope to schools where conflict may be happening, in that it can lead to growth and resolution given time.

Secondly, Cunningham’s (1994) research focussed on Christian church founded tertiary colleges in the United States. His study proposed a model that reflected the changing relationship of church and college with the passage of time, that may have implications for some of the conflict situations described above in the fledgling new Christian schools.

Around 1900, there were just under a thousand church colleges. They were small, with only a few hundred students, commonly strapped for cash and kept alive by generous, sacrificial church folk. Their academic program was also very weak and church attendance was deemed the symbol of college unity and community life (Cunningham, 1994: 27-28). This was regarded as the first stage with the partnership tilted towards the churches. It lasted until the Depression and World War II in some cases. The second stage was generally between the 1930s and the 1960s. This was described as the even Steven period with neither side gaining the upper hand. The third stage followed from the 1970s to the present day, when the church’s role was always the junior partner (Cunningham, 1994: 33). The parallels with the modern day new Christian schooling movement are obvious; however, no church is likely to admit that they will ever become the junior partners to their school. Nevertheless, these communities would do well to learn from the experiences of those who have gone before.

Cunningham warned against a number of sources of conflict: church distrust of academics, leadership in church and college needing different styles, the support being too much or too little and the style of governance. He commented that the successful church related college was the one that faced up to the strains in its relationships with the church and overcame them, while subservience never secured success. Cunningham found that where discord had corroded relationships, the fundamental reason was often a mutual desire for control or an effort by the church to recapture governance decision-making for the college. He also found that discord easily attracts attention but concord goes unnoticed for years and, in terms of the nature of conflicts,
that the church gets upset sooner and stays upset longer than the college (Cunningham, 1994: 82-89).

Thirdly in this section, the most comprehensive study of the development of the new Christian schools in Australia was carried out in the mid-1990s by Long (1996a; 1997). He was not content to merely describe their formation and growth, but in addition to that, he attempted to understand their internal dynamics and to prescribe a series of potential remedies that could be applied to their perceived dysfunctionality.

Long noted that these schools were stressful places to be employed in on account of the role conflicts that blur the functions of church and school, exacerbated by a lack of capacity for critical thinking. He believed that this lack was linked to insecurity, authoritarianism and a preoccupation with obedience and the quest for absolutes founded in the subconscious of the communities. He observed that this lack of critical analysis often allowed the management to *unconsciously use manipulation and exploitative practices on its employees* (Long, 1997: 25).

Sadly, the final conclusion of Long’s thesis was his damning belief that these organisations were *schools of confusion, fear and contradiction* and if they were to become truly successful communities both individually and as a movement, they needed to address the specific problems that he had identified (Long, 1996a: 433).

For example, in the philosophical foundations of the schools, he felt that there should be less *imperative for dogma*. In other words, these schools needed to be more flexible in dealing with internal relationships without compromising their stand (Long, 1996a: 427). This is allied to another of his conclusions that they should move away from the *binary approach*, that is that their use of terms needed to develop beyond the simplistic right and wrong, black and white approach; to encompass various shades of grey while developing greater use of reasoned argument in their philosophical position (Long, 1996a: 431).

At the individual level, Long was also concerned about the issue of the staff’s role conflict. He argued that it was a matter of urgency that these schools examine the
ambiguity that he found existed between the roles of teacher as minister and principal as priest. His argument was that this confusion has lead to lowering job satisfaction and signs of psychological and physical illness and stress and that staff under stress are less reflective and less able to cope. In this context, he also singled out for comment the conflicts relating to staff, children and spouses, especially where these relationships span several Christian settings (Long, 1996a: 432). In order to begin to address these issues, Long also advocated greater staff association and unionisation, especially as the schools become larger. He felt that the prohibition on staff having representative power and industrial knowledge was naïve and a pressing problem (Long, 1996a: 429).

Finally, in terms of the organisational dimension, Long was very intrigued with the uniqueness of the K-12 model and argued that there was a great need for further research and publication in this field. He also linked this to the issue of the organisation’s size and its relationship with the true nature of Christian Education. Long had observed organisational confusion, which in his mind could be linked with a poor understanding of the K-12 model whereby the primary and secondary staff were confused about each other’s roles and the nature of the students in their care. He also noted a high degree of staff stress associated with staff trying to achieve too much from too little. Long suggested that to reduce stress, schools needed to clarify what they do best and admit what they cannot do (Long, 1996a: 428-429). This latter issue may, on reflection, be more related to the school’s rapid growth phase rather than a poorly understood K-12 model. In any event, it bears out Long’s call for further research. In this regard, he called on the Christian schools themselves as well as government agencies to fund more research along the lines of Peshkin (1986), Bollar Wagner (1990) and Rose (1988), whose case studies focussed in depth on small numbers of schools as opposed to the broad brush philosophical approach such as his own (Long, 1996a: 426).
The literature has recognised a number of examples of serious dysfunctionality but has been unable to discover with any precision the key root of the problem or to find suitable solutions. The researchers have raised far more questions than they have answered. For example, Long asked whether a further factor that might have contributed to internal conflict was the patriarchal, authoritarian management style that underpins most new Christian schools. He pointed out that 60 per cent of the staff are women but only three per cent of principals are women, demonstrating the male dominance in the highest level of leadership (Long, 1996a: 401).

Davies (1993: 1) and Andersen (1990: 32) noted that many communities exhibit the classic bureaucratic, hierarchical model of administration. Is this the preferred style of management - patriarchal, authoritarian leadership that seeks to exercise control on the basis of superior knowledge (Weber, 1924: 14)? Further, is the preferred style of organisational control one that is dominated by a single individual? Parsons (1987: 132), Coleman (1993: 176) and Long (1996a: 22) all suggest that this is true and that as so much power is vested in one individual it is more likely to result in irreconcilable conflict. In any event, historically, too much control results in a drive for unionisation (Agyris, 1964: 59), a move resented in the new Christian schools (Twelves, 2000: 64) but strongly advocated by supporters of the movement (Long, 1996a: 429).

The role ambiguity between church and school responsibilities towards the young may hold another key (Parsons, 1987: 132; Long, 1996a: 432). Surely the bureaucratic structure with dominant authoritarian leadership contradicts Biblical principles of community (Davies, 1993: 1)? However, if conflict does break out, the Christian community should be able to effectively resolve their differences (Horsfield, 1990: 20). Consequently, the style of governance is critical to the successes of these schools, especially as they grow to maturity (Long, 1995: 38).

2.3.2 Seriously Functional Governance

The aim of every effective organisation should be trust, opennesm, individuality and flexibility, which sadly are often the exception rather than the rule (Agyris, 1964: 194).
Agyris stressed flexibility as the imperative to enable organisational structures to vary over time with the type of decisions needed in the various stages of growth (Agyris, 1964: 211).

What are the functions of school councils? The government school councils generally hire the principal, establish the curriculum policy, administer the buildings, grounds and cleaning, the financial management and the general accountability to the school community (Knight, 1995: 265). However, at a more philosophical level, councils must ensure that the functions of management, leadership and governance occur in harmony with each other (Beavis, 1997: 292).

Good management is generally seen as a pre-condition for the effectiveness of an organisation. That is, an emphasis on order and consistency in planning, budgeting, staffing and problem solving. In general terms, good management fulfils the expectations of all stakeholders. The next function, leadership, is concerned with movement and change as an organisation responds in a dynamic way to an increasingly complex environment. A good leader identifies the direction and lines up a group of people to move in that direction in spite of the inevitable obstacles. Finally, governance, probably the least studied and understood aspect of the three functions, is all about values and perspectives. Governance encapsulates characteristics of the organisation’s life that expresses particular ways of doing things or particular attitudes with an emphasis on maintaining the organisational ethos from generation to generation. It is this aspect that is the main preserve of the school board or council, composed of part-time volunteers who are physically removed from the day-to-day activities. However, it is their role to ensure effective management and leadership occurs in harmony with the foundational values and perspectives of the organisation (Beavis, 1997: 292-293).

A model of effective governance that has been increasingly taken up by the new Christian schools is Carver’s (1997) Governance Model for Non-Profit and Public Organisations (Twelves, 2001: 66). This model cradles the vision of the organisation. It holds and supports the primary focus of the organisation as paramount as it systematically encourages the stakeholders to think the unthinkable and to dream.
Such a model will be focussed on externals, more concerned with needs and markets than internal organisation. It is outcomes driven and forward thinking with all decisions being weighed against the mission. It is pro-active rather than reactive, focussed on creativity rather than approval, facilitating diversity and unity without squelching dissent. Above all it delineates the board’s role while balancing over control and under control as it defines what information it needs to make efficient use of its time (Carver, 1997: 17-18). Beavis (1997) has applied this philosophy in his view of organisational structures, where school staff carry out the management and leadership functions and the governance functions are the preserve of the voluntary board members (Twelves, 2000: 57).

Cameron’s (1997) study of an Australian tertiary college offered the following guidelines for the make up of an effective council:

- The principal and four senior staff should be the nucleus with up to three more senior educationalists from outside the college
- The remainder should represent the wider community:
  - Three women, more if the college goes co-ed
  - A maximum of three ex-college men
  - At least one but not more than two businessmen
  - As many over 45 years as under
  - Compulsory retirement after four years for all except the principal and the senior staff
- The principal must be the Chairman, unless he is *primus inter pares*, first among equals, both constitutionally and in practice (Cameron, 1997: 103)

Clearly this recipe is looking for balance but with a strong educational emphasis. There is also a clear message that such a governing council should be made up primarily of current educators, not past students determined to defend their nostalgic memories at all costs.
In contrast, Jones’ (1983) study of *The Development of the new Christian schools in Australia – 1975-1981* described the typical make up of the church sponsored school boards affiliated with Christian Community Schools Ltd.:

- The senior pastor of the church
- Four members elected by the local church
- The principal
- One staff representative
- Two parent representatives

(Jones, 1983: 60)

This model emphasises the predominant role of the sponsoring church where, in contrast to the Cameron model, the emphasis of the board is unlikely to be education *per se*. Rather, it is much more likely to carry the church’s vision with the school as a subsidiary or ministry arm (Jones, 1983: 60).

These two extremes illustrate one of the dangers of boards going in the wrong direction, that is, the make up of the board can so easily influence the future directions and emphases of the school. Also boards face the temptation to move from strategy towards operations and from the long–term challenges towards the immediate concerns and from collective action towards individual initiative. This is in contrast to effective governance that champions collective effort to advance a shared purpose consistent with the institution’s mission (Chait et al., 1996: 1).

Above all, boards need to balance the roles of leadership, management and governance. Leadership needs to predominate when an institution needs to make changes necessary to cope with changes in its environment. At times of rapid change, strong management is needed in order to consolidate and stabilise the changes that have occurred and finally, effective governance is required when environmental changes threaten an institution’s character. Above all, no particular mix can be prescribed but rather a dynamic approach should be adopted to avoid various over or under emphases that could lead to a pathological condition that will atrophy (Beavis, 1997: 298). If the three elements of leadership, management and governance are held
in flexible tension then our schools and colleges will be dynamic, healthy institutions, but not if we get it wrong (Beavis, 1997: 299).

Finally, there is one further requirement for functional governance, namely, that the governing boards should be made up only of devout Christians, alert and vigilant to maintain the distinctly Christian vision and ethos of the school. This is the effective bulwark to prevent them from being secularised in the way that the church schools of a hundred years ago were changed with the passage of time (Riding, 1997: 62).

### 2.4 Leadership in Christian Schools

#### 2.4.1 What is Leadership?

In the twentieth century, secular literature examined leadership from various perspectives, which collectively depicted great complexity and demonstrated leadership’s vital significance for the success of any organisation. There was a search for definitions, the characteristics of effective leadership and recognition of the embodiment of the vision in the total life of the leader.

The literature in the 1940s emphasised charismatic leadership and trait theory. This was followed in the 1950s and 1960s with behavioural theories and in the 1960s and 1970s with the contingency theory that emphasised the leadership’s behaviour in relation to their followers. This evolved in the 1980s into the attribution theory that emphasised the perspective of the followers and in the 1990s into an emphasis on the total quality organisation and transformational leadership (Abbott, 1999: 7-11; Robbins, Waters-Marsh, Cacioppe & Millett, 1994: 467-469). Despite these exhaustive secular leadership studies, the actual behaviour of school leaders (Walcott, 1974: 324) and Christian school leadership in particular has been little researched (Davies, 1993: 1; Long, 1996a: 12).

Leadership styles have changed with time. First there was the directive, firm, or headship leadership, which was followed by the democratic phase and finally the more
recent, participatory, collaborative, employee-centred leadership. However, as early as the 1960s this model was deemed to be outdated and a fourth scenario was posited, namely that no one leadership style was considered to be more effective than others, it depends on the local context (Agyris, 1964: 214; West-Burnham, 1997: 136). Given that there are so many perspectives to choose from, how can leadership be described?

One survey (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) found more than 350 definitions of leadership, however, there were two common elements. Firstly, leadership was regarded as a group activity that needs the interaction of two or more people and secondly, leaders intentionally sought to influence the behaviour of others (Owens, 1995: 116). Expressed more succinctly, leaders make things happen (Gronn, 1999: 9) but they have a certain restlessness about them (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980: 7) that keeps them moving on to find new challenges (Gardner, 1995: 286).

Arguably, one of the greatest and most powerful leaders of the twentieth century was the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He did not get things done because of any legal authority compelling his followers to act, yet he had an extraordinary power to influence the behaviour of his followers and ultimately a whole nation. What he had were ideas, transparent values and beliefs, and a clear vision of a better, more just, more morally perfect future. In essence, leadership establishes a direction by developing a vision, aligning followers who understand the vision and by motivating and inspiring them to implement the vision (Kotter, 1990: 5; Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs & Thurston, 1987: 73; Walner, 2000: xii, 6). King had learned much about leadership from studying the life of Mohandas Gandhi who was a master of the art (Owens, 1995: 117-118).

Maxwell (1993) explored the concept of learning to lead or developing the leader within. Unlike others who reported one perspective, namely, that leadership was purely a gift (Gardner, 1995: 22), Maxwell considered that a leader could develop their leadership by gaining the right training and experience. His model proposed that a leader could progress through five levels as measured by their degree of influence. Level 1, recognised leadership on account of position; level 2, recognised relationships have been formed; level 3, considered the results of leadership; level 4, recognised that
followers have been changed and a degree of reproduction had begun and finally level 5, focussed on the leader having gained genuine respect from their followers (Maxwell, 1993: 14-15).

Whether innate or acquired, outstanding leadership has naturally emerged as a key characteristic of successful schools and has inspired the quest for the key features of effective leadership (Bear, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989: 99). However, an analysis of such lists does not produce a panacea for improving schools. Effective leadership seems to embrace a wide range of cultures and practices from relatively autocratic to relatively democratic. Nonetheless, a consideration of the literature’s recipe does add further dimensions to the question of what is leadership (West-Burnham, 1997: 136).

Some of the key features of effective leadership include a sense of belonging to their community and an understanding of people, while possessing a readiness to confront individuals. They may be risk-taking visionaries intent on team building while making effective use of delegation so that they can have time to reflect on the big picture (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992: 49; Gardner, 1995: 36, 286; Gurr, 1996: 12, 116).

A more detailed consideration of two examples of the characteristics of educational leadership serve to illuminate some of the key issues faced by school leaders. Starratt (1986) proposed six essentials in his educational leadership paradigm that are all rooted in vision:

- The leader’s power or effectiveness is rooted in vision, which in turn has its foundation in basic human need
- The leader utilises vision to illuminate ordinary every-day activities with dramatic significance
- The leader articulates the vision in a compelling way to their followers
- The leader implants the vision into the structures and processes of the organisation
- The leader ensures that the day-to-day decisions are all made in the light of the vision
- All members of the community celebrate the vision in ritual ceremonies and art forms

(Starratt, 1986: 15)
In contrast, Gardner’s (1999) approach to the challenges of leadership emphasises the motivations of the effective school leader. He emphasised the necessity for a long-term perspective while working on small-scale victories that build on strengths. Leaders need to be flexible, anticipate setbacks and learn to deal with them effectively. Gardner calls for the leader to pay attention to implicit messages in the institutional culture. For example, he notes that *nothing can boost the cause of understanding more than the sight of the teachers themselves striving to understand new material.* Leadership focuses on creating a caring community, which, according to Gardner, is more effective if it remains small. Finally, he urges time for reflection, an energetic commitment to the process of change and the necessity for frequently reciting of the vision (Gardner, 1999: 230-234).

Perhaps one of the most challenging characteristics of effective leadership that frequently comes through the literature is the call for the leader to *embody* their message (Bolman & Deal, 1993: 3; Gardner, 1995: 290; Gardner 1997: 108; Gardner 1999: 229; Peshkin, 1986: 48; Ulich, 1996: 215). This feature is allied to the leader’s integrity and passion for what they are trying to do and their ability to identify with their vision in a uniquely human way. To illustrate this, Gardner traced the lives of Martin Luther King Jr. and Margaret Thatcher emphasising the stories they told both implicitly and explicitly (Gardner, 1995: 203-238). He quoted King, *once you become dedicated to a cause, personal security is not the goal, my cause, my race is worth dying for* (Gardner, 1995: 219). The result of this level of leadership is that the people in the organisation become increasingly connected with each other and a bonding develops between the leader and the followers (Abbott, 1999: 14; Sergiovanni, 1996: 33).

Successful leadership has been recognised in various ways over the years but it has been very hard to define. Perhaps one of the keys is that leaders make things happen because of the vision they carry within themselves and effectively pass on to their followers.
2.4.2 Some Leadership Themes

This next section will examine in a little more detail the leadership themes of the bureaucratic and collaborative styles, and instructional and transformational leadership as they apply to the new Christian schools.

Weber defined bureaucratic administration as *the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge*. He went on to say that this knowledge was of a *technical nature* that grew out of experience in the particular organisation. Weber referred to the bureaucratic leader having a *store of documentary material, peculiar to themselves* that constitute the *official secrets* of the organisation, control over which *increases their power* (Weber, 1924: 14).

The consequences for an organisation with bureaucratic control include a tendency towards *levelling in the interests of the broadest possible basis of recruitment* and the dominance of *formalistic impersonality, ‘sine ira et studio’* (without hatred or passion) and hence *without affection or enthusiasm*. Therefore, everyone in the organisation is treated to the same formal equality (Agyris, 1964: 296-297; Weber, 1924: 14).

In the early 1980s, there was a strong move towards the bureaucratic view as the best way to effect school improvement, despite the prevalence of pressures for equality and access from the 1970s. This style was allied to the *factory model*, dominated by top-down hierarchical authority, mechanical regimentation and going-by-the-book. Policy handbooks, standardised forms and rosters dominated the organisations, along with supervisory functions that reported to the hierarchy (Long, 1996a: 400; Owens, 1995: 66-68).

The term *bureaucratic leadership* describes the style of structures in place, but perhaps the most obvious expression of this style is the emphasis on authoritarianism. Talk of the *headmaster steering a tight ship, marshalling the troops* and *patrolling the corridors* all conjure up military imagery designed to bolster the authority of the leadership. These images may reflect a well-managed institution but *do they produce questioning participants* or merely subservient students and teachers (Davies, 1994: 5)? Long (1996a) did not applaud the benefits of good management either but noted
that the new Christian schools have largely adopted the bureaucratic model by default as they have not taken the trouble to analyse the most appropriate structure for their needs.

Long was very much opposed to the apparent focus on authoritarian leadership in the New Christian Schools, proposing that its preponderance was related to a drive, particularly amongst Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, whose theology supports big is good and big is better, as they strive to push their enrolments over the 1000 mark (Long, 1996a: 391). The idea came from American church circles in the 1970s and 1980s and was known as the church growth movement grounded in the American entrepreneurial business mentality. Leaders of this trend power-dressed, emphasised the spectacular and talked about leadership itself building the programs and enrolments of their schools. Long claimed that principals in this mould exaggerated the role of the school principal as the visionary leader, focussed far too much on image and rarely considered deeper educational issues or collegial criticism (Long, 1996a: 391).

Long’s thesis also regarded leadership’s loneliness at the top for Jesus’ sake as simply legitimising authoritarianism (Long, 1996a: 400). Bradley (1994) also appeared to justify the authoritarian governance of the Christian Schools in her examination of Machiavellian ideas’ impact on Christian school leadership. She declared that Niccolo Machiavelli was the ultimate realist, the supreme pragmatist, concentrating on what works rather than what ought to work and by implication justifying to some degree, the status quo (Bradley, 1994: 16). Long, however, castigated the use of Machiavelli being brought into any discussion on the leadership debate in the New Christian schools on account of his indifference to morality and his disposal of principled thinking as a weakness (Long, 1995: 34; 1996a: 401). Clearly, Long saw no justification for authoritarian leadership within the new Christian schooling movement.

Tension was also evident in the American new Christian schools literature. There was implied criticism that authority was often too highly concentrated on the principal, who relied heavily on obedience as the bed rock of relationships within the school’s structure of control (Peshkin, 1986: 48, 92; Rose, 1988: 117). There was also evidence of a polarisation within the New Christian Schooling community as several
pastors and principals across the United States expressed concern that too many schools had atmospheres that *stifled individuality* and *constructive thought* (Parsons, 1987: 135).

Larger organisations tended to tolerate and use authoritarian leadership more effectively than smaller groups and may have produced higher productivity but lower morale. Likewise, different personalities appear to have reacted very differently to authoritarian leadership. Participants high in the need for independence thrived much better in a more collaborative environment (Agyris, 1964: 215: Bolman & Deal, 1984: 57). An organisation dominated by the bureaucratic model overstates the *structural frame* of Bolman and Deal’s *Reframing Organisations* and consequently overstates the needs of the individual; the recognition of different skills and the development of relationships are ignored or down played (Bolman & Deal, 1997: 15).

Beare and Slaughter (1993) contended that the bureaucratic model should not be operating in schools. They believed that any business operating on such lines couldn’t operate in a post-industrial economy, which guarantees survival only to the flexible and creative, and that give due credit to the initiative of local decision-making (Beare & Slaughter, 1993: 78). Bennis (1994) was even stronger in his criticism of the bureaucratic command and control leadership describing it as *silly and obsolete* as it can’t *release the brainpower of an organisation by its use of whips and chains* (Bennis, 1994: xiii).

Ever since the Paris riots of 1968, there has been an expectation of worker-participation in management and student and staff participation in academic government (Andersen, 1984b: 3). It is essential that the person at the top of the organisation initiate the core attribute of collaboration. Instead of de-motivating and disenabling the human resource factor as occurs in the most pyramidal, hierarchical power structures, all employees should be empowered and rewarded through horizontal team structures that equally involve them in decision-making processes and give them responsibility for all manner of outcomes (Jones, 1992: 306; Vanderhoek, 1993: 17).
However, it would be wrong to assume that collegiality is always the best way to run a school. Collegiality or collaborative leadership has such obvious appeal that it is tempting to regard it as always the best way. However, where there is a shortage of experienced staff, a high percentage of part-time staff, a rapid rate of staff change or a set of conflicting loyalties, the organisation would be poorly served by a collaborative approach (Davies, 1994: 18).

Collaborative leadership is not simply the positive equivalent of the bureaucratic model but rather an integration of all four frames of Bolman and Deal’s reframed organisations. It is the combination of the structural frame (bureaucratic style), the political frame, the human resource frame and the symbolic frame together that constitute the collaborative style (Telford, 1996: 25). Therefore, collaborative leadership does not replace the bureaucratic model, but builds upon it. The active participation of people is sought from all levels of the organisational hierarchy. For this reason an organisation with the collaborative style is popularly referred to as having bottom-up structures (Owens, 1995: 129). For example, in the Christian schooling context the primary aim of staff should be to achieve fellowship and in order to do this, they need to work side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder rather than up and down a ladder of hierarchy (Andersen, 1984a: 12; Vanderhoek, 1993: 16).

The presence of collaborative leadership has been equated with succeeding schools (Twelves, 2001: 72). Wallace (1995) cited Rosenholtz’ 1989 study of the environment of a sample of American primary schools. She found that the stuck schools were bureaucratic in structure, whereas in moving schools, teachers believed that they never stopped learning, were supportive of change or improvement and were respected, celebrated and recognised as people and as professionals. The teachers were empowered to define what constitutes a problem and to work together to change the conditions that caused the problem. Wallace believed that developing collaborative structures in schools was a necessary, albeit complex, critical function of school leaders (Wallace, 1995: 16).

The emphasis must shift from telling people what to do to managing the boundaries and helping others gain skill (Wallace, 1995: 17; Weisbord, 1987: 369). Perhaps one
of the best ways to do this is for the school leader to embody integrity. A leader who does this will inspire trust in others and if integrity is the guiding principle, the leader can trust their employees and in due time open the door to decentralised decision-making, teamwork and empowerment (Jones, 1992: 307; Wallace, 1995: 17).

One application of the collaborative approach was Maggard’s (1994) releasing of several interested teachers to write new curriculum outlines in their summer holidays. He ministered to his staff by providing materials, time and opportunity to become competent in the field of language arts and process writing. He saw this as a central aspect of the principal’s role as instructional leader, an essential ingredient for the success of his Christian school in Kentucky, United States (Maggard, 1994: 60).

The control of the educational programme has dominated the study of leadership in schools. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, advances in management and social science theory brought to centre stage, the technical and human aspects of leadership with the result that educational aspects were neglected. The pendulum has now returned and instructional leadership is once again at the forefront of debate. This new emphasis is a happy by-product of recent school effectiveness and teacher effectiveness research. Effective school leaders have to be strong educational leaders (Sergiovanni, 2001: 102).

Over the years, many principals have aspired to be instructional leaders but relatively few appear to be satisfied that they performed well in this area (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980: 43). They have had a challenging list of objectives to achieve, for example, the establishment of a high priority for curriculum and instructional issues together with the resources to match these goals. The principals have also been charged with the creation of school cultures that have enhanced learning while recognising that time is always short and minimising any disruption to learning. They have had to set high expectations of staff, actively involving them in instructional policymaking and establishing good teacher evaluation procedures while effectively monitoring student progress and making frequent class visits. In essence, the instructional leader was seen symbolically as the embodiment of the school’s professional purpose and competence with the potential to reassure the teachers about
Instructional leadership has focussed on growth in student numbers but it is obvious that this is only a portion of those activities associated with effective school leadership. In recognition of this, the problem-solving view of the leadership process was established as less likely to create ambiguity or confusion. It extends the instructional leadership model to encompass transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership was based on exchange theory, whereby the leader motivated the follower with an exchange of various incentives and transformational leadership actually shapes and elevates the motives of the followers without any tangible exchange process (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992: 7-10). An in-depth study of ten secondary school principals also recognised the importance of instructional leadership and that it is subsumed within transformational leadership (Gurr, 1996: 185-190).

The introduction of transformational leadership stressed that its followers become self-directing, self-reinforcing and eventually become converted into leaders themselves (Burns, 1978: 3). Bass (1985) developed his own model of transformational leadership based on Burns’ earlier work. He recognised that a transformational leader is one who motivates their followers to do more than they originally expected to do, firstly, by raising their levels of awareness and consciousness and, secondly, by enabling them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or the community and finally, by expanding their capacity in terms of needs and wants (Bass, 1985: 20).

The discussion of transformational leadership has emphasised the transformation of the followers rather than the style of the leader. So it is easily understood why transformational leadership has been equated with the much older term of charismatic leadership as though the followers are able to recognise their leader’s gifts but cannot explain how they work (Gronn, 1999: 129; Sergiovanni, 2001: 137). Nevertheless, four criteria have been recognised to distinguish the presence of transformational leadership: idealized influence, the role model; inspirational motivation, the arousal of team spirit; intellectual stimulation, to be innovative and creative and individualized
consideration, paying special attention to each individual’s needs (Bass & Avolio, 1994: 3-4).

This style of leadership in schools has some resonance with collaborative leadership (Telford, 1996: 21) as it has the capacity to work with others in the community to formulate the vision, to communicate the vision in a way that ensures the commitment of the staff, students, parents and the wider community, and to empower others in decision-making (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992: 49). It has also been regarded as a developmental model with some resemblance to Maxwell’s (1993) model of leadership development. The first stage, building, is where the human potential is aroused and expectations are raised. The second stage, bonding, is seeking a transformational breakthrough, as organisational goals are elevated and the leader and the follower bond together in moral commitment. The final stage, binding, promotes self-management with people connected to the vision (Sergiovanni, 2001: 138).

As transformational leadership is rather nebulous it is difficult to define with clarity, partly because it attempts to encompass so many other leadership themes and also because so much of it is rooted in the perceptions of the followers. Nevertheless, meta-analysis of 21 rigorous studies has demonstrated that transformational leadership in schools is associated with improved organisational effectiveness and more collaborative cultures (Leithwood et al., 1996: 798-799). Providentially, transformational leadership’s overarching boundaries seem to include specifically Biblical leadership styles that researchers have longed to see in the new Christian schools (Abbott, 1999: 14). Gronn (1995) also recognised the significance and breadth of this theme in his frequently quoted parody of transformational leadership:

A strong air of human perfectibility inflicts the exposition of transformational leadership, the terminology about elevating people to previously unheard of levels of potential, altered levels of awareness, autonomy, mission and vision and even the very idea of transformed individuals and organisations, carries with it all the hall marks of a religious crusade and being born again (Gronn, 1995: 25).
2.4.3 Christian School Leadership

This last section attempts to focus the first two sections towards an understanding of what really constitutes Christian School Leadership. Very little research has been conducted in this area (Long, 1996a: 12) but what has, clearly concentrates on transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1996) and Biblical leadership.

Abbott (1999) argued that there is a strong compatibility between transformational leadership and Biblical leadership. She examined the common attributes of transformational leadership and proposed a model for administration in Christian Schools (Abbott, 1999: ix). For Christian teachers in particular, the transformational concept resonates with their belief structures, rings true to scriptural principles and echoes the leadership patterns of their Biblical heroes such as Moses, Joseph, David, Paul and of course Jesus Christ the ultimate transformational leader (Sharpe, 2000: 31). But what are the distinguishing features of Christian school leadership?

1. **Vision.** *Where there is no vision the people perish* (Proverbs 29: 18). There are two strands: the first is a deep dissatisfaction with how things are and the second is the dream of the solution.

2. **Hard Work.** Vision alone cannot make a leader; it has to be translated into practical plans that demand thought, energy, enthusiasm and hard work.

3. **Perseverance.** Visions translated into action must be maintained with perseverance, as opposed to stubbornness, when the inevitable obstacles arise.

4. **Submission.** Submission is the most distinctive characteristics of Biblical leadership. The Bible does not concern itself with hierarchical relationships but rather it radically advocates an *inner* attitude of *mutual* submission amongst Christians. Thus, leaders are to give up their own interests in favour of the interest of others. Therefore, a school organisation that is based on *consensus*, *collegiality*, *power sharing*, *appreciation* and *encouragement* is Biblical. The
emphasis is not on lording it over people, but whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (Matthew 20:26).

5. Service. Service is not merely a qualification for leadership but the end of leadership. Jesus said, whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:43-44).

6. Waiting on God. The discipline of prayer and meditation is an essential component of Biblical leadership. A leader who really understands submission will be painfully aware of their weaknesses. Indeed, many Biblical leaders exhibited flaws in their personality that at times crippled their leadership; Noah (drink problem); Moses (temper); David (adultery and murder); Peter (personal insecurity). Successful Biblical leaders, however, recognise that their weaknesses can be overcome by waiting on God, as the Psalmist expressed it (Psalm 40:1).

(Bradley, 1992: 2-11)

This model of Biblical school leadership is alluded to in much of the literature. For example, Christian school leadership is expected to model gentleness, selflessness, modesty, diligence, professional competence, empathy and trust as it establishes genuine authority rather than resorting to the use of their hierarchical powers (Davies, 1993: 5; Horsfield, 1990: 27). They should also regulate how spiritual and theological insight should affect the way in which the school is run (Lankshear, 1992: 106).

A number of other writers (Bolman & Deal, 1993: 54; Starratt, 1993: 47) recognised that the school principal was in fact a spiritual leader and Davies, R. (1957) went so far as to say that the head teacher and all teachers of religious subjects were responsible for bringing the pupils to a faith in God through Jesus Christ (Davies, 1957: 9). Others do not go quite so far but admit that school leadership is a moral craft (Lortie, 1975: 111; Starratt, 1996: xiv).
One of the key foci of so much of the leadership literature, both secular and overtly Christian, is the philosophy of servant leadership (Bolman, Deal & Rallis, 1995: 70; Davies, 1993: 2; Owens, 1995: 138; Sergiovanni, 1990: 152). Greenleaf introduced this philosophy in the 1970s but it failed to receive wide acceptance until after 1990, the year that he died (Greenleaf, 1996: xii), partly as a result of a backlash against economic rationalism and the dominance of management over leadership that prevailed throughout the 1980s (Sharpe, 2000: 30-34).

The pivotal principle of servant leadership is that the servant leader is a servant first, responding to a natural desire to want to serve, and then this is followed by the conscious choice to aspire to leadership. The test of true servant leadership is to judge what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or at least not be further deprived (Greenleaf, 1970: 7)? Further, while they are being served, do they grow as persons, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely themselves to become servants (Bradley, 1999: 46)?

Servant leadership is similar to transformational leadership in that it has few prescriptions but rather it embraces certain key principles. Nevertheless, Spear, the executive director of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership in Indianapolis, has identified ten critical characteristics: A servant leader will be a good listener, aware of the perspective of others and able to empathise with their situations. They will be known for their powers of persuasion and analytical conceptualisation; committed to people’s growth, willing and able to minister healing for hurts and misunderstandings. They will also exercise responsible stewardship in the light of clear foresight as they build the local community together (Greenleaf, 1996: 4).

Three of the principles that undergird servant leadership are trust, appreciation of others and empowerment. The values of honesty and integrity build interpersonal and organisational trust which is essential for the success of organisational change, employee satisfaction, and long term stability and only develops when shared values permeate a social situation. Servant leaders visibly appreciate, value and encourage their constituents. While authoritarian leadership styles may demean followers, servant leaders respect those they serve and empower them. This empowerment
involves entrusting workers with genuine authority and responsibility and in so doing they multiply their leadership. Empowerment is the opposite of the historical management practices that emphasised manipulation, it involves delegating responsibility and nurturing participatory leadership and it is believed that the degree to which the leader is able to delegate is a measure of their leadership success (Russell, 2001: 80-81).

Christian school leadership is very hard to define, however, its presence or absence is easily recognisable. It applies transformational and servant leadership to a Biblical model that has at its heart spiritual leadership. It employs the collaborative style as opposed to the bureaucratic model, demolishes the hierarchical, authoritarian approach and encourages delegated authority and responsibility through empowerment of others.

Christian educators, seeing every person as a child of God, a brother or sister in Christ, simply enhances the clarity with which they see and know the real person in front of them...in a sense, the sources of greatness of the school is in the teachers and the pupils...the leader’s job is to nurture their belief in themselves and each other through a vision worthy of them (Starratt, 1993: 4).

2.5 Building School Culture

It is implied throughout this section that effective Biblical leadership will be the primary force behind the building of school culture. However, the literature clearly indicates that this will never be achieved by one authoritarian leader on their own but is much more likely to occur if the whole group is actively involved. Initially, this section attempts to define school culture and then considers how it might be built and by whom. The third subsection inspects a number of examples from the new Christian schools and the final subsection considers how these cultures can be maintained in the future.
2.5.1 Defining School Culture

Organisational cultures cannot be easily defined; they are perceived or felt (Handy, 1985: 197). It is a subtle and indescribable feeling, which pervades every school defying analysis and definition (Dorman, 1996: 32). However, whatever it is needs to pervade the whole organisation to be recognised as their culture. It reflects the distinctive character of the organisation, that everyone is proud to be a part of and passionately believes in. These beliefs shape everyone’s behaviour with a unity across all departments and their distinctive culture is no passing fad, as it stands the test of time (Drennan, 1992: 273).

Schein (1985) has offered a more formal definition of culture from the perspective of leadership:

_A pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems_ (Schein, 1985: 12).

In the context of the new Christian schools’ place in the broader society, Hill (1976) proposed a three-dimensional definition of culture. At its heart, the school is a community as opposed to an institution, with rules and procedures that are designed to encourage individualized learning in a supportive and co-operative atmosphere. The members of the community are tied together by a shared interest or common bond, which endures at least for some time. At the second level, the wider community impacts the school community. For example, parents paying fees, offering voluntary labour or working on task forces with the school administration keeping the school ethos under constant review. At the third level, schooling for community, considers how the school community might impact the wider community, from public performances, to acts of service and the common good (Hill, 1976: 25-34).
2.5.2 The Ingredients of School Culture

The leaders’ perspective of the visionaries who established the new Christian schools in the United States, saw them as having been searching for ingredients that have been missing in all too many of their institutions, a *sense of control and community*, an *education that responds to the wishes of the local actors*, is not highly bureaucratic or dominated by top-down mandates and provides a *system of ethics that can guide the communities conduct* (Rose, 1988: xii).

Perhaps the key ingredient in the New Christian School culture is the battle for faith for succeeding generations. The leadership believed that they were in the most important and crucial religious war in all of history, the struggle between Christianity and humanism and the battlefield was the minds of the students in their schools. If they could build a truly Christian lifestyle in their schools, it would permanently impact the lives of their students, their families and the wider community (Rose, 1988: 1-2).

All schools interact with their broader environment to a greater or lesser degree and as a result there are always pressures from outside waiting to impact the school’s culture. Therefore, one of the roles of leadership is to be effective gatekeepers for the community. For example, a study reported by Barnes (1976), indicated that police habitually patrolled the corridors of an American high school at the principal’s invitation. The question was asked, *What are the students learning during their time at school about American society and their place in it?* Barnes concluded that what is learned depends far less on what is taught rather than what the students actually experience. No amount of discussion about democracy in history or social studies classes can erase what they experience first hand in the corridors of their schools. How the teachers and pupils talk with each other in corridors and in classrooms, how the headmaster runs staff meetings, how time-table decisions are made and the tone of letters to parents and the notices on notice boards, all impact markedly on the development and maintenance of school cultures (Barnes, 1976: 182-183).
In the Christian school context, the principal should be aiming to mould the school into a Christ-like community to some degree. If he or she does not, and accepts the environment as a given, then his or her life will be dictated by the pressures from within and without the school community. In order to build the school into a community, the principal’s central task is to build the staff into a community, then there is a possibility that the infection will spread, for all of us tend to mirror, in our approach to others, the way we have ourselves been approached. The initial ingredients for this approach include the principal’s need to be accessible and approachable, and as far as possible transparent in motivation and intention (Andersen, 1990: 34-37).

So much of the focus of education is on individual achievement and the fulfilling of personal potential, however a Christian school that majors on this philosophy denies the Biblical principle of community. The children’s gifts should not be developed individualistically with the hope that one day they might be incorporated into community. Rather, they need to be developed and practiced within community from the outset (Cox, 1998: 5). In this regard, Vanderhoek (1993) focussed on building community in the school with reference to one of the key passages from the New Testament:

*Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully* (Romans 12: 4-8) (Vanderhoek, 1993: 12).

This passage illustrates another key ingredient of school culture, namely that every part of the community needs everyone else as each one has an invaluable part to play in the whole. In recognition of this in the primary grades, schools that have instituted buddy systems for assisting the younger children have often found that their functions grow
beyond their original design as the older one becomes genuinely protective of the younger and will, at times, become their advocate. Another possibility along these lines would be to see older students become coaches of the younger ones as the latter prepare for class presentations, school assemblies or a school programme. In the secondary schools, mentoring systems can be established in which senior students become involved with integrating incoming students into their new community and peer support programs can vastly enhance the capacity of student care within the community (Vanderhoek, 1993: 13).

This review of the ingredients of school culture will conclude with an examination of what the children learn as a result of being part of the school, the hidden curriculum. It is far better that the hidden curriculum not be hidden at all! There should be documents written about it so that everyone knows what is being attempted, how and why (Lankshear, 1992: 60).

Lankshear proposed three elements of the hidden curriculum. Firstly, the school discipline system should be designed to provide the basis for self-discipline. If it becomes too dependent on staff enforcing acceptable standards, then it does not carry the seeds of future growth to maturity. Secondly, the hidden curriculum encompasses the things of value to the school. A cursory examination of school displays and what is mentioned in and omitted from assemblies will quickly provide a glimpse into what is important to the school. For example, the school’s attitude to children with special needs is a good barometer. Are they singled out as a minority who need help or are they integrated into the whole on the lines that many children need special help in at least one area? Finally, the school should be a therapeutic community, which is one that seeks to care for more than the intellect of its students. This sphere of care should at least extend to include the parents, as that will have a direct impact on the children (Lankshear, 1992: 60-67).

A further aspect of the hidden curriculum concerns that which is omitted from the overt curriculum. In one sense, the total package presented to the children and students contains messages in a binary code of 1 or 0. The lack of teaching, for the sake of political correctness, in state schools about the Christian World View, actually
transmits a message that Christianity is unimportant. This, coupled with the media’s reluctance to present too much Christianity for fear of bias, is in fact indoctrination against Christianity (Watson, 1992: 2). The Christian schools’ response is to build an adequate framework of understanding in the minds of the students that will enable them to make sense of Biblical perspectives and ultimately to make informed personal choices to accept or reject Christianity (O’Keefe, 1992: 100).

Any attempt to develop the life of a school as a community in the light of the gospel is no soft option. It takes time, energy, commitment and determination and in the end the results might not look very different from a state school down the road, however the basis for the action will be the theological undergirding provided by the gospels (Lankshear, 1992: 68).

2.5.3 Christian School Cultures

Christian school culture has been characterised by the Three L’s; namely listening to the insights of the children and leading the community into wisdom in an atmosphere of affirming love that honours each person and race (Goudzwaard, 1997: 47). Culture also reflects interdependence, a family atmosphere and the dovetailing of each individual’s gifts for the common good (Andersen, 1984a: 7-8; King, 1954: 33). They are communities that focus on the total development of each student in terms of their relationship with God, their fellows, their environment and themselves. They are environments where a carefully monitored balance guides such development between Christian nurture and judicious exposure to interaction with the outside world (Andersen, 1984a: 19).

The students in Pensecola Christian School, in the United States, had no locks on their lockers as stealing resulted in automatic expulsion. There were only three expulsions necessary over twelve years. The school also emphasised punctuality, cleanliness, truthfulness and respect for adults and property (Parsons, 1987: 26-27). Another glimpse at the Christian school culture can be seen at Bethany Baptist Academy, also in the United States. The Headmaster, McGraw operated an umbrella policy of
twenty-four hour concern for the student’s behaviour. This meant that if he got wind of a party being organised, he would call in the ringleaders and squelch the party. McGraw said, *If the kids thought nobody cared what they did over the weekend, we’d lose all our credibility, the rules at Bethany Baptist Academy have to be there until the love of Christ takes over* (Peshkin, 1986: 94).

Another distinctive feature of Bethany’s culture is the operation of the corporal punishment policy. Parents are always notified before the paddle is used. It is only given by the administrator in the presence of an adult witness and is generally only used on the younger students, from grade eight downwards. Any child who refuses to accept the paddle is expelled and McGraw claimed that they *would close down before giving up the paddling policy* (Peshkin, 1986: 107-108).

In Australia, Tucker (1990) argued that one of the hallmarks of the Christian school culture was that they should have a *clear sense of what culture* they wanted to achieve amongst their students and staff. For example, one of the indications of this culture was that if a staff member was absent, other staff always covered for them because they saw this as their Christian duty *to go the second mile*. He went on to suggest that a key feature should be the *resolution of conflicts* and the *absence of grudges and bitterness* in an atmosphere of daily prayer (Tucker, 1990: 20-21).

A number of writers conceived the essence of culture to be an expression of the close association between the *home, the church and the school*. They suggested that where such a partnership existed, the development of a distinctive culture was more likely, as the students would see certain ethical norms being played out in the key environments of their lives, and therefore they would reflect them more consistently themselves (Kew, 1993: 76; Rohrer, 2000: 1; Starratt, 1994: 10).

Finally, from a more philosophical standpoint, Nordin & Turner (1980) saw the Christian schooling culture as a society that was listening to a *different drummer* and that *marched resolutely* towards the *values of their past*. They argued that they were perfectly within their rights to do so but they were forced to question whether such
groups should be taking a growing percentage of youth into their control (Nordin & Turner, 1980: 393).

**2.5.4 The Maintenance of Christian School Cultures**

These schools seem to have been walking a tightrope as they have sought to maintain their distinctive Christian ethos. For example, there is a very real tension between the process of maintaining the Christian culture and the goal of academic excellence, although it is possible to achieve both. Riding (1997) argued that if the subject Christianity is part of the curriculum, there is the clear existence of Christian elements in all subject areas, there are daily class devotions, the protestant work ethic and the atmosphere generated by the Christian teachers, then the Christian ethos can be maintained (Riding, 1997: 58-61).

Some have feared that the distinctive culture will be lost as the new Christian schools grow in size, but Deal and Peterson (1999) claim that this will not necessarily be the case as long as the focus of the organisation remains on people not profits. In order to maintain the culture, they advocate the telling of the stories of the past and the value of cementing the culture in the architecture of the present. For example, they suggest that a small library and a gigantic gymnasium will quite clearly reflect the values held by the community (Deal & Peterson, 1999: 1-63).

*The Christian culture will be perpetuated as long as the school’s mission is firmly built on the central tenets established in the Bible (Walner, 2000: 3) and the community’s focus is greater than the local including both the national and global contexts as well (King, 1954: 44).*
2.6 Successful Christian Schools

2.6.1 Attempts to Define Success

It is hard to define success but most people can recognise it when they see it (Bolman & Deal, 1993: 48). Most parents make the crucial decision about where to send their children by talking with other parents. This decision is often based on how happy a child appears to be and parental judgments about a child’s academic progress (Walsh, 1999: 2).

Unfortunately, no matter how carefully the parents investigate a particular school, their judgements will always be subjective. One of the issues that make it so difficult to define the success of a given school is that it is very difficult to quantify the impact of the continuous and informal training given to children by their families, rather than the explicit and methodical instruction they gain at school (Teese, 2000: 5). This search for a definition of success is made even more problematic in the new Christian schools, as there is often the additional factor of the church to consider as well. Trying to disentangle the multiple effects of home, school, church and social background is virtually impossible (Rose, 1988: 156).

However, in an attempt to provide some objectivity for the endless debate about a school’s success, Edmonds (1979) in the United States and Rutter, Maughan, Mortimer and Ouston (1979) in the United Kingdom, founded what has become known as the school effectiveness movement (Townsend, 2001a: 3). The early work was trying to demonstrate that schools do have an effect on student outcomes despite the generally held belief at the time that students’ achievements depended almost entirely on out of school factors. Social, economic and environmental factors were believed to account for 80 per cent of variation, while school effect was thought to account for two per cent. However, pupil expectations of their school were seen to be important and largely reflected the catchment of the school (Reynolds, 1992: 1-3). One of the striking conclusions of the Rutter et al. study was that children were more likely to show good behaviour and achieve good scholastic attainment if they attended some schools than if they attended others (Rutter et al., 1979: 178). Gradually attitudes were changing.
The Search for Effective Schools Project (Edmonds, 1979) identified a number of characteristics of urban schools in the United States that had positively impacted the whole range of students in their care. They had strong administrative leadership that had created a climate of expectation in which no children were permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement. The schools’ atmospheres were orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive and generally conducive to the instructional business and they were places where the pupil’s acquisition of basic skills took precedence over all other school activities (Edmonds, 1979: 22).

A more recent study, based on specific measures of Literacy and Mathematics in Victoria, Australia, demonstrated that differences between classes within the same school are many more times higher than differences between schools, indicating a high variability in teacher/class effectiveness. The percentage variation attributable to within school variations, such as teacher and class effects, was around 40-55 per cent, while the between school variation, successful schools paradigm, was between four to nine per cent (Hill, 1998: 423).

Manifestly, the school effectiveness research has begun to quantify success, although these figures merely reflect performance in the two curriculum areas of English and Mathematics. There is much more to a school’s success than the study of English and Mathematics. Success can be measured in terms of technical/economic effectiveness, human/social effectiveness, political effectiveness, cultural effectiveness as well as educational effectiveness and each of these can be viewed at various levels; the individual, institutional, communal, societal and international level. Therefore, even with the quantification of some variables, any attempt at understanding success is an exceedingly complex issue (Cheng, 1996: 13).

In keeping with Reynolds (1992) and Hill (1998) school success has been defined in terms of the progress that pupils make in their learning (Walsh, 1999: 234). However, reflecting Cheng’s (1996) broader perspective, Walsh adds the caveat that teaching, learning, management and governance also need to be monitored (Walsh, 1999: 235).
However, from the economic rationalist perspective, L. Davies (1994) proposed that for a school to be seen as successful it needs to be competitive and cost-effective. She argued that the primary goal is academic efficiency in a tightening economic climate while not ignoring the needs for greater democracy and the upholding of human rights (Davies, 1994: 1).

Deal and Peterson (1999) suggested a checklist approach. They would look for extra-curricular success, the teachers doing a good job, students getting into tertiary college, the school surviving and not making waves, keeping up with the latest educational innovations and all the students learning effectively (Deal & Peterson, 1999: 24). However, this definition of success, begs the question, how do you measure the success of the extra-curricular programme or the teachers doing a good job?

Perhaps a more realistic measure of success would be to consider the extent to which the school’s desired level of output has been achieved (Sheerens & Bosker, 1997: 4). A similar approach was taken in the Christian schooling context by Chen’s (1972) study of a hundred years of Christian education in China. He defined their schools’ success as the extent to which the schools’ stated aims and objectives had been achieved in the several phases of the schools’ history (Chen, 1972: 3). Such approaches to the problem of defining success remove the unnecessary and misleading comparison between other schools, as the only measurements are against the schools’ own target performance levels. Bear et al. (1989) warned against the dangers of seeking academic excellence in the light of league tables, as they believed a concentration on basic academics could sideline music, art, speaking skills, personal growth and self-esteem (Bear et al., 1989: 15). Another criticism of this emphasis on league tables was that they could turn the school’s focus inward on itself to the detriment of its potential for serving the wider community (Townsend, 2001b: 122).

No comprehensive review of the success or failure of the new Christian schools has been undertaken. Smith (1984: 42), Peshkin (1986: 13) and Rose (1988: 156) in the United States and Kew (1993: 99) and Long (1996a: 12) in Australia all called for more research in this field, frequently citing the fact that these schools were too new to allow any meaningful study of the impact on their students. However, the literature
has reported a wide range of qualitative definitions of success while they await a more objective analysis sometime in the future.

Those that emphasised the schools’ long term goals included the suggestion that students should be surveyed when they have left school and settled into their adult activities of work, marriage, post-school friendships and child rearing etc. (Peshkin, 1986: 13), and an even broader definition was that true success is to ultimately change the state and health of a nation (Parsons, 1987: 6). In contrast, some definitions focussed on the current situation. For example, success means keeping one’s integrity and faithfulness in the midst of a corrupt and corrupting world (Rose, 1988: 199), and success is seeing progress with handicapped children because of the love and encouragement found in the Christian school community (Weeks, 1988: 43).

This section has shown that all schools need to clearly establish the criteria by which their success will be judged. This is all the more important for the new Christian schools as their role is much broader and more complex than the traditional school aim to develop the full potential of each student. If the primary distinctive of Christian education is to bring children to a personal knowledge of God, the teaching of scripture and the Christian faith, in so far as it leads to that knowledge, is the only other essential part of it. The purpose of History, Science, English etc, is simply to train the mind and to provide the means of making a living (Davies, 1957: 5; Elliott, 1994: 2; Peshkin, 1986: 155).

However, if the primary emphasis is on learning subjects to gain marks in order to beat others into higher education places and subsequently into better jobs, students are being encouraged to develop a very self-centred and consumer oriented values system. These values, which are more than mere beliefs or feelings, in due course determine the students’ disposition and choices and as such run counter to the desired ethos of the new Christian schools (Hill, 1991: 1-4). This illustrates the tensions inherent within these schools as they seek to provide the best possible academic education while at the same time promoting and modelling the Christian life style.
The new Christian schools continue to exist in an educational context where there is a growing call for objective measures of academic attainment coupled with the demand for economic success. These pressures are creating tensions between the broader goals of spiritual transformation in their students’ lives and changes in society at large (Twelves, 2001: 72). Therefore, perhaps the best definition of success for these schools would be similar to that of Chen’s (1972) study that called for measures of the extent to which the schools’ stated aims and objectives have been achieved. A further reason that this school specific approach would be preferable is the fact that the movement contains so much diversity that no single definition could possibly be suitable for all schools (van Brummelen, 1988: 38-39).

2.6.2 Prerequisites for Success

This section will consider some of the prerequisites for success, having established that the most practical way to gauge the success of a New Christian School is to seek to measure the extent to which their stated aims and objectives are being fulfilled.

Some of these schools have been able to satisfy the many competing demands and still claim to be successful because they have had a selective enrolment policy. Very little has been written about this in the Christian schooling literature but the fact that one example can be found suggests that some schools may still be using this philosophy to their advantage. In the early 1980s, one handbook for an Australian New Christian School stated that, only those students who will meet our high achievement and behaviour standards will be comfortable in our school. We will gladly accept children of all learning abilities, however only those of the highest behaviour and morality are admitted or retained. Admittedly, the wording seems to be non-selective at face value, however in practice, the outworking of such a policy must have seen careful selection in the enrolment and the annual re-enrolment process. The handbook continued more bluntly, stating that although the school offers a high quality of Christian training, it is not designed to be a corrective institution for problems arising beyond those usually found in average school children. While we love delinquent children and emotionally unstable children, the school is not equipped to meet their needs (Maslen, 1982: 262).
To be fair to the school concerned, this degree of selection was probably not designed with their success in mind, as the school was only four years old at the time. Instead, the selective enrolments were presumably in place in order to ensure survival through their early years.

In contrast, the literature has had much more to say about the right principal being a key factor that determines success. The appointment of a strong instructional leader was seen as vital (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998: 63; Rutter et al., 1979: 203; Walsh, 1999: 3) and Walsh stressed this further in arguing that this appointment was the most important decision a governing body ever has to make (Walsh, 1999: 41).

According to a survey of eight successful principals in the United States, conducted in the late 1970s, the school leaders were all eager and desired to make their schools over in their image while typically working 15–18 hours a day. They were proactive and quick to assume the initiative while being resourceful in balancing the competing demands on their time (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980: 201, 256-7). Adding to this impressive list, successful schools tended to have principals who remained at their posts longer than most, giving them time to effect meaningful change in the school culture (Bolman & Deal, 1999: 42), personal relationships being the most important feature of that culture.

The quality of relationships between teachers, and between teachers and administrators, has been correlated with school success (Barth, 1990: 15-18). In a similar vein, the quality of student and staff relationships, fostered by vertical pastoral groupings of thirty students each, where the older mentor the younger, has been linked with success (King, 1954: 35-36). Some schools even go so far as to say that success is dependent on the degree to which the individual is cared for and feels cared for (Livermore, 1990: 18).

Others have placed greatest emphasis on the development of partnership between parents and teachers. Stoll and Fink (1996) have argued that the best schools have majored on building true partnership between parents and teachers, since there is ample evidence to suggest that students succeed where there is an active involvement
of interested parents in the life of the school (Stoll & Fink, 1996: 134-135). The break
down of this relationship is commonly quoted as a key reason for school failure.
However, failure in this regard should not be seen as a fatal flaw in the new Christian
schools, as they have habitually sought to build partnership, unlike some state schools
that have lacked the inclination to address the effective involvement of parents in the
school community (Weeks, 1988: 79).

The value of effective relationships for achieving success has also been championed by
Long (1995) in his proposal that small Christian schools are to be preferred. He
argued that small schools are more attractive to parents and that many parents are far
more interested in finding a school with effective pastoral care than a wide range of
facilities. Parents have a higher participation rate in the life of small schools where
their input can be truly appreciated rather than in larger more impersonal communities
where their efforts might be seen more as simply a duty on a roster that has to be done

All Christian schools undoubtedly want to succeed. Some may have manipulated their
enrolments but all will have sought the service of an effective principal who was
prepared to remain long enough to engender healthy relationships within the school
community.

2.6.3 Successful Christian Schools

Most people can recognise success when they see it (Bolman & Deal, 1993: 48),
however success takes many different forms in Christian schooling. The literature
speaks of success in terms of academic achievements, spiritual development,
citizenship and compromise.

Very little has been written about the academic standards attained by these schools,
probably on account of their recent development and due to the fact that
comprehensive studies have not yet been completed. However, the staff from many
Christian schools are pleased that their students regularly exceed national norms on
standardised achievement tests indicating academic success while at school (Peshkin, 1986: 155). An indication of intellectual success in the longer term has been provided by evidence that many graduates from Christian schools are holding key positions in almost all sections of society (Ho, 1996: 32).

A more objective measure of their success has been provided in Chen’s (1972) study of True Light Seminary, Canton, China; Christian education for Chinese children in a totally non-Christian culture. The study found that in the first 45 years of their history from 1872 to 1917, 3,764 students had been enrolled, 69 per cent girls. After graduating from school, of the 29 per cent of these girls who went out to work, 42 per cent became bible women (missionaries), 39 per cent became teachers, 15 per cent became physicians and four per cent became nurses, indicating that their academic attainment must have been quite respectable in a society where few women worked (Chen, 1972: 83).

The second measure of success is the degree to which the students adopt the Christian faith. Figures from the True Light Seminary in China, indicated that in 1917, there were 312 students enrolled, of whom 95 per cent were Christian (Chen, 1972: 84). True Light believed that it had successfully achieved its primary evangelistic aim as 25 per cent of all those who enrolled during the first 45 years became Christians while at school, not including those who may have become Christians in adulthood (Chen, 1972: 106). The following quotation illustrates the dominant Christian culture:

*Before the long summer vacation, meetings were held to prepare students for missionary work, urging them to take every opportunity to give the gospel message to as many people as they had a chance to meet. When school opened again in September, they (the children) were eager to report what they had done – one little girl of eight years astonished her parents by reading the scriptures to them and praying for them daily* (Chen, 1972: 87).

Again from Asia, Ho’s (1996) study of Christian schools that had started after 1970 found that almost all the teachers were committed Christians and that *more than half the students had become Christians after five to seven years of intensive spiritual*
nurture. Over 150 Christian churches were involved in primary Christian education in Hong Kong and 40 of them had oversight of secondary schools as well (Ho, 1996: 32).

Unfortunately, no comparable figures were readily available for other parts of the world, however, the story of how an American Christian school principal handled a clever but increasingly rebellious teenage girl for talking back to her teacher illustrates one of the tactics employed in the school’s spiritual mission:

*We put her in the room by herself, gave her a Bible and told her to read the Proverbs. She didn’t read any that morning because she was so mad at the world. But before the day was over, she decided she’d rather read than just sit there. She read the book of Proverbs and really broke. The Spirit of God really dealt with her. God got a hold of her life that day. Her days of teenage rebelliousness abruptly ended in an insolation room in a Christian school* (Parsons, 1987: ix).

Parsons related this story to a number of people and their reactions were diametrically opposed. One mother saw it as a marvellous testimony from a Christian school and commented that she hoped that she could find such a good Christian school for her daughters, while another thought it was *very scary* and reminded him of *punitive isolation used on prison inmates years ago* (Parsons, 1987: ix). Nevertheless, at face value, it does demonstrate the success of the school at bringing the girl to a tangible Christian experience.

Peshkin’s (1986) study of Bethany Baptist Academy, United States, noted that one of their crowning achievements was that the students accepted the school’s mission to make them better persons. He was impressed with a school whose 14-year-old student could claim: *Everyone I know, knows that I go to this school. If they see me doing something wrong, they’ll think, ‘well, why pay so much to go to a school when it does not make you a better person?’* (Peshkin, 1986: 179).

These statistics and anecdotes suggest a generally positive picture, however, there is some literature that probes further. Astill (1998) conducted a study of social values in the schools of South Australia. His primary conclusion was that there were distinct
differences in the value systems of pupils from active Christian families and those who professed no faith. However, whether their school was Christian or not, did not have any great influence on the underlying social values of either Christian or Non-believer students. In other words, he found no evidence of the schools having any effect on the values systems of the students, but rather, most students adopted the values of their parents (Astill, 1998: 43).

The further measure of success concerns the schools’ ability to produce model citizens who positively impact their communities in adult life. Arguably, the reformed girl or the 14-year-old student from Bethany would graduate one day and should become model citizens. So the objective of bringing students to a personal Christian faith should also impact their role in society.

The American Baptists who oversaw the operations of their Christian school, Lakehaven Academy, were pleased that they were producing disciplined, punctual, obedient, conforming and self-intrusting students who were growing up to be good workers (Rose, 1988: 144). Rose went on to develop this theme by suggesting that, in her experience, the Christian schools were a tool in the hands of evangelicals who wished to establish greater control over the socialisation and education of the young, and therefore, over the future of society (Rose, 1988: 199).

Peshkin (1986) held a similar perspective. The staff believed that the graduates from their school would have been inculcated with attractive personal qualities such as loyalty, honesty, industriousness, punctuality and reliability. In addition to this impressive list, they believed that they would be deferential to authority and as such have the makings of productive employees (Peshkin, 1986: 279). In both Lakehaven and Bethany’s case, the emphasis seemed to be more on decent, orderly and compliant young adults. There was no suggestion that they were training the leaders of tomorrow.

The final measure of the Christian school’s success, compromise, can perhaps be seen as failure depending on one’s perspective. The typical American culture, for example, can be seen as dominantly individualistic and task oriented, however, there are some
subcultures that would be described as collective, the indigenous Americans and the Amish to name but two. Where should the Christian schools sit? Should they endeavour to be cut off from the mainstream as they seek to practice their Christian counter culture or should they compromise a little in order to maintain access to potential converts and doors of opportunity for the schools’ graduates to find employment?

An example of compromise with mainstream culture has been seen in Bethany Baptist Academy. The school has clearly taught the students *not to store up treasure on earth* (Matthew 6: 19) that is this side of heaven; on the other hand, the apparent affluence of some church members and the church pastors has raised some questions in the minds of the students:

>You look at the Lowes, Mr McGraw (Academy Headmaster), Pastor Muller – they’ve got all those wonderful houses, two cars, the whole bit. Man, they’re in the preaching business for the money. I see Pastor Muller and it seems he is wearing a new suit at least once a week. I know our family struggles to make the car payments (Peshkin, 1986: 243).

Clearly the student has a point. Has this situation arisen by default with no-one conscious of its happening? Does this indicate a successful school or a failing school? Rose (1988) recognised in her study that there was neither total rejection of secular society but rather an *act of compromise* involving a *myriad contradictions* as the school communities *selectively reject, accept and appropriate modern ideas, conveniences and life styles* (Rose, 1988: 199). The result is a dynamic tension as the leadership of the day responds to the rapidly changing school environment.

Bollar Wagner (1990) conducted an anthropologic, ethnographic study of nine new Christian schools in the south-eastern states of the United States. They were regarded as examples of an educational alternative to public school education, the first widespread alternative since the establishment of the Catholic schools in the nineteenth century (Bollar Wagner, 1990: xi-8). Her main thesis was that these schools represent compromise with the popular American culture and as such they existed as a *transition*
culture to take society to the goal culture of no competition, forbearance, forgiveness and the fruits of the Spirit (Bollar Wagner, 1990: 20; Galatians 5: 22-23).

The schools associated with the Holiness Churches, those most akin to the puritan movement, were the most separate from mainstream society, while the Evangelical and Charismatic schools were at the opposite extreme, more accepting of worldly goals. As an illustration of this, Bollar Wagner noted that she was the only female above five years of age without pierced ears, in all but the Holiness schools. She also observed that she never saw a boy with pierced ears at any of her case study schools (Bollar Wagner, 1990: 120-124).

It seemed as though the parents were taking the blame for allowing the worldly things into their children’s lives with the result that these schools were not the total institutions most of the literature claimed for them, but rather a mixture of Christian and popular culture. She found that competition and materialism were co-existing or compromising with the gentle fruits of the Spirit that conservative Christians identified as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance and the justification for this stance was the notion that these schools were equipping children to handle the world if they knew what was out there (Bollar Wagner, 1990: 137, 203).

It is not clear to what extent the new Christian schools are meeting all their aims and objectives and therefore to what extent they can be regarded as successful. Undoubtedly, they contain examples at all levels of performance, from the excellent to the failing. However, the fact that increasing numbers of parents continue to enrol their children suggests that most of them must be doing something right.
2.7 Case Studies

2.7.1 The Scope of the Case Studies

This final section of this literature review will survey some of the more significant case studies that have been carried out into the phenomena of the new Christian schools. Thirteen studies have been reviewed that include six doctoral studies, four masters and three published books. Six of these considered Christian education in the United States, five in Australia, one in China and one in Indonesia.

There were a number of common themes running through many of these studies. For example, there were studies that examined the attributes of successful Christian leadership and management (Abbott, 1999; Davies, 1993; Twelves, 2000). Others were concerned with how these schools were attempting to maintain their Christian ethos (Barnett, 1988; Long, 1996a; Riding, 1997; Walner, 2000), while others majored on the outcomes of Christian education (Chen, 1972; Oentoro, 1997; Rose, 1988). Three studies attempted broad national overviews, Parsons (1987) and Bollar Wagner (1990) for the United States and Long (1996a) for Australia.

The most typical methodologies included participant observation (Barnett, 1988; Long, 1996a; Riding, 1997; Rose, 1988), semi-structured interviews (Chen, 1972; Long, 1996a; Parsons, 1987; Peshkin, 1986; Riding, 1997; Twelves, 2000; Walner, 2000;), questionnaires (Bollar Wagner, 1990; Chen, 1972; Davies, 1993; Oentoro, 1997; Peshkin, 1986; Walner, 2000) and documentary analysis (Chen, 1972; Long, 1996a; Riding, 1997; Twelves, 2000). When students were directly studied, both primary and secondary students were used but the lowest age cut-off varied. Riding (1997) used students from year 2 upward, Oentoro (1997) from year 5 upward. Only one study surveyed past students, an attempt to gauge the education’s impact on adulthood (Chen, 1972).

The most common feature of the masters case study findings was the writers’ presentation of lists of distinctive features, usually six in total (Davies, 1993; Riding, 1997; Twelves, 2000), whilst the doctorates and the published works tended to draw broader conclusions. For example, Bollar Wagner (1990) majored on the tensions...
created by compromise between Christian education with the secular world but Oentoro (1997) preferred to concentrate on the balance needed between academic aims and Christian values, the balance between spiritual and educational objectives and the imperative for faith and learning to go hand-in-hand. In contrast, Parsons’ (1987) perspective focussed on some of the shortcomings of Christian education, alluding to the voices of nostalgia that were crying out for the old fashioned virtues of past generations. However, he did conclude his study by suggesting that any success of Christian schools would be a source of embarrassment for the public schools (Parsons, 1987: 183).

Four case studies have been chosen for closer analysis, two American and two Australian. The first one (Peshkin, 1986) has many similarities with this research, for example, Peshkin focussed on one school and sought to make clear what an exemplary Christian school was like. The second case study by Rose (1988) was quite similar to Peshkin’s work, but contrasted two very different Christian schools, one that overtly sought to influence the wider community and one whose focus was on producing hard working compliant American citizens. Rose’s title, Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America has been adapted by this research into Putting Them In The Hands of God: A Successful Christian School in Australia, a distillation of the primary aims of the new Christian schools in Australia. Long’s (1996a) work is the third case study to be considered in this chapter. He treated the whole movement in Australia as a case study and sought to clarify their theological foundations, concluding that, as a whole, the new Christian Schools of Australia were not distinctively Christian or distinctively educational institutions. The final case study (Twelves, 2000) took up some of Long’s (1996a) challenges, as it considered the leadership and management of three exemplary non-government Australian Christian Schools.
2.7.2 God’s Choice: The Total World of the Fundamentalist Christian School -
Alan Peshkin, 1986

A student was in need of a ride home after an evening class during a 1978 midwinter
blizzard in the mid west of the United States. The student was the Reverend David
Houshholder, whose son attended a Christian school, and the driver was Alan Peshkin
(Peshkin, 1986: 11). This chance, blizzard-prolonged encounter led Peshkin to
undertake this case study, which is the story of Bethany Baptist Church and its school,
the pseudonymous Pastor Muller and Headmaster McGraw, the teaching staff and
several hundred children. Peshkin, a Jew, and his research assistants, Glesne and
Franz were participant observers for four semesters, nearly eighteen months, in a close
knit community located in a rural city of fifty thousand in the state of Illinois. The
Spenser Foundation funded the research for over three years.

Pastor Muller started service in Bethany in 1964 and by 1968 they had established
several goals for the church, first, to buy a new bus, second, to start a Christian radio
station and third, to start a Christian school. In a climate of growing dissatisfaction
with their local state schools, the church ran a survey of its members and concluded
that they could start their own school, a K-6 program, with 65 students. They started
with 88 students and four teachers in 1972 (pp. 2-4, 32).

By 1980, Bethany Baptist Academy (BBA) had grown to 358 students from
kindergarten to twelfth grade. Its enrolments had remained relatively unchanged from
then until 1986, demonstrating a hard won stability in the face of hard economic times.
Its school buildings were split, K-6 levels occupying the south wing built in 1976 and
its 7-12 students occupying the north wing built in 1973. A gymnasium connected the
two wings, built in 1970 as a church activities centre, and provided space for church
services as membership rose from 130 to 1,500 over eighteen years. The academy’s
buildings were separated from the church by a parking lot that was used for recess
activities and physical education, though the entire church-school complex operated as
an organic whole (pp. 32-3).

References in this section indicated by pp. refers to the page number in the case study in question.
A pilot study was conducted in 1978-79 in Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Seventh-day Adventist schools in addition to BBA who thankfully invited Peshkin and his team back for the major focus. Previous studies had focussed on the impact of these religious schools and Peshkin now wanted to emphasise the nature of the school whose impact was being investigated. His intention was to make clear what an exemplary Christian school was like, of the variety that was Independent Baptist and affiliated with the one-thousand-member American Association of Christian Schools (AACS). His subsidiary goals included the discovery of what made such schools attractive to many Americans and what were the consequences of this type of education for American education and American society as a whole (pp. 11-15).

During the first semester the researchers simply observed. In the second and third semesters they conducted interviews and in the fourth semester they ran questionnaires for all students and teachers and one parent of each student in order to verify the data that had previously been collected (p. 24).

Peshkin’s findings revolved around the notion of the total institution. The church set out to establish a school with a difference and they have succeeded. On a number of occasions, he compared BBA with boarding schools where the students live within their educational community and penal institutions where the inmate’s whole life is played out inside even tighter boundaries. However, unlike the penal establishment, Bethany’s students volunteer to join their community and unlike a boarding school, they each leave the total institution at night to go home to their families in the outside world. Consequently, there are no physical boundaries to delimit its participants’ physical movement, though the staff did consciously seek to exert the broadest possible control of their students, extending as far as nearly all their behaviours and thoughts, wherever they went and at all times of day and night, term time and holidays. Despite this invasion of privacy, BBA still produced characteristic Americans even though the rigidity of their beliefs and behaviours placed them outside the mainstream of American life (pp. 257-75).

This case study also examined the cost to the wider community of operating such institutions as Bethany. If the academy succeeded according to its own assumptions,
the fundamentalists rejoiced, while Peshkin and the world of non-believers mourned the loss of intellectual vitality and artistic creativity that they believe adherence to Biblical principle curtails. Those who rejected such communities as BBA quoted the perils of such groups as Scientology, the Unification Church and Hare Krishna, but Peshkin found such groups to be worlds away from what Bethany was seeking to do. His research found no basis for alarm in the activities of the fundamentalist institutions (p. 292). However, he did find Christian schooling divisive. As evidence of this, some of the results of the students’ surveys were quoted. The Bethany students’ views were very striking, showing how counter cultural they had become:

- 30 per cent say interracial marriage was OK
- 29 per cent believed that books by communists should be in school libraries
- 27 per cent considered it good that the United States had so many religious groups
- 26 per cent said that homosexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals

(p. 292)

Bethany Baptist Academy has applauded multiculturalism and pluralism as wonderful and instrumental in their survival but according to Peshkin, they have not championed these virtues with their students. Here lies a paradox. The more groups like BBA thrive, the more everyone knows that America’s pluralism is alive and well. Yet the more successfully each group proselytises, the more pluralism comes under threat. An open society allows parents the freedom to educate their children as they desire but the imperative for diversity will always compete with the objective of unity (p. 278).

Bethany certainly exemplified internal unity on many fronts. For example, its teachers were known for their hard work and caring attitude, teaching as though it was definitely their ‘calling’. And consequently, the large majority of parents who sought a pervasive fundamentalist Christian community have been delighted with its operational concomitants:
• Yes sir, no sir behaviour
• Clock-ticking silence
• Uncomplaining, committed teachers
• Pre-lunch prayers with bowed heads and closed eyes
• Obedient, Bible-toting students
• Conservative dress and hair styles
• Graffiti-free restroom walls
• Kids on a field trip bus spontaneously singing religious songs for thirty minutes at a time (pp. 280-1)

On account of the internal unity between the home, the church and the school, the students could be themselves in an environment that was designed for them. The researchers sensed a marvellous order, an enveloping peace and an abundance of meaning and community that so often accompanies collective religious experiences. Peshkin went so far as to suggest that, perhaps, Christian schools could even inspire public schools to restore policies that would benefit their own students and teachers, yet without the religious overtones of the fundamentalist total institutions.

2.7.3 Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America
- Susan Rose, 1988

Rose was raised as a p.k. (preacher’s kid) in a liberal Methodist home that meant that she was a stranger to evangelical culture. Therefore, her foray into the lives of the people of the Lakehaven Community, a working class, fundamentalist, Baptist church and school, and Covenant Community, a middle class, independent charismatic church and school was an eye-opening experience. The people of both communities were extremely generous with their time and their caring which made the study possible. The Lehman Foundation, Sage Graduate Fellowship and Sigma Xi Dissertation Research Grant were acknowledged for their financial support over the four years of the study (pp. xxv-xxvi).
The author became interested in the Evangelical movement and the rise of the new Religious Right in the early 1980s while undertaking research on domestic violence and the sources of stress and support for families in the United States. She was intrigued by groups that proclaimed themselves *pro-family*, yet simultaneously protested against mandatory child abuse reporting, shelters for battered women and the International Year of the Child, declaring it *one of the most demonic things to have come along in the past decade*. Rose considered that the Evangelical movement signalled a return to *patriarchal parenting and protestant supremacy* (p. xviii).

She was intrigued to find out why evangelicalism was so appealing to so many people, in fact, to approximately 22 per cent of Americans, eighteen and older. She wanted to find out how they made sense of their lives and to achieve this broad aim she undertook an in-depth ethnographic study of two communities located in upstate New York within 30 miles of each other, between the springs of 1982 and 1984. Each community was approximately of the same size and both had established their schools in 1974. Rose's aims were to examine the values, commitment and actions of contemporary evangelicals and to undertake a comparative analysis of the two communities and their processes of socialisation, primarily by using the tools of field notes and observation.

Her preliminary study to establish the context had involved her visiting and surveying eighteen schools in Virginia and upstate New York, primarily by simply walking in without writing a formal letter of introduction or calling in advance on the phone. A number of communities were resistant to academic research, but their emphasis on evangelicalism meant that Rose was seen as a potential convert by others who wanted to win her over to Christ (pp. xvii-xxiv).

Covenant people considered themselves as pilgrims travelling through a foreign *worldly* (hostile, unclean) land in search of the Kingdom of God. They recognised that their Christianity may be only one generation away from extinction and consequently one of their key objectives was their role in socialising their children *into the ways of the Lord*. Further attributes of this community were their willingness to submit to
authority, the authority of the scriptures and of Christ the King, and the typical charismatic emphasis on the Holy Spirit living within man (pp. 48-50).

The initial motivation for their school came from the pastor, who like many in his fellowship, had children approaching school age. The school initially operated in a one-room schoolhouse setting and grew from six children in its first year, 1974, to 110 in 1981. At this time, the school ran to grade eight at which age they considered the students were sufficiently spiritual to make the transition to public school (p. 70). They believed that the children should be exposed to worldly things and secular materials in order to teach them discernment between what is Godly and ungodly (p. 75). The parents were actively involved in the direction of the school, having many opportunities to express their opinions and to participate in its daily operations (p. 150).

Covenant school served as an experiment in cultural production on the part of the sponsoring church. The Covenant people were communicating through the school their worldview as a place in which each individual was an actor, who in co-operation with each other could affect their world. Their schooling stressed the acquisition of analytical skills, flexibility and self-direction as they prepared their students for professional jobs where they would be able to exercise their Christian influence (p. 98).

In contrast to the pioneering Covenant people, the Lakehaven Baptists saw themselves as guardians of the past, preserving traditional values and lifestyles. Here patriotism was an integral part of their Christianity, with tangible reminders of this in the form of the stars and stripes in the sanctuary, the cafeteria and even on men’s ties. For them, the world was defined in terms of a good and evil dichotomy; there was little grey matter to muddle the mind. There was little in-depth debate with each other for fear of confrontation, nor did they want to test the degree of consensus. Instead, they respected people’s right to privacy and they shied away from analysis (pp. 99-100). They employed guilt as an effective means of social control and, in this context, disapproved of any alcoholic consumption or attendance at movies or dances. This
was not because they felt all alcohol was poisonous and all movies depraved, but because they harboured doubts about their own self-control (pp. 101-2).

Just like the Covenant School, Lakehaven Academy opened in 1974, but with the full twelve grades and they had 100 students within the first three years, however, this fell to 76 students by 1983. They bought in their curriculum, by using the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system. This enabled them to start with a wide range of grades and only three teachers as this system made use of individual learning books that the children worked through at their own pace. They gave major emphasis to the ACE system, which was ideal for children with learning difficulties, as each child had their own tailored curriculum (pp. 113-22).

The students were taught to restrict their bathroom visits to 10.00 a.m. each morning and lunchtimes only. Despite the very rigid and predictable regime, resembling a military model that came with the ACE system and reflected the Baptist church culture, there were very few behavioural problems and no one could recall any corporal punishments in the two years previous to Rose’s visit (pp. 131-43).

Rose found that the children of these working, lower-middle, and agricultural-class Baptists were being trained to take over whatever jobs they could find in their rural communities, typically to follow in their parents’ footsteps. Their parents and teachers stressed obedience, respect for authority, conformity and an ability to follow directions. They did not expect their children to revolutionise society nor to become distinctive individuals, but rather that they would become upstanding citizens and Christians, able to support themselves and their families in a reasonable manner (pp. 143-4).

In conclusion, Rose questioned the success of these schools. She asked if they were actually undercutting the wellbeing of the children and the common good of society? However, from the positive perspective, she recognised that these schools were still flexible and not yet entrenched in any older traditions or self-perpetuating bureaucracies. She postulated that these schools could be forerunners of a new kind of
Both schools in her study argued that public education had failed because it attempted to offer value-free or value-relative education and that Christian education remedied that problem. However, on balance, Rose found these schools to be more limiting than liberating, though she highly respected the people who had become so actively involved in something they deeply believed in (pp. 218-21).

2.7.4 The Development of Themelic Schools in Australia - Robert Long, 1996a

Long was a teacher in government schools for many years, a theology student/minister in a conservative Protestant denomination, the vice-chairman of a regional committee to establish a new Christian school, a consultant for the Inter Church Commission On Religious Education In Schools (ICCOREIS)(NSW), a teacher in a Christian Parent Controlled School (CPCS) for seven years and a regional representative on a CPCS national curriculum committee. These experiences helped him generate his hypotheses and questions from a friendly but critical point of view with a liberal theological perspective (p. 14).

He coined the term *themelic schools* based on the Koine Greek that literally means *Christ is the foundation*. It referred to the new, low-fee, Christian schools that first emerged in Australia after 1962 and encompassed schools in CPCS, Christian Community Schools Limited (CCSL), Light Education Ministries (LEM, that typically use an ACE curriculum), independent themelic schools and themelic home schools. The Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) represents the majority of these schools, with financial services and a significant lobby group in Canberra.

Unlike the previous two case studies that examined respectively, a single school and two contrasting schools in the United States in the mid-1980s, Long’s study sought to examine the whole movement as it had developed in Australia by the mid-1990s. It attempted to clarify the schools’ theological positions, to evaluate their theological and social positions and to offer criticisms and recommendations regarding their educative
value. One of Long’s more significant subsidiary aims, that reflected his perspective, was his desire to contribute to a deeper understanding of the movement in Australia on account of the movement’s inability to criticise itself from within and partly because it had not yet developed a critical understanding of its own history (p. 66).

The methodology integrated a diversity of thinking from various disciplines, namely, theology, philosophy, history, psychology and sociology. It was partly ethnographic with some elements of participant-observation reflecting Long’s teaching years inside themelic schools. However, there were elements that reflected his more detached, outsider perspective of more recent years.

At the heart of his methodology was a descriptive, analytical and critical history of the movement in Australia, incorporating the methods of oral history that employed in-depth, semi-structured interviewing of a broad selection of personalities, including significant founders of the movement and a variety of personnel representing all models of themelic schooling. Those interviewed included principals, executive staff, board members, parents, past-staff, past-parents and past-students. He used his findings to test various hypotheses that he had developed over the seven years he was employed in themelic schools (pp. 78-93).

Long’s research proposed that the themelic schools were distinct and different but not distinct in the themelic sense of the term. He argued that these schools were neither distinctly Christian nor distinctly educational. Long’s argument went on to suggest however, that they had a distinct themelic language, naïve realist epistemology, a psyche of fear and confusion and policies and practices that have emerged from these characteristics (p. 88), such as:

- Authoritarianism
- Separatism
- Underlying contradictions
- Lack of openness
- Fear of criticism
- Adversarial reactionism and
- Managerial myopia (p. 425)
Long’s recommendations for the new Christian schools of Australia:

1. On account of the scarcity of research on the movement in Australia, the umbrella organisations and government institutions should fund research

2. The themelic schools should give up their imperative of dogma

3. The themelic schools should look carefully into support and promotion of prophetic thinking in the movement

4. There should be further exploration of the relationship between size of the organisation and the nature of Christian education

5. There is a need for political equity, in particular, the need for staff to associate and unionise

6. There is a need to further research into the K-12 model of school design

7. There should be encouragement of debate about the meaning of terms in themelic schools. Binary thinking tends to close rather than open people’s minds and

8. The clarification of roles along with the eradication of role conflict should be a matter of urgency in themelic schools. Confusion over the role of teacher-as-minister and principal-as-priest cause the most damaging outcomes in relationships (pp. 426-33)

Long felt that these schools urgently needed to address these recommendations if they were to develop as educationally sound institutions, because he considered that at the time of writing, they were schools of confusion, fear and contradiction.
2.7.5 Leadership and Management in Three Exemplar Non-Government Australian Christian Schools - James Twelves, 2000

Twelves acknowledged that Long’s (1996a) thesis of confusion, fear and contradiction might have been true of some schools but disputed that the accusation could be levelled at the entire new Christian schooling movement in Australia. Accordingly, he set out to identify some of the keys to success in three case study schools that had been nominated by an expert panel for being successful. They were two Christian Parent Controlled Schools (CPCS) and one church sponsored school.

Information was gathered by using qualitative methods of in-depth interviewing, together with a documentary study. Eleven interviews were conducted comprising three chairpersons, principals and deputies; one school general manager and one sponsoring church general manager. Twelves postulated that the leadership and management styles created the necessary structures for effective schools that in turn led to the school’s success.

Six keys to successful non-government Australian Christian schooling were identified across the three case studies. Each key was found in all three schools to a greater or lesser degree and are not presented in any specific order of importance (pp. 88-9):

1. **Collaborative Leadership Style**
   
   A marked move away from bureaucratic, hierarchical structures was observed and has been replaced with collaborative, collegial teamwork.

2. **Board Governance and CEO Model**
   
   The management of change had been effective as the boards’ roles had evolved from ‘hands on’ management towards the implementation of the Carver Model of Governance for Boards of Non-Profit Organisations, or similar, together with the clarification of the role of the principal as a modified CEO.

3. **Clear Enrolment Policy Rationale**
   
   The implementation of an enrolment policy that was firmly established in the foundational philosophies of the schools, either ‘open’ to any applicants or ‘closed’ to children of Christian homes only. Whichever policy was adopted, it was the consistency and the resonance with the foundational philosophy that was significant.
4. Recruitment of Committed Christian Teachers
   
   The attraction to the school of a totally committed Christian teaching faculty, whose primary focus was the sharing of their faith in God with the students in their care.

5. Focus on Transformed Lives of Students

   After the staff had cared for and nurtured the children through their primary years, they began to prepare their students in the secondary grades for the challenges of adult life, so that they would be able to make a positive difference in their communities and grow in their faith towards God as adults.

6. Implementation of a Dynamic Vision

   The communication of a progressive vision to the whole school community, building on the founders’ vision, inspiring all with the confidence that their school is meeting the needs of their children and making an ongoing positive impact on the wider community.

All three schools were justifiably described as successes and confirmed the nominating panel’s recommendations; however, they all had known significant challenges in the past that they were successfully overcoming. They placed great emphasis on their vision statements and being true to their founders’ intentions, while being able to reflect the changing demands of the modern day (p. 89). Staff relations with their boards had been strained in two of the schools in the mid-1990s and consequently they had begun to implement a Certified Agreement in order for them to build better ongoing relations. They had seen moderate success at the time of the study but the most positive outcome was that they had recognised the need for change (p. 90).

Twelves made three recommendations. Firstly, that a detailed case study should be undertaken of one successful Christian school in Australia. The current study was a response to this suggestion. Secondly, that there should be an examination of the foundational philosophies of the Australian new Christian schooling movement. Finally, the third recommendation was that research should be undertaken into the unfolding position of the teachers in Australian new Christian schools (pp. 91-2).

The most significant findings of the research were that a collaborative leadership style dominated the three organisations and that the school boards were now concentrating...
on governance rather than management and they had begun to implement a modified CEO model for their principals (p. 92).

2.8 Summary

This chapter began with a consideration of the roots of the new Christian Schooling Movement and moved on through a review of the governance and leadership models employed in its schools. In order to understand the essence of these schools, the building of their distinctive culture was examined, followed by an attempt to describe and define success in their contexts. The chapter concluded with summaries of four contrasting case studies, two from the United States and two from Australia.
Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the rationale for the methodologies employed in this study and justifies the selection of the Sandford Christian College case study design. The data collection and methods of analysis are described and examples of the research are used to illustrate the various stages of analysis. The chapter concludes with an examination of the delimitations and limitations of the research and a review of the ethical considerations.

3.2 Methodologies

This section considers the theoretical aspects of the research design. Quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering have been combined and applied in this research as mixed methods. The discussion proceeds with an application of Pre-understanding, and Grounded Theory that explains the relationship of the researcher’s Masters study with the current research. The roles of Ethnography and Hermeneutic Phenomenology are explored and this section then concludes with the application of case study design and selection.

3.2.1 Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed Methods?

In the past three decades, there have been numerous debates or wars within the social and behavioural sciences regarding the superiority of various social science paradigms or world views/belief systems guiding researchers (Gummesson, 1991: 2). The primary protagonists have been those from the quantitative (positivist/empirical) and the qualitative (constructivist/phenomenological) positions. More recently, the debate has shifted from a focus on the differences to one of concern to use the most
appropriate methods. This study has used a mixed methods approach, which has increasingly been encouraged for complex issues (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998: 3-5).

Quantitative research is concerned with frequency of phenomena, while qualitative research is concerned with abstract characteristics of events. The latter approach maintains that many natural phenomena cannot be adequately described merely in terms of a frequency. For example, knowledge of human beings and their behaviours cannot be expressed exclusively in terms of numbers; the context in which they live and work is a vital element of qualitative research (Kincheloe, 2003: 188-189).

Glesne and Peshkin compared and contrasted the quantitative and qualitative approaches illustrating the strengths and weaknesses of each. They saw merit in both approaches but acknowledged that researches tend to apply the methodology that most closely aligns with their own socialised worldview. They quoted Jill, a student in Vermont, who said, *I felt that I had found a research home when I learned that qualitative research existed.*
Table 3.1 Predispositions of the Quantitative and Qualitative approaches (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Gummesson, 1991: 153).

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assumptions</strong></td>
<td>• Social facts have an objectivity</td>
<td>• Reality is socially constructed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Variables can be identified and relationships measured</td>
<td>• Variables are complex, interwoven and difficult to measure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Etic (outsider’s perspective)</td>
<td>• Emic (insider’s perspective)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>• Generalisability</td>
<td>• Contextualisation</td>
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<td>• Predictive</td>
<td>• Interpretive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Casual explanations</td>
<td>• Understands actors’ perspectives</td>
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<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>• Begins with hypotheses and theories</td>
<td>• Ends with hypotheses and grounded theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Manipulation and control</td>
<td>• Emergence and portrayal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Deductive</td>
<td>• Searches for patterns</td>
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<td><strong>Researcher Role</strong></td>
<td>• Detached and impartial</td>
<td>• Personal involvement and partiality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Maintain a distance between themselves and the object of their research, taking the role of external observer</td>
<td>• Researchers are actors who also want to experience what they are studying from inside</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Objective portrayal, trying to remain emotionally neutral making a distinction between reason and feeling</td>
<td>• Empathic understanding, allowing both feelings and reason to govern their actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Researchers discover an object of research external to themselves rather than creating the actual object of their study</td>
<td>• Researchers partially create what they study, for example the meaning of a process or document</td>
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Quantitative research follows the scientific method, regarding the people involved as little more than passive recipients being acted upon by the events being measured (Kincheloe, 2003: 13). Qualitative research, on the other hand, is interested in the complexities of human decision-making and behaviour. It takes the view that all human life is experienced and constructed from a subjective viewpoint and social research should be designed to elicit the meaning of events and phenomenon from the viewpoint of the participant (Johnson, 1994: 7).

Chapter 3 Methodology
The mixed methods approach adopted in this study has meant that the elements of objectivity, measurement and impartiality have not been lost while acknowledging the complexity of human relationships, the gaining of an insider’s perspective and the expectation of the emergence of new models from the research.

### 3.2.2 Pre-understanding and Grounded Theory

Sometimes in qualitative enquiry the researcher’s *pre-understandings*, their *suppositions, assumptions and pre-existing bodies* of data gained before the study commenced, predispose the enquirer to interpret the phenomena under review in a biased manner, blinding them to the discovery of new theory (van Manen, 1990; 46). Conversely, a lack of pre-understanding can hamper the researcher’s progress, as too much time must be spent gathering basic information.

Glaser and Strauss developed their *grounded theory* to describe an inductive research design that ostensibly does not require any pre-understanding. They made a clear distinction between *theory generation* and *theory testing* to explain how their approach radically differed from the accepted norms of research prevalent at the time (1967: 1-15). Theory testing was the traditional approach of quantitative research that collects data to confirm or deny a pre-existing theory. Grounded theory, on the other hand, is a method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an individually derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 24).

The whole thrust of the study of Sandford Christian College was to generate a new model for successful Australian Christian education as none previously existed. Therefore, this study has to some degree applied the principles of grounded theory, at least in the qualitative elements of the research design, in that it has sought to answer the research objectives, never previously addressed in Australia.

Grounded theory information is primarily collected through one-on-one interviews, focus groups and participant observation. In-depth interviews and focus groups were the primary source of the qualitative data in this study. Whilst there was no formal
participant observation, the researcher, being so well accepted on the site for an extended period of time, was allowed access to experiences that many using interview methods alone could not have expected. These experiences were not formally recorded although they did emerge in the researcher’s diary entries as reflections on the events in the school community.

The following are the key attributes of good grounded theory (Creswell, 1998: 34):

1. The author should mention from the outset that their purpose is to generate theory
2. The procedure needs to be thoroughly discussed and should be systematic
3. The author should present a visual model or coded diagram of the theory they postulate
4. The language and feel of the research should be scientific and objective, while at the same time addressing the topic at length in order to capture the complexity of detail of all human relationships

This study has attempted all four attributes. One and two have been addressed in this Methodology chapter. Attribute three, though not a visual model as such, is covered in the discussion, Chapter 6. Attribute four has been covered by the whole study, but notably in Chapter 5 that presents at length, the results of the interviews and focus groups from an objective stand point.
Hurworth’s (1999) model (Figure 3.1) graphically illustrates a grounded theory research design. It starts with a general interest in a subject that assumes no pre-understanding. As some understanding is achieved and themes emerge, these ideas form the basis of the subsequent stages of the research. In essence, the interim findings structure succeeding stages of the research.

This approach has been applied in the way that the in-depth interview and focus group objectives were not devised from the outset of the research but were based on the
findings from the School Development Review surveys, which was the initial quantitative stage of the design.

The researcher’s previous Masters study had been in part based on Sandford Christian College (Twelves, 2000). Its findings established the value of further research into the College and indeed this present study seeks to directly fulfil one of its recommendations:

**A detailed case study to be undertaken of One Successful Christian School in Australia.**

No such study has been undertaken in Australia and the American equivalents date back to the 1980s (Peshkin 1986, Rose 1988). This study should include a longitudinal study of past students to attempt an assessment of whether the school has been effective in ‘transforming the lives’ of the students (Twelves, 2000: 91).

This earlier research had suggested six keys to successful Australian Christian schooling presented here in Table 3.2:

**Table 3.2 Some Keys to Successful Themelic* Schooling (Twelves, 2000: 88-89)**

(* Coined by Long (1996a), to describe Christian Schooling that first emerged in North America in the 1940s and in Australia in the 1960s)

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<th>Collaborative Leadership Style</th>
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<td>Clear Enrolment Policy Rationale</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Recruitment of Committed Christian Teachers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Focus on Transformed Lives of Students</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Implantation of a Dynamic Vision</td>
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The researcher had concluded that these six keys related to the success of this particular type of schooling and as such would be confirmed or refuted in this present study. This was not one of the research objectives of this study therefore the six keys were regarded as pre-understandings that were blocked in order to permit new theory to emerge. Despite the pre-understandings, the researcher sought, as much as possible, to approach this study without any preconceived ideas about what would be discovered.
3.2.3 Ethnography

Ethnographic research has been defined as *an attempt to understand the common sense meanings and experiences of the participants in a social system.* It is a deep, clear description of a particular cultural reality to such an extent that a non-member of the culture could *pass as an insider* if he or she internalised the cultural features of the particular setting (van Manen, 1990: 177-8).

This section will demonstrate that this study design contains elements of ethnography, particularly with regard to the second research objective that seeks to understand the essence of a successful Australian Christian school.

A typical ethnographic report comprises the following attributes, all of which have been addressed in this study:

1. Literature Review.
2. Background to the study, describing the physical, demographic, geographic and historical setting. Entry into the study setting is described, as are the methods and any ethical dilemmas.
3. Ethnographic descriptions of particular social settings sometimes organised around themes or case studies.
4. Discussion of theories and interpretations of the social settings developed and the processes described, concluding with integration or taking issue with the previous literature in the field under review (Kellehear, 1993: 21).

Ethnography can be a useful way of describing what actually happens in a social context and as such is helpful to the administration of an organisation that can then ensure that subsequent policy making is based on reality rather than imagination. It has gained credibility in social science research because it has become increasingly evident that an over emphasis on quantitative measures can miss very significant links and relationships within a community. Ethnography can be criticised for a lack of scientific rigour, but quantitative data can equally fall short of credibility, for example, in terms of the size of samples employed in a given situation (Burns, 2000: 394-395).
Whenever human behaviours are being considered there are always multiple perspectives as the processes develop within the social context. Burns (1990) advocated that for these processes to be clearly understood, the ethnographer had to live the life of the people being studied (Burns, 1990: 226). This design did not allow for participant observation as an agreed method of data collection, however this lack did not detract from the ethnographic elements of the design. The researcher’s immersion, as opposed to participation, in the school community aided the administration of the other techniques and afforded a deeper understanding of the social context. The participants knew that the researcher was keeping a reflective diary but not formally observing every action, and this helped increase their trust in the research process and, the researcher contends, increased the richness of the findings. While the researcher did not live the life of the participants, he sought an ethnographic understanding of the dynamics of the social framework that was the essence of Sandford Christian College life.

An ethnographic study design, on account of its inductive structure, shows similarity to the grounded theory approach through the feedback mechanisms that contrast markedly with the linear approach of quantitative research. The following Figure (3.2) from Burns (2000) demonstrates how the ethnographic cycle collects data. Elements of this cycle have been applied to this study.

The ethnographic data-gathering period occurred during the second semester of 2000, when the researcher was visiting Sandford Christian College once or twice a week. During this time, the surveys and documentary studies were undertaken by the Researcher for the School Development Review, the main focus of the bottom right circle of the conceptual framework (Figure 1). The reflective diary was also started during the phase of ethnographic data collection and the assembly of an ethnographic record.

Informal analysis of the ethnographic data occurred during the systematic analysis of the surveys and documentary data conducted for the School Development Review. This shaped the asking of ethnographic questions during the in-depth interviews and focus groups that were designed to elicit explanations for the extreme findings of the
quantitative data. As the interview and focus group period progressed, some of the findings from the completed interviews and focus groups generated further ethnographic questions that resulted in a repeat of the left hand cycle of the Burns (2000) model or one of the spirals of Hurworth (1999). The whole study represents the writing of the ethnographic report, which is summarised in the discussion in Chapter 6. Recommendations have been made in that chapter for further study, which represent the selecting of an ethnographic project. In essence, this was the right hand cycle of this ethnographic research design, the key to which has been the inductive approach of allowing the results of one stage to stimulate succeeding stages.

![Figure 3.2 The Research Cycle of Ethnography (Burns, 2000: 400)](image)

The grounded theory approach and ethnography in particular have enabled the recognition of the distinctive cultural setting that was Sandford Christian College. Coupled with the close working relationship the researcher developed with the staff, this has led to an understanding of the community to some degree as an insider (van Manen, 1990: 177-178).
3.2.4 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology asks the question, what is the meaning or understanding of something from the actor’s own perspective? In contrast to the previous section on ethnography, the focus of which was literally the discerning of patterns in the unknown, this section along with the succeeding one on case study design will focus on the comprehension of meaning and interpretation of the essence of the organisation under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 7).

Phenomenology takes notice of the unexpected as well as the predictable answers to pre-determined questions in an interview setting (Gummesson, 1991: 149-50; van Manen, 1990: 77, 183-4). Creswell (1998: 236) emphasizes the idea that the phenomenological researcher distils the central meaning or essence of an experience or concept or topic. Creswell (1998: 32) identified four discrete steps in the phenomenological approach, each one involving a concentration process of the available material:

1. The researcher first reads all the relevant descriptions in their entirety
2. Significant statements are extracted
3. Statements are formulated into meanings and then meanings are clustered into themes
4. Finally the researcher integrates the themes into a narrative description.

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. The word has traditionally been used in the context of the study of classical sacred texts such as the Bible but is now used more broadly to describe variously, the understanding of lived experiences, the grasping of one’s own possibilities for being in the world in certain ways and being enlightened by an author’s intended meaning (van Manen, 1990: 180). Hermeneutic scientists go a step deeper than phenomenologist in that they interpret immediate events in the light of previous events, private experiences and whatever else they find relevant to the situation (Gummesson, 1991: 150).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was the basis of the methodology used by Gurr (1996) in his study of school principals beginning to embrace the Schools of the Future initiative.
in Victoria. In that case, the emphasis was on describing the leadership role that twelve disparate principals had adopted in the new environment in which they found themselves.

In the context of this study, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, without any preconceived persuasions, has sought to understand the central themes that have made Sandford Christian College a successful Australian Christian School. This distillation down to the essential themes has been the rationale for the analysis of the qualitative data gathered that was generated from the in-depth interviews and the focus groups.

At a deeper level of application, how has the community that made up Sandford been *Putting them in the hands of God*? And to follow van Manen’s (1990: 86-91) thinking at an even deeper level, how would the researcher *put them in God’s hands* in a different situation based on the understanding he gained in this study?

To the extent that this study has focussed on the central meaning or essence (Creswell 1998: 236) of Sandford Christian College, hermeneutic phenomenology has contributed to the theoretical framework for the research. The case study design has provided the structure and serves as the bridge between the quantitative and qualitative approaches, the mixed methods methodology.

### 3.2.5 Case Study Design

Case studies are research strategies that have captured the middle ground between the two extremes of quantitative and qualitative research, relying heavily on multiple sources of data (Gummesson, 1991: 73; Johnson, 1994: 20; Yin, 1994: 13). They provide detailed inductive investigations, *exploratory forays into previously unexplored territories* and are particularly suited to the single-handed researcher (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993: iv; Hartley, 1994: 208; Johnson, 1994: 20). They are the perfect combination technique making use of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (Hartley, 1994: 209).
Johnson (1994) (Table 3.3) explored the strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach, concluding that they are not primarily designed to portray specific situations but rather to illustrate from the particular, more generally applicable principles:

**Table 3.3 Case Studies Strengths and Weaknesses (Johnson, 1994: 20-24)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Copes with complexity</td>
<td>• Lack of scientific rigour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intelligible, non-technical findings</td>
<td>• Possibility of uniqueness of material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can provide interpretation for similar cases</td>
<td>• Possible uneven access to all aspects of the phenomenon/a under review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yin (1994), suggests that the strengths out-weigh the potential weaknesses and, as case studies rely on multiple sources of data, they naturally generate triangulation and thus the validity of the findings is enhanced (Yin, 1994: 13, 45).

Finally, each case study is defined by *boundaries* (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 25-9). There are boundaries in terms of time and means on the part of the researcher. In this case, the majority of the data were collected during the second semester of 2000. The volume of data from the early days of the College was very limited. The Past Student Survey, however, did take the case study back to perceptions of the late 1970s. Data were collected entirely by the researcher, as no other resources were available.

This case study also had geographical and cultural boundaries. There was the physical campus of Sandford Christian College, which shared the same site with its oversight church Sandford Christian Fellowship, and there were the members of the College community that defined the specific culture under scrutiny. Both these geographic and demographic boundaries formed quite discrete boundary lines, however, there were three interesting exceptions to these boundaries as the course of the study unfolded:

1. The interview with the Senior Minister of the covering church was conducted in his office in the church. These offices were on the same land as the school but the church had not been defined as a separate source of data other than indirectly through this interview. The interview focussed entirely on the College but the connection with the church could not be ignored. In fact the
Past Student Survey sought to answer the question, *what had the greater influence on the students, their time in the church* (many students attended both) *or the College?*

2. A second interview also occurred in the church property, namely the interview with the College Council Chairman. This too focussed on the College, however there were some significant references to the church as the Chairman had been so intimately involved with both organisations for nearly twenty years. While the College was a discrete, limited company it was still culturally part of the church.

3. There was an interview with a parent College Council member. He lived on a street that backed immediately onto the College property to the east, so while the interview physically took place off the campus there was no reference to the surrounding community in the interview. So effectively the boundary remained in tact in this case.

It has been said that a case study report should adopt an historical format telling the story as it unfolds over time (Burns, 2000: 448). This study has not adopted an historical persecutive per se but it has certainly sought to portray the essence of the College as it has unfolded in the lives of the participants during the second half of 2000. In this way, it has encapsulated the theoretical constructs of discovery and understanding discussed earlier in this chapter.

### 3.2.6 Selection of Case Study

The literature has focussed on three Christian schools in the United States: Susan Rose’s (1988) investigation into two successful schools and Alan Peshkin’s (1986) single successful, church sponsored, Christian school. The Australian Christian schooling movement has not been studied in a comparable way (Long, 1995). Therefore, to help redress this disparity, Sandford Christian College has been selected for this study. It was one of a number of schools nominated by an expert panel as

*Chapter 3  Methodology*
successful Australian Christian schools, and was studied as part of the researcher’s Masters thesis (Twelves, 2000).

The expert panel consisted of six of the most senior executives representing four of the leading Christian schooling organisations in Australia:

- Australian Association of Christian Schools, O’Connor, ACT.
- Christian Community Schools Ltd., Wentworthville, NSW.
- Christian Parent Controlled Christian Schools Ltd., Blacktown, NSW.
- Christian Schools Association of Queensland, Spring Hill, Queensland.

The schools with the most nominations were invited to participate in the researcher’s Masters study entitled: Leadership and Management in three exemplar non-government Australian Christian Schools (Twelves, 2000). These three schools were the first schools that positively responded to their invitations to be part of the research.

Sandford Christian College was selected as the case study for this research for several reasons. It had been previously nominated as a successful school and the researcher, a member of the sponsoring church had already established a good rapport with the leadership of the College. It was anticipated that this study had the potential to reveal a wealth of data that could benefit the Australian Christian schooling movement by creating a deeper understanding of the phenomena of successful Christian schooling.

Sandford Christian College was started in the late 1970s and at the time of the data collection in 2000 had over 600 students Kindergarten to Year 12. It was a non-denominational, co-educational, church sponsored, Australian Christian school. It was affiliated with the Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS).
3.3 Research Methods

This section describes the practical features of the research design. The discussion begins with a deliberation on access and gatekeeping concerns. It then moves through the data-gathering phase, starting with quantitative elements of the accountability framework employed in the School Development Review. The succeeding subsections address the qualitative data gathering and the section concludes with a description of the analysis process.

3.3.1 Access and Gatekeepers

One of the prerequisites for any successful research project is the degree to which the researcher is permitted access to the community, culture or organisation. Very little has been written about access and the overt or covert access that may result depending on the response of the key gatekeepers involved (Gummesson, 1991: 11, 12, 26-8; Hurworth, 1999).

The researcher had already developed a trusting overt relationship with the gatekeeper by the time of the proposal for this current study because of his earlier Masters work in the community. The formal approach was addressed though the Principal in May 2000 following a verbal agreement from the Senior Minister of the church, the College Council Chairman and the Principal (Appendix 1).

The literature suggests that Christian schools have a tendency towards suspicion of outsiders, perhaps related to the history of American Christian schools’ frequent battles with government agencies concerning the final authority for education or the paying of levies (Parsons, 1987: xv). Peshkin also wrote of his difficulties gaining access to Bethany Baptist Academy reporting one pastor as saying (1986: 12):

*You're like a Russian who says he wants to attend meetings at the Pentagon – just to learn...no matter how good a person you are, you will misrepresent my school because you don't have the Holy Spirit. First become a child of the king and then you can pursue your study in Christian Schools.*

Chapter 3 Methodology
There was suspicion in the early days of the study and the researcher felt quite unwelcome at times. However, the head of Music, quite a community minded teacher with influence, was very impressed with a written review by the researcher of her Primary School Concert that implicitly reassured the community that the research was going to be fair and objective (Diary, p. 10) (Appendix 3).

The Principal was the gatekeeper. While there was no apparent hesitation in proffering his acceptance of the research proposal, he certainly kept a close active interest in the progress of the research at all times. From the beginning, his actions in selecting the teaching staff that would be asked to participate in the in-depth interviews could have been looked upon as a covert attempt to shield the researcher from others who might give less favourable responses (Diary, p. 1). At face value, this was very intrusive and controlling but the reality was the direct opposite, as the participants were extremely overt in their observations. Even though the gatekeeper had controlled the in-depth interviewees, no restrictions were placed on the composition of the focus groups. In these settings, those with definite opinions appeared to relish the chance to talk openly in confidence.

Some of the Primary teachers took exception to the Primary Students’ Questionnaire. Though they did not voice this directly, they felt threatened that the findings might be used against them, and were concerned that the questions were not written at an appropriate level for year 5 students. They voiced their concerns to the Principal, who in turn called the researcher in to explain the rationale of the questionnaire to them in his presence. This meeting was most successful and the survey went ahead unaltered (Diary, p. 10). On this occasion it was very clear that the gatekeeper was opening the door for the researcher.

**3.3.2 Accountability Framework of the Schools of the Future**

The Office of Review, a subdivision of the Department of Education, Employment and Training in Victoria, began a process of consultation with government schools in 1993
to develop an accountability and school improvement framework as a core part of a larger school self-management reform entitled the Schools of the Future (Spring, 1997).

The Accountability Framework has been highly acclaimed (Griffiths, 1997; Gurr, 1999; Victorian Auditor-General’s Office, 1997) by the government sector in Victoria, despite it placing further time demands on already very busy Principals and teachers. In terms of an appraisal tool for the education profession, it has proven to be both summative and formative. Useful information has been generated on school performance but it also indicates developmental directions for the future (Gurr, 1999: 62-67).

The rationale for the Accountability Framework was to satisfy legitimate expectations of government about accountability for the outcomes of schooling, and to assist schools and teachers to improve standards of student learning (Office of Review, 1998a: 4). These laudable motives were underpinned by the belief that:

- **External evaluation is more effective in improving school performance when schools have well developed internal processes and**

- **School self-evaluation without some external component lacks the rigour necessary to effect real and lasting improvements in school performance** (Office of Review, 1998a: 4).

These quotations firmly establish the framework’s mandate to improve standards of student learning across Victorian government schools. Nevertheless, the application of the Accountability Framework methodology to Sandford Christian College was primarily to effect a valid quantifiable comparison between the government schools and the low-fee independent Christian schools.

Government schools had become increasingly self-managed throughout the nineties due to the Schools of the Future initiative. This has made comparisons between government schools and Sandford Christian College justifiable and potentially
beneficial for the Christian schooling movement. The ability to quantify performance measures across the two school sectors will potentially encourage future policy development from the standpoint of greater objectivity.

The policy statement *Quality Assurance in Victorian Schools: An Accountability Framework* published by the Office of Review in 1997 prescribed the elements of the school reviews. This framework was based on a commitment to quality assurance in the management of schools and a key component was the support provided to schools in assessing the value they were able to add to the learning outcomes achieved by their students. It is for this reason that this study chose to adopt and adapt this framework methodology in order to seek to answer research questions 2 and 3, respectively, the direct comparison of the school’s performance with government schools and the aim to objectively describe an exemplary Christian school. For comparison purposes, the statewide averages for P-12 government schools have been used.

![Figure 3.3 The Accountability Framework (Office of Review, 1997: 8)](image)

The school’s Annual Report (Figure 3.3) is the basic tool of accountability. In the government schools, the school charter is linked to the third Annual Report, known as the Triennial Review. In the case of Sandford Christian College, the school’s vision and goals have been linked to this study’s modified review, referred to in this research as the School Development Review.
In Victoria’s government schools, every third year the Triennial Review examines the performance of the school against their own stated goals and appropriate state benchmarks. As such, this was a better instrument to model for the purposes of measuring the success of Sandford Christian College and to address the research objectives one and two. The following diagram (Figure 3.4) from Gurr’s overview of the Accountability Framework shows how the Triennial Review builds on the preceding Annual Reports:

![School Review Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.4 School Review (Gurr, 1999: 34)**

In the government schools, the Triennial Reviews make specific recommendations to the school community and the Department of Education regarding the goals and priorities for the next school charter and thus ensure progress is paramount as opposed to the maintenance of the *status quo*. The process entails two stages, internal self-assessment (effectively a third annual review) and independent verification. The Triennial Reviews began in 1997 with 450 Victorian schools taking part (Gurr, 1999: 33-34).

The first stage of such a review, initiated by the school’s management team, identifies trends emerging from the previous annual reports. The analysis of the data becomes the basis for the recommendations for the next school charter. It is formative as it
focuses attention on ways of making improvements and developing programmes. It concentrates on strengths and weaknesses, the attainment of goals and the achievement of the priority outcomes.

Though many of the instruments of the first stage of the Triennial Review were applied to Sandford Christian College, their senior management team did not initiate them. In this case, the researcher provided the impetus for the School Development Review. This was not driven by a purely academic interest, as the researcher recognised that he was an investigator within the community and as such he could help Sandford Christian College with the findings of this research (Diary, p. 4). In the government schools, the second stage, involving independent verification, was more analogous with the concept of an investigator being immersed in the culture with an objective to provide help. The verification process is designed to be affirming and challenging; put another way, they are the school’s critical friends (Gurr, 1999: 37).

The key elements of this process of independent verification in the government schools includes:

- Analysis of the school’s achievements
- Discussion between the reviewer and the school’s management regarding the draft conclusions. This takes place at the school and usually takes a full day to complete. The school principal, the school council’s president and one nominee from the school staff are present.
- A report including the recommendations for the next charter is prepared. This report is presented to a meeting of the school council and, by agreement with the school management, to a meeting of the school staff. A copy of the report is logged with the Office of Review (Office of Review, 1997: 15-16).

Table 3.4 indicates the elements of the Triennial Review that were included in this study. The ‘Y’ denotes the indicator used; the ‘N’ reflects those indicators not used.
### Table 3.4 Adaptation of the Triennial Review to Sandford Christian College’s School Development Review (Gurr, 1999: 35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Triennial Review</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student achievement:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• P–10 (CSF)</td>
<td>N *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 11–12 (VCE) and VET</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specialist schools—teacher opinion of student progress</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time allocated to the eight Key Learning Areas</strong></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent opinion scales of:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• academic rigour</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teaching quality</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• student reporting</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• school environment</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• customer responsiveness</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• general satisfaction</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exit and destination data on students leaving secondary colleges</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apparent retention in secondary colleges</strong></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student attendance</strong></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student enrolment at each year level</strong></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student accident information</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional development undertaken by staff</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff opinion scales of:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professional development</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• school morale</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• supportive leadership</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• goal congruency</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professional interaction</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 14 point full staff survey (optional)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-certificated staff leave</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global budget report</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme budget report</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes of school priorities</strong></td>
<td>Y **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Alternative data was supplied by the College.
** Past Student Survey conducted subsequent to the Sandford Christian College Review.
In a government school that has undergone their Triennial Review and has been found to have significant issues requiring assistance and improvement, the Office of Review demands that the school have a *School Development Review* (SDR). This special review is diagnostic in nature and focuses on producing clear direction for improvement. In this case, the General Manager (Schools) advises the Principal of the requirement for an SDR and the reviewer(s) is (are) appointed after consultation between the Office of Review, General Manager (Schools) and the school in question (Office of Schools - Wardlaw, 2000b).

In the government schools, the SDRs are usually conducted in Term 3 so that the recommendations can be implemented in Term 4. There are a series of standard instruments common to all SDRs:

- **Full staff diagnostic survey**
- **Student survey**
- **Interviews with the leadership team**
- **Structured focus groups of parents, teachers and students as appropriate around identified issues**
- **The use of other instruments or data sets as agreed in the scoping**
- **The appointment of a contact person to liaise timetable of events and to receive summary results from reviewers** (Office of Schools - Wardlaw, 2000b)

Sandford Christian College did not require a SDR but the methodology set out above was the most appropriate model to adapt for this study. There are elements of the research design that resonate strongly with the SDR, namely the combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and the notion of the external researcher directing the study as opposed to a high proportion of the scoping and analysis being conducted by the school’s own staff.

The Office of Review’s Opinion Survey module procedures are presented in Appendix 2.
3.3.3 Sandford Christian College’s School Development Review

The following instruments were included in the modified School Development Review (SDR) that was applied to the Sandford Christian College community:

A. **Analysis of existing documentary data on file in the College.** Johnson (1994: 26-27) highlighted some advantages of this type of research. Notably the exercise brings together previously unrelated material to illustrate a topic and it brings into wider circulation new materials. The following data were collected:

- Student Achievement:
  - VCE 2000 Results.
  - University of NSW - Educational Testing Centre Results 1991-2000 for Maths, Science and English across some grades between years 3 to year 10.
  - Curriculum - Time Allocation in 2000 for Key Learning Areas across years (KLAs) Prep - year 8.

- Student Retention and Student Absence.

B. **Parent Surveys.** All families were invited to complete a ten-minute questionnaire used as part of the Accountability Framework (Office of Schools Review (1995) *Monitoring parent opinion user guide*, Melbourne: Directorate of School Education). It was completed by 50.27 per cent or 185 of the College families (Diary, p. 28). This was far in excess of the minimum of the smaller of 10 per cent of families or 30 families within a school community as suggested as an appropriate sample for schools (Office of Schools Review, 1995). The survey (Accountability and Development Division, 2000: 43-44) was designed to ascertain parent opinion on:

- Quality of teaching
- Academic rigour
- General environment
- Customer responsiveness
- Student reporting
- General satisfaction
C. **Staff Surveys.** All Staff, teaching and non-teaching, were invited to complete a thirty-minute questionnaire devised and tested by the Office of Review, the Full Staff Survey (Hart, 2000: 27-28; Office of Review, 1998b: 7). It was completed by 79 per cent of staff. It was designed to ascertain opinions on fourteen variables:

1. School morale
2. School distress
3. Goal congruency
4. Supportive leadership
5. Professional interaction
6. Professional growth
7. Participative decision-making
8. Appraisal and recognition
9. Role clarity
10. Curriculum coordination
11. Student orientation
12. Effective discipline policy
13. Student misbehaviour
14. Excessive work demands

D. **Student Surveys.** All students from year 5 - year 12 were invited to complete a twenty-five minute questionnaire devised and tested by the Office of Review (Office of Schools, 2000a). Because of some absences and a year 6 excursion, the response rate overall was 87 per cent. It was designed to ascertain the student’s opinion on:

- Empathy
- Teacher enthusiasm
- Teacher fairness/firmness
- High expectations
- Quality of instruction
- Feedback
- Appropriateness of instruction
- Time
E. In-depth interviews.

In-depth interviews can be defined as qualitative data gathering tools designed to give access to knowledge - a knowledge of meaning and interpretations that individuals give to their lives and events (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995: 1). They are windows on the world (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 2) or simply ways of collecting people’s stories and in so doing give acknowledgement that their unique experiences have value (Seidman, 1991: xv, 3). Johnson (1994: 43) describes them simply as social encounters between two people with a particular focus or purpose, initiated by the interviewer. Their purpose in this study, while being an integral element in the School Development Review, was to collect the community’s stories as part of the inductive grounded theory approach.

Burns (1997: 328) distinguishes between standardised and in-depth interviews. Standardised questions are the essential feature of the former while the drawing out of the participant’s individual story is the essential feature of the latter. Burns suggests that in-depth interviews can be either unstructured or semi-structured and that all three sub types exist along a continuum (see Figure 3.5):

![Figure 3.5 Types of Interview (Burns, 1997: 328)](image)

The interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured, in that there were some key questions that formed the basis of all interviews but were not necessarily asked in their entirety on each occasion. In many respects the focus of the interviews was much more unstructured in that the direction of the conversations were designed to be responsive to the participant’s replies, rather than the pre-conceived questions.
The following Table (3.5) presents the key interview questions employed in this study. However, throughout the interviews there was constant tension between the desire to be flexible and gather new understanding from unique lines of discussions and the need for consistency of questioning to cover the research areas. This tension was resolved overall by letting some of the more responsive participants direct the line of discussion leaving some key questions unquestioned, while the full list was employed with the more reserved subjects.

**Table 3.5 Key In Depth Interview Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Key Interview Questions</strong></th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1 | *Leaders:* What do you believe are your main qualities of leadership in the community?  
   *Staff:* What do you believe are the main qualities of the leadership of this college? |
| 2 | Describe your part in the college community? |
| 3 | Describe the nature of the relationships within the community? |
| 4 | Describe the impact of the college on the students, in academic, physical/social and spiritual terms? |
| 5 | What do you believe are the key issues facing the staff/parents/students at present? |
| 6 | Describe what you believe to be the impact of the college on the wider community? |
| 7 | How would you describe the ethos of the school? |
| 8 | To what do you attribute the success of the school? |

Considerable preparation was required to set up the in-depth interviews, because so much background knowledge was needed (Johnson, 1994: 48). Most of the surveys relating to the School Development Reviews had been run prior to the start of the interviewing, so this period allowed the researcher time to be accepted into the community, extending considerable benefits to the in-depth interviewing that followed (Gummesson, 1991: 114).

Minichiello et al. (1995: 70) described five different types of in-depth interviews. The interviews in this study employed elements of the first three types and the focus groups discussed later accord with the fifth type:

1. The gaining of understanding that could not be observed directly by the researcher
2. Oral histories that focus on significant events in the life of participants
3. *Gaining access to a group of people by talking to a wide range of ages*

4. *Clinical interviews*

5. *Group interviews or focus groups*

The participants’ life histories in the community usually formed the basis of the conversations. Their unique experience could not have been gathered effectively as data in any other way. The leadership of the College were interviewed, but younger staff were also interviewed and in this way, the essence of the community was being tapped in order to understand the unique dynamic that had taken nearly twenty years to build up.

The in-depth interviews were designed to test hunches (Minichiello et al., 1995: 75) that had developed earlier in the research and on occasion came to the researcher during interviews themselves. Frequently, the interviews were used to gain personal responses to the outcomes of the quantitative surveys run earlier. On some occasions, the researcher shared personal experiences as a technique to trigger responses from the participant and to give them thinking time. At other times, it was important to listen carefully and talk as little as possible, just asking brief questions from time to time when a point was not readily understood. Good rapport seemed to have been generated as interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere with most interviews going for 50 minutes. These techniques were some of the twenty described by Seidman (1991: 70) in his work on interviewing.

The physical environment for the interview was important. Keats (1988: 52) recognised that the best choice of location was in a private place, with a minimum of background noise and a time slot that could minimise the potential for interruptions. As it eventuated, the participants made the choice of location and time, and always requested an office or private room where they knew they would not be interrupted. The researcher felt that as they knew that a tape recorder was being set up, they were mindful of the need for a clear, uninterrupted signal. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed for detailed analysis, however written notes were taken as well (Burns, 1997: 335) that were used in the reflective diary. The tapes alone were used to
glean key themes for the School Development Review, but the written transcripts were used in the detailed matrix analysis described in detail in Section 3.3.6.

The in-depth interviews were a very powerful tool in this study design. They were an interpretative activity brought about by the juxtaposition of the interviewer and the interviewee. More importantly, they could be said to have aided in the construction of meaning, as they were meaning making occasions, whether recognised or not (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 4). They were the bridge between the largely quantitative School Development Review and the largely qualitative study design as a whole.

Thirteen in-depth interviews of up to an hour each were conducted with the leadership and management and some members of the wider school community. The following participated:

- Senior Minister of the church
- College Council Chairman
- College Council Member
- College Principal (two interviews)
- Business Manager (two interviews)
- Remaining members of the Senior Management Team:
  a. Assistant Principal Primary
  b. Assistant Principal Secondary
- Teaching Staff:
  a. English and Drama Teacher
  b. Infants Teacher
  c. Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator
  d. Secondary Sport Teacher

The leadership were included to explain the dynamics of the community and the teachers provided both triangulation and balance to the account. The selection of the teaching staff was made following the principal’s suggestions, designed to cover both older and newer teachers and both primary and secondary departments. The selected teachers reflected both strident supporters and articulate critics of the leadership.
Each interview was audio taped and subsequently transcribed. Participants had the opportunity to check their transcripts for accuracy, to delete any of the text if they wished or to withdraw from the study. No one withdrew and only six transcripts received minor corrections by the participants. Only the edited transcripts were used for the subsequent analysis. All participants had a single interview other than the Business Manager and the Principal who each had a follow up interview.

F. Focus Groups.

The general aim of the focus groups was to access a wider cross section of the community than could have been achieved by the in-depth interviews, and they also provided triangulation with the in-depth interviews (Hurworth, 1996: 48).

The optimum timing for the focus groups was negotiated between the researcher and the Principal to be between late October and early November 2000. A notice in the school newsletter invited the parent participants, but this had to be supported by personal invitations via telephone on account of the small number of volunteers. The public notice thanked all those families who had participated in the parent survey and invited anyone to volunteer for one of two parent focus groups. In all there were 16 parents representing 14 families split between the two parent focus groups. Form teachers selected/volunteered their most articulate class members for the lunchtime student groups and the staff self-selected depending on their availability for the two after school staff focus groups.

The participants came in cold, not having been pre-warned of any of the questions, though the researcher had obviously pre-planned a great deal (Hurworth, 1999). The following (Table 3.6) were the key pre-determined subject areas for the focus groups but the heart of each focus group were the highlights from the previously administered surveys. The researcher took the opportunity to test the new theory that had emerged from the previous levels of the inductive spiral.
Table 3.6 Anticipated Focus Group - Key Question Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional interaction</td>
<td>Suitability of reporting system</td>
<td>General satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD provision</td>
<td>Quality of teaching</td>
<td>Quality of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons college attracts parents</td>
<td>Reasons for student enrolment</td>
<td>Range/suitability of subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of key current issues</td>
<td>Identification of key current issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of the College’s impact on the wider community</td>
<td>Assessment of the College’s impact on the wider community</td>
<td>Assessment of the College’s impact on the students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7 Examples of Focus Group Questions Used - Primary Students
(Diary, p. 54)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction, names, how long in the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Describe the best and worst thing about your time in SCC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Appropriateness/inappropriateness of instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Time needed to complete work plus related homework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fairness/firmness of their teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Empathy of their teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What has been the impact of the College on their life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus groups used in this study design were conducted approximately at the midway point in the data gathering sequence. As such, they were formative in design and aided the triangulation of the quantitative data already collected (Hurworth, 1996: 49).

Seven focus groups of up to an hour each were conducted with key stakeholder groups:

- Administration and teaching staff - 22 per cent were involved, in two randomly selected groups.
- Parents - 4.4 per cent of families were involved, in two randomly selected groups.
- Students - 4.6 per cent of students in three groups:
  a. Primary Students
  b. Junior Secondary
  c. Senior Secondary
Each was audio taped with the group’s permission and transcribed. Group members were not provided a copy of their transcript for checking, but all personal references made in the transcripts were de-contextualised to protect the identity of individuals. They were later analysed along with the in-depth interview transcripts using the matrix method described below.

G. Reflective Diary.

In addition to the above data collection procedures, the researcher kept a journal of personal reflections of his immersion in the life of the College and the subsequent analytical stages of the research. There were 122 pages in all commencing on 18 July 2000 and concluding 18 June 2004. It was used for three broad purposes with each page divided into two columns.

The first function used the left hand side for recording facts, important dates or observations, such as recording that on 15 September 2000 the researcher had collected 79 of the staff surveys and 51 per cent of the parent surveys (Diary, p. 28). The second function used the right hand side for subsequent reflection on events. For example, the diary recorded reflections on a discussion with one of the teachers about the implementation of their uniform policy (Diary, p. 36). This right hand column was often left blank, but ruling it in the first place reminded the researcher to reflect on the facts described, either in the immediate future or, as its third function, some months ahead (Heath, 1998). The exercise of using the reflective diary was extremely beneficial, both as a factual record of events and as a cathartic therapy and, in keeping with Burns’ suggestion, the dairy was used during preparation for the interviews and focus groups (Burns, 2000: 439).

The term reflective diary came from Heath’s description of how to use such a diary (1998). Her paper offered a practical guide to the writing of such diaries, specifically for nursing staff in hospitals. Her ideas came partly from a review of the literature on reflection and partly from the continuing education students at the Homerton School of Health Studies who studied a reflective practice module during 1996.
The researcher has not made a formal analysis of his reflective diary but rather used it on an ad hoc basis to confirm facts or to provide additional insight into specific issues brought up in the discussion chapter. Its primary function was to aid in the formulation of new ideas and the development of hunches inspired during the data gathering process.

A draft School Development Review was prepared for the Principal and delivered on 26 March 2001. There had been casual consultation with him prior to this point but no formal daylong discussions with the College Council Chairman and a nominated member of staff as would have been the case in the government schools. The Principal sought some clarification on the points of recommendation in the review and, in consultation with the researcher, some changes were made to the final report. The Principal was appreciative of the opportunity to digest the report before it was formally presented to the College Council on 1 May 2001. On this occasion, the researcher made an oral presentation of the significant findings to the College Council, each member having been given their personal copy the previous week. The researcher did not make any presentation to the staff as a whole, but the Principal took two full staff meetings to address issues that were raised by the report (Diary, p. 97).

3.3.4 The Past Student Survey

The survey was first despatched to past students on 21 December 2000 (Appendix 4). The researcher had been supplied with a database from the College, which had been generated from school records for a fundraiser, a few months earlier. A 50 per cent sample was employed that generated 232 potential recipients. The return rate was not very high, possibly due to the distractions of the holiday season. Consequently, a second posting was mailed on 12 February 2001 to the same past students who had not previously responded.

A total of 77 replies were received, representing 38 per cent of the 50 per cent sample. While this was a relatively small sample it should be remembered that for much of the
College’s history the school was much smaller than it was at the time of the study and consequently the pool of past students was relatively small. Despite the relatively small return, it was hoped that those students who had gone to the trouble of replying, would represent the full range of feelings about the College over the previous two decades.

The survey was expected to require thirty minutes to complete. It was first drafted in September 2000 with the principles of good questionnaire construction in mind, namely, the avoidance of confusion and the keeping of the respondents’ perspective in mind (Neuman, 1997: 233). Eleven independent adults tested the survey, some within the College community. They were each asked to complete the survey and add comments on the clarity of the questions (Diary, p. 28-29). The Principal and three past students of Sandford Christian College, who had later become employees, completed the questionnaire as part of the trial. The first draft had 18 questions spread over three pages. The final version had 11 questions limited to two pages. The questionnaire was designed to ascertain the past students’ opinions on how well the College had achieved each of its 10 goals and how much the College had impacted the participant’s adult life. The findings are presented in the second part of Chapter 4.

3.3.5 Analysis of Qualitative Data

The in-depth interviews and focus groups generated a considerable body of qualitative data that complemented quantitative data gathered earlier. This section examines the process from qualitative data recording to data interpretation, the building of new ideas and the attainment of conclusions. It is essentially a process of abstraction (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 92), from the transcripts of in-depth interviews and focus groups that are gradually reduced in bulk until the essential ideas are integrated into an explanatory framework. In the early stages every detail mattered, as it could not be known what would develop into one of the key findings. Therefore, great care was needed in the coding of significant, emerging themes in this distillation process (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 55).
During this process, there was a danger that the researcher might reach premature closure by the strength of significant arguments. However, this would have diminished the potential value of other ideas still to be examined, and therefore a conscious effort was maintained to delay this process until all the data could be considered (Hartley, 1994: 220).

The first stage of coding was to categorise the texts according to the research objectives established at the commencement of the study (Burns, 1997: 341; Hartley, 1994: 220; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 93). There were three broad categories, description, success and impact. Their order reflected a chronological sequence, with description allied with the second objective to describe an exemplary Christian school; success was allied with the first objective to quantify the degree of success of Sandford Christian College’s education and impact was allied with the third objective to illustrate the impact of the College on the lives of their students.

Each of these broad categories for coding was further subdivided as illustrated in Table 3.8. Here DH refers to the description of the history, DR the description of roles, DISta the description of staff issues and so on.
### Table 3.8 First Stage Coding Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Category</th>
<th>Sub-Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>DH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>DR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>DF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Students</td>
<td>IPrSt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Students</td>
<td>IpSt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>IC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once these categories were established, the first stage of analysis ensued, namely the transcripts were studied and margin notes added along with the abbreviation for the most relevant category or categories. As each transcript was completed, the margin notes were posted on an analysis matrix along with the page number of the transcript in question. These notes were in abbreviated form, as the words themselves did not matter nearly as much as the meaning behind them (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 56). The page numbers were added so that direct quotations could be collected and referenced.

The analysis matrix was divided into cells of variable size. The X-axis listed all 13 in-depth interviews and seven focus groups. The Y-axis displayed the first stage coding categories with variable height rows. The variations in height were estimated based on the expected number of references determined by the researcher, prior to analysis. In reality a considerable number of cells were found to be too small, so extensions were drawn up in neighbouring cells that had limited or zero use. The base of the matrix was reserved for notes. Entries were made here based on hunches and observations.
made during the transcript analysis phase and assigned to the relevant in-depth interview or focus group. Table 3.10 is an example of part of this analysis matrix, the second stage of analysis.

The second stage of analysis began when all the margin notes had been transcribed onto the analysis matrix. This was the beginning of the thematic analysis stage typically associated with hermeneutic phenomenology. For example, it became clear early in the analysis that ideas related to unity were a ubiquitous theme throughout the analysis matrix. Thereafter, each reference to unity was shaded green on the matrix. This process of identifying themes continued until nearly all the text on the matrix was shaded one colour or another. The process only stopped when no further themes could be found (Burns, 1997: 341). The text remaining white was proven to be largely factual and descriptive and not directly linked to the research questions. Table 3.9 charts all the themes and sub-themes used in the analysis. If they are to be found on the sample matrix presented in Table 3.10, they have been colour coded accordingly so that Table 3.9 can be used as a key.

As the in-depth interview and focus group transcripts were analysed and the emerging themes posted on to the analysis matrix, it became clear that certain sub-themes were recurring. The third stage in the analysis was the macro grouping of the sub-themes, into six themes, *Christian Foundations, Growth and Change, Leadership Styles, Management, Teaching and Learning* and *Student Behaviour Management*. These themes became the rationale for the structure of Chapter 5, which presents the findings of the in-depth interviews and the focus groups.

The rationale for this process was partly narrative (Hartley, 1994: 221), starting with the foundation of the school and their original vision. The themes described in Chapter 5 have been organised thematically, from the macro to micro scale, from esoteric notions of the nature of unity to the issues surrounding corporal punishment in schools.
Table 3.9 Second Stage Coding - The establishment of Sub - Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miracles</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer and Faith</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Sa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion for Christian Education</td>
<td>PaCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Ch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with growth</td>
<td>P+G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Culture</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>U</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Foundations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth &amp; Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Con</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>De</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Col</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity with Time</td>
<td>C+T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Sev</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>Sit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>EM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective Management</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Stu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers High Quality</td>
<td>TQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Poor Quality</td>
<td>TPQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with schooling</td>
<td>P+S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACES +ve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACES - ve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Size Problem</td>
<td>CS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with Public Ed</td>
<td>PE-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The codes that have been coloured have been used in the sample analysis matrix (Table 3.10), those not coloured only occur elsewhere on the analysis matrix.
**Table 3.10 Sample of Analysis Matrix**

*The key to the colour coding is Table 3.9*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIStu</th>
<th>Infant’s Teacher IDI 8</th>
<th>Senior Minister IDI 9</th>
<th>Principal II IDI 12</th>
<th>Primary Students FG 1</th>
<th>Junior Secondary FG 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff support and pray p7</td>
<td>Positive talk about children</td>
<td>Originally based against corporal punishment p6</td>
<td>Climate change creates: Warm, care, enthusiasm p10</td>
<td>Parents and kids happy p7/9</td>
<td>Religion good and bad p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not component of standards p10</td>
<td>Positive talk about children</td>
<td>Feeling of being special p7</td>
<td>Students can be prayed for and cuddled p8</td>
<td>Different levels of work p7/9</td>
<td>More Bible in secondary p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not component of standards p10</td>
<td>Positive talk about children</td>
<td>Feeling of being special p7</td>
<td>Students can be prayed for and cuddled p8</td>
<td>Different levels of work p7/9</td>
<td>Less Bible in secondary p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep parents very unsure p2</td>
<td>Stressed parents wanting to do right thing by leadership p5</td>
<td>Getting used to new teacher styles year to year p5</td>
<td>We would like to see the school p8</td>
<td>Extra support for PACES was seen as weak p2</td>
<td>Less Bible in secondary p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIStu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistants Principal Primary IDI 7</td>
<td>Assistant Principal Primary IDI 7</td>
<td>Assistant Principal Primary IDI 7</td>
<td>Assistant Principal Primary IDI 7</td>
<td>Assistant Principal Primary IDI 7</td>
<td>Assistant Principal Primary IDI 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change creates: Warm, care, enthusiasm p10</td>
<td>Feeling of being special p7</td>
<td>Students can be prayed for and cuddled p8</td>
<td>We would like to see the school p8</td>
<td>Extra support for PACES was seen as weak p2</td>
<td>Less Bible in secondary p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not component of standards p10</td>
<td>Positive talk about children</td>
<td>Feeling of being special p7</td>
<td>Students can be prayed for and cuddled p8</td>
<td>Different levels of work p7/9</td>
<td>Less Bible in secondary p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep parents very unsure p2</td>
<td>Stressed parents wanting to do right thing by leadership p5</td>
<td>Getting used to new teacher styles year to year p5</td>
<td>We would like to see the school p8</td>
<td>Extra support for PACES was seen as weak p2</td>
<td>Less Bible in secondary p1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 3 Methodology**

123
### Table 3.10 Sample of Analysis Matrix (continued)

The key to the colour coding is Table 3.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistant Principal Primary</th>
<th>Infant’s Teacher IDI 8</th>
<th>Senior Minister IDI 9</th>
<th>Principal II IDI 12</th>
<th>Primary Students FG 1</th>
<th>Junior Secondary FG 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong> Without vision will not be able to keep up. God wants us to be better. No building being built with footings for two stories p5</td>
<td><strong>IDI</strong> 7</td>
<td><strong>IDI</strong> 8</td>
<td><strong>IDI</strong> 9</td>
<td><strong>IDI</strong> 12</td>
<td><strong>DF</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SL</strong> Principal:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of staff p6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role to keep up p6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable p6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high economic growth p4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision for a thousand, two campuses? Possible school in western suburbs p5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong> Separate primary and secondary growth p6: Master plan brought forward because of triple string p7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong> Fee reduction for poor families p12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong> Optimistic p3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SL</strong> College council governance p6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong> Principal:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration and program design p6</td>
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<td><strong>DF</strong> Senior Minister:</td>
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<td><strong>DF</strong> Commitment to original vision p6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DF</strong> School council not democratic appointed to discuss p7</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These six columns and five rows in Table 3.10 are representative of the 20 columns and 13 rows on the actual analysis matrix. Where the cell is clear there were no responses recorded for that category. These instances reflected the semi structured in-depth interviews and focus groups as each interview and focus group were not all asked exactly the same questions (Burns, 1997: 328). The cells with text in Table 3.10 are a direct transcription of the cell from the analysis matrix and the colour code refers to the sub-themes listed in Table 3.9. The construction of this analysis matrix was the second step in the reduction of data, the first being the margin notes on the transcripts.

---

**Chapter 3 Methodology**
The final stage in the analysis of the data was the tallying of the number of references to the sub-themes identified. The defined data were then used to design the presentation of the findings in Chapter 5. The number of references did not necessarily indicate relative importance; other considerations were also brought to bear, for example the requirements of the research objectives.

3.4 Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitation is the process of defining the boundaries of the research whereas the limitations are any restrictions and qualifications imposed on the results.

The chief delimitations of this research were concerned with the phenomenon Sandford Christian College. It was a tightly focussed study in the naturalistic inquiry paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 42). The major boundaries of the case study were considered in Section 3.2.5 that is the boundaries of time, the researcher’s means, geography and culture were reviewed (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 25-29). It was hoped that the findings of the research might find application outside these boundaries but no assumptions about this were to be implied by the research.

A further delimitation reflecting Gurr’s (1996: 75) application of hermeneutic phenomenology was the constraint of interpretation by the researcher. The emergent findings from the data were compared with the literature, which in turn, suggested additional avenues for research. In this study the research was not designed to test any previous theoretical positions or to ascribe any causal relationship between individual or corporate behaviour and the perceived success of Sandford Christian College. It was simply designed to depict the essence of a community that was deemed to be successful.

Nevertheless, since Sandford Christian College has been nominated as one of the successful Christian schools and the objective analysis of the School Development Review has deemed it to be outstanding in terms of key indicators, it could be implied that the unique combination of identified phenomena here in the school could be worth
considering in other contexts within the Christian schooling movement. Those in positions of influence may choose to adapt some of the findings to their own situations to the end that more children might be positively impacted by Christian schooling. Further, as this community placed great weight on the promotion of explicit values, such findings may be of interest to a wider range of schools than simply the new Christian schooling movement.

In considering the limitations of the study there has been no assumption that the results from this single case study would have any direct application to other Christian schools. This study has been designed to stand alone alongside the two American studies (Peshkin, 1986; Rose, 1988), as a snapshot of a particular context at a particular time, and in fulfilment of this objective, the key findings of the School Development Review and the Past Student Survey have already been presented to the school for their consideration and application.

The limitations of the mixed methods methodology have been considered in the light of the benefits and problems outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984: 15-16):

**Benefits**

There were three tangible benefits present in this research:

1. Rich perceptions and interpretations of social phenomena are provided.
2. As the research was not constrained by initial preconceptions and frameworks surprising findings and new theoretical integrations can emerge.
3. Findings may be more attractive and more persuasive to many readers because the findings are presented in words, not numbers.

The second research objective was designed to provide a rich description of the College community, one that could capture the essence of the place to such an extent that the reader, who might not be a specialist in statistical analysis, could pass as an *insider* if they embodied the findings (van Manen, 1990: 177-178). Chapter 6 brings
together the findings in the light of the literature and presents a unique integration of ideas.

**Problems**

There were four identifiable problems:

1. Time and financial constraints on data collection and analysis.
2. The limited degree of sampling means that generalisability is often questionable.
3. Because it relies heavily on the researcher’s interpretation, there may be increased chance of researcher bias.
4. The methods of qualitative data analysis are not always clearly formulated. This may lead to a lack of guidelines on the data collection that makes it difficult for the research to be replicated.

The time and financial demands of the data collection were not excessive. As described earlier (Sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.5), the data were collected during the second semester of 2000. The analysis was completed early in 2003. The research was not funded and was made possible by the researcher’s availability and a number of part-time and full-time teaching positions.

Problems 2 to 4 raised by Miles and Huberman (1984: 15-16) relate to generalisability, researcher bias and research replication and are discussed below under the heading Trustworthiness (3.4.1).

The quantitative methodologies associated with the School Development Review also presented limitations for this research. The Victorian Schools Accountability Framework outlined a number of constraints (Gurr, 1999: 28-40):
• Parent Opinion Survey. Normally five per cent of families or a minimum of 30 families should be surveyed. This study exceeded the recommendations achieving 51 per cent of families representing 185 families (Diary, p. 28).
• Staff Opinion Survey. The full staff survey was not compulsory for schools but this study provided it to all staff and a 79 per cent return was achieved representing 50 staff (Diary, p. 28).
• The School Development Reviews were designed to be conducted during Term 3 and the review was to be conducted by an external reviewer with significant management experience in schools (Office of Schools, 2000a).

Under each of these three considerations this study has matched or exceeded the limitations established for the Victorian Schools Accountability Framework. The data were collected over two terms instead of one and the researcher had significant experience in school management, eleven years as a head of department, two as a deputy principal and one as a principal, at the time of the study.

3.4.1 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the concept of trustworthiness is of greater meaning for qualitative research. Their concept provides for an effective way to amplify the integrity of the study. They propound the notions of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and Merriam (1998) argues this approach is best suited to case study research that in this situation combines both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The application of Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four components of trustworthiness to this study:

1. Credibility is regarded as the extent to which the study is credible to the participants involved. This was achieved through:
   a. Prolonged involvement within the community. The researcher had previously studied Sandford Christian College as part of his Masters research and one semester of approximately 0.5FTE (Fulltime Equivalent) data-gathering for this research.
b. Triangulation by the employment of multiple data sources and methods of research (Burns, 1990: 248; Gummesson, 1991: 121-122). The 13 in-depth interviews and seven focus groups achieved triangulation on numerous occasions as indicated by the frequency of references to specific issues highlighted in Chapter 5. The mixed methods approach described in Section 3.2.1 also developed credible triangulation of data. For example, the School Development Review raised the issue of the lack of adequate toilets, which was corroborated by numerous references in the focus groups.

c. Referential adequacy by making use of a portion of the data as a test of credibility. This was directly achieved in the School Development Review as the key findings were continually measured against external state benchmarks.

d. Peer debriefing by the use of a critical reviewer. In addition to the researcher’s supervisor who was consulted regularly, one of the researcher’s colleagues reviewed the findings of the School Development Review prior to presentation to the College Council (Diary, p. 99).

e. Member checking, whereby participants are provided with their data, interpretations and conclusions for checking. The participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time and they were presented with the transcripts of their in-depth interviews for corrections or deletions. The Principal and the College Council were also presented with the School Development Review in May 2001. They confirmed their belief that the interpretations and conclusions reached were valid and expressed their appreciation for the review (Diary, p. 99).

2. Transferability is the extent to which sufficient information has been presented to allow for application to other participants in similar or different contexts.

It has been argued at the start of Section 3.4 that since this research was an example of the naturalistic paradigm it never attempted transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 315) advocate that it is the
responsibility of the user of the findings to judge whether the conclusions are relevant to their own situations.

3. Dependability and Confirmability are achieved by the use of a summative evaluation or audit trail of the data that in this study comprised:
   
a. The keeping of clear records of the research: audio recordings of in-depth interviews and focus groups, transcripts, surveys and documentary evidence.

b. Data reduction and analysis. The first stage was the margin notes on the transcripts along with their coding. The second stage was their transfer to the analysis matrix with the page number reference.

c. Data reconstruction and synthesis products. The School Development Review and the Past Student Survey were the first stage and have been presented in Chapter 4. The findings from the qualitative research are presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents the synthesis of both previous chapters in the light of the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

The degree of dependability in the study is the extent to which the study could be repeated in a similar context. This is achieved by judging the appropriateness of the research objectives, the methodologies used, researcher bias, premature judgement, Pygmalion effect, Hawthorn effect, level of sophistication of the study, stratified sampling and assessing the overall study design. The judgement of the researcher is that sufficient detail has been presented to facilitate a repeat study in a similar context.

The degree of confirmability in the study is the extent to which the results have been grounded in the data. This judgement is achieved by sampling the findings and tracing back to the raw data, assessing the appropriateness of the analytical tools used, the justification for the coding, the possibility of alternate explanations, the extent of inquirer bias and appropriate level of negative examples. In this regard, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 327) advocated the employment of a reflective diary which has been reviewed in Sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.3 G.
It is the researcher’s contention that this study has described reality within the context of this case study with a high degree of trustworthiness and that it has established a valid understanding of the research objectives that have shaped the research design.

### 3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

The paramount concern of ethicists is to ensure that the conduct of research does not negatively impact the participating individuals or organisations. Whilst this study investigated a successful Christian School, it did uncover a range of concerns held by various stakeholders in the community which, taken out of context or in the wrong hands, could be harmful to those concerned.

To counter or minimise the dangers, various measures were set in place for this study:

1. **Voluntary participation (Burns, 1997: 18).** The organisation, represented by the Principal, and each participant within it all signed consent forms that fully informed them of the nature of the research and assured them that they could withdraw at any point in the process. The individuals were free to accept or decline participation, but the participation in the in-depth interviews was slightly less flexible. All interviewees were employees, with the exception of the Council Chairman and the council member. They were free to decline participation but no doubt some felt obliged to participate as the Principal had agreed to the school becoming the subject of the case study (Burns, 1997: 19). The participants in the focus groups did not sign participation papers, as individuals have not been identified in the study. Nevertheless, no one was obliged to participate against his or her will. No inducements were offered or given to participants.

2. **Anonymity (Burns, 1997: 20-21).** All participation in the surveys for the School Development Review was conducted anonymously. Prior to the surveys being run on the students, the school newsletter (28 July 2000) was used to inform the parent body that the surveys were being conducted and to give the parents the opportunity to withdraw their child from participation if
they felt concerned (Diary, p. 3). While this study has identified the case study as being a Christian school in Victoria, Australia, it has disguised its identity with the use of a pseudonym, Sandford Christian College. Individual participants have only been identified by their position or title. While every effort has been made to disguise identities, it has to be conceded that the Christian schooling sector in Australia is relatively small, and therefore these disguises may prove to be thinly veiled. Here the main mitigation against adverse effects of the research rests in the fact that the findings are by and large extremely positive.

3. **Risks associated with human interaction (May, 1989: 180-181).** As the in-depth interviews and focus groups both relied on human interaction, there was the potential for embarrassment, anger, violation of privacy, misunderstandings and conflict of opinions and values. During the conduct of this study, there were no incidents that could be equated with this list; however, the opportunity afforded individuals to speak out, undercover of anonymity, did allow some issues to emerge that the researcher would have expected to be taboo subjects in a more public forum. Examples of these subjects include discussion of the class-size debate, the use of corporal punishment and attitudes to the PACE system (Personalised Accelerated Christian Education). All these issues and more were brought out in the School Development Review, which was made available to the College Council. The Principal, while obviously concerned by some of these perceptions was content to have them discussed at the appropriate level in the community (Diary, p. 98). Therefore, the mitigation for these risks was the regular debriefing with the Principal. There has been total transparency regarding the findings of the research during the progress of study. Therefore, there will be few hidden surprises for the participants on completion.

4. **Research obligations (Burns, 1997: 21).** The researcher entered into a series of implicit contracts with his subjects. This behoved him to be present at meetings at the right time, to end meetings on time and to provide feedback at various points during the research as agreed at the outset with the
gatekeeper(s). The researcher fulfilled all requirements of the study including the release of the School Development Review on 1 May 2001 and the Past Students Survey Report on 21 June 2001.

5. **Disengaging from the Research Field (Burns, 1997: 336).** The participants’ close involvement in the research was expected to have a lasting impact, especially in cases where they revealed their perspective on incidents known only to them. Burns (1997) considered the various merits of the researcher’s gradual withdrawal from the case study as opposed to a clean break. In the former case, opportunities may be permitted the researcher to check with the participants on details discussed during the writing up stages, which are denied in the latter. In this study, the researcher was still present in the community for a year subsequent to the close of the data-gathering phase, but no formal debriefings were arranged. The participants were given the opportunity to edit their transcripts, which provided them the opportunity to disengage with their own contributions.

It is the intention of the researcher to be open with the findings of this research (Burns, 1997: 21-22). It is hoped that the findings will be published in relevant contexts for the mutual benefit of others in the field of educational practice.

### 3.5 Conclusions

A mixed methods approach comprising quantitative and qualitative methods, grounded theory, ethnography and hermeneutic phenomenology have been employed in this single case study of a successful Christian School in Australia. The second part of the chapter explained the application of the research methods used. The major components of this section were the School Development Review, the Past Student Survey and the analysis of the qualitative data. The central objective of this chapter was to demonstrate how the research design fulfilled the requirements of the three research objectives outlines in Chapter 1. The key element in these objectives was the search for the *central meaning or essence* (Creswell 1998: 236) of Sandford Christian College.
Chapter 4 Sandford Christian College Development Review and Past Student Survey

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the Sandford Christian College Development Review that was conducted during semester 2, 2000 and the Past Student Survey carried out between December 2000 and February 2001. The use of italics within the text in this chapter indicates a defined category or a quotation from a question from one of the survey instruments.

4.2 Sandford Christian College Development Review

The College Development Review was based upon the Victorian Schools Accountability Framework (Office of Schools Review, 1995). It comprised a survey of all staff based on the Office of Review Full Staff Survey (Hart, 2000: 27-28; Office of Review, 1998b: 7-13); an analysis of documentary data on student achievement, retention and absence; student surveys from Years 5 - Year 12 (Office of Schools, 2000a) and finally a parent survey that sought opinions on a range of subjects including the quality of teaching, academic rigour and customer responsiveness (Accountability and Development Division, 2000: 43-44).

4.2.1 Full Diagnostic Staff Opinion Survey

All Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, were invited to complete a thirty-minute questionnaire devised and tested by the Office of Review called the Full Diagnostic Staff Survey. All staff were invited to take part in the study in line with the Office of Review’s recommendation that the entire staff be asked to participate, because from their experience, all staff have requested this (Hart, 2000: 7-13; Office of Review, 1998b: 7-13; State of Victoria, DEET, 2002: 54-55). Fifty out of the sixty-three staff members, representing a 79 per cent return, completed the 72-question survey (Diary,
It was designed to ascertain their opinions on fourteen variables. The survey allowed for a fifteenth variable, those specific school questions on issues, which obviously could not be compared with statewide benchmarks. These questions are considered at the end of the section on the analysis of the question scores.

The data from Sandford Christian College was compared with published benchmarks from Victorian state schools of comparable type, namely the Prep-12 Colleges. The Office of Review had designed the standards and accountability framework for internal comparisons between variables and for external comparison with state benchmarks. The benchmark publications advised that professional judgement was required in the interpretation of school data on account of the context of each school being unique (State of Victoria, DEET, 2002: 54). Arguably the most useful exercise, namely the comparison with Sandford Christian College’s past performance was obviously not possible as the current study was merely a snapshot taken at one point in time in the school’s history (Hart, 2000: 15).

**Analysis of Full Diagnostic Staff Opinion Survey**

**Table 4.1 Comparison of College Scores with 1997-2000 State Benchmarks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Mean 1997</th>
<th>State Mean 1998</th>
<th>State Mean 1999</th>
<th>State Mean 2000</th>
<th>College Staff Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Morale</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Leadership</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Congruence</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Interaction</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Blanks for 1997, 1998 and 1999 for Professional Growth as not surveyed at the time)

It was evident that the categories, *school morale, supportive leadership* and *professional interaction* were all improving steadily from 1997-2000 and in each case the College score demonstrated a further positive increment. However, *goal congruence* was almost static over this period in the state schools, yet the College score was markedly higher.

Table 4.2 Comparison of College Scores with 2000 State Range Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Min 2000</th>
<th>State 25th per cent 2000</th>
<th>State Mean 2000</th>
<th>State 75th per cent 2000</th>
<th>State Max 2000</th>
<th>College Staff Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Morale</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Leadership</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Congruence</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Interaction</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Growth</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4.3 Comparison of Scale Scores and State Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Mean</th>
<th>2000 College Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Morale</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Leadership</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Congruence</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Interaction</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Growth</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Decision-Making</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Clarity</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Co-ordination</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Orientation</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Discipline Policy</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Misbehaviour</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive Work Demands</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Distress</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: ¹These three negative categories of the survey are preferable with lower scores.)

(Source: Current state mean data from Hart’s Full Staff Diagnostic Opinion Survey, made available to the researcher by Department of Education and Training, Treasury Place, Melbourne, 20th September 2000.)
In all but three categories the College scored higher than the state benchmarks. The only exceptions to the rule were, *participative decision-making* [3.52], *curriculum coordination* [3.56] and *student orientation* [3.95].

**Analysis of Scale Scores against State Benchmarks**

Each category of the survey comprised approximately four questions that each generated a response from 1 (strongly disagree) through to 5 (strongly agree). Therefore the average score for any item was 3.00, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This next section analyses the aggregated scores for each category. For example, the questions that pertained to the category *school morale* generated responses with an average score of 4.18, indicating significant positive agreement with the questions and thus a high school morale. For the same category, the average score generated by the state schools surveyed was 3.45, indicating only a slight positive agreement, and therefore demonstrating a more moderate school morale.
Figure 4.1 Comparisons of Scale Scores with State Benchmarks

(Note: These are negative categories of the survey where lower scores are preferable.)

(Source: Table 4.3)
School morale and its opposite, the lack of school distress, were markedly better than state benchmarks. The workplace environment, characterised by the presence of strong supportive leadership, goal congruence, feedback and the lack of excessive work demands, presumably, positively impacted these first two categories. Similarly, the staff considered that student management was working well indicated by their perception of an effective discipline policy and the lack of student misbehaviour.

There were three scores, participative decision-making, curriculum co-ordination and student orientation that were slightly below the state benchmarks, although they all received positive aggregate scores. It was the researchers’ contention that these findings might have reflected respectively, the dominance of the principal, the comparative young age of the school and its rapid growth in recent years.

Finally, with respect to the 25th and 75th percentiles benchmark data (Table 4.2), greater definition could have been made, however, on the 2000 data, benchmarks were only available for school morale, supportive leadership, goal congruence, professional interaction and professional growth. These values helped to define the range of the data as fifty per cent of the schools in the state survey fell between the 25th and 75th percentile. In other words, when the College score was above the 75th percentile, that indicated a positive comparison could be made with the highest 25 per cent of Prep-Year 12 Colleges in the state sector in Victoria. Comparison of the College data with these percentiles indicated that school morale, goal congruence and professional interaction were all in the top 25 per cent band.

**Analysis of Question Scores**

**Morale [Scale Score 4.18]**

The questions about staff taking pride in the school, team spirit and high morale all scored at a higher than average level [4.33, 4.27 and 4.23 respectively], while the lowest scoring question in this bracket was the question about the energy in the school [3.98].
Supportive Leadership [Scale Score 4.08]
On the whole, staff were able to approach the College’s leadership, acknowledged reliability of the leadership and felt support from the leadership, all scoring higher than the scale score [4.33, 4.21 and 4.13 respectively]. The lowest scoring question, at 2.31, suggested that the College’s leadership did not know the problems faced by the staff. However, 63 per cent of staff respondents disagreed with this statement, indicating that the majority believed that the leadership did understand the staff’s problems. In this category, there was a slight indication that communication could be improved, as this question indicated the widest spread of responses and the lowest overall score of 4.02. Sixty eight per cent felt communication was good while 29 per cent did not know or disagreed.

Goal Congruence [Scale Score 4.26]
The highest scoring questions indicated very strong conformity of responses. The statement regarding the staff’s commitment to the College’s goals and values drew 94 per cent agreement and the statement regarding the College’s clearly stated objectives and goals drew 87 per cent agreement scoring 4.38 and 4.42 respectively. The statement that drew the widest range of responses was the one regarding agreement about the teaching philosophy of the College. In this case 18 per cent disagreed or did not know, giving an overall score for this question of 4.02.

Professional Interaction [Scale Score 4.03]
The questions relating to acceptance by other staff [4.52]; support from colleagues [4.35]; reliance on support when needed [4.35] and good communication between staff [4.06] all rated higher than the scale score. However, questions that rated lower than the scale score suggested some lack of opportunity for co-operative work [3.75], room for better communication between groups [3.67] and the desire for more opportunities for sharing teaching methods and strategies [3.44].

Professional Growth [Scale Score 3.56]
The staff believed that there were limited opportunities and there was limited encouragement to pursue professional development, as seen in the questions which rated only 0.25 higher than the moderately scoring scale score. The corollary of this
was that staff, on balance, felt that little active interest was shown in their career development, with a negative rating of 2.98.

**Participative Decision-Making** [Scale Score 3.52]
The question that drew the highest score in this category affirmed that there were forums in the College for staff to express their views and opinions, drew 64 per cent agreement and a score of 3.85. All questions in this category drew a noticeable range of opinions. For example, in the question relating to staff happiness with the process, 10 per cent were unhappy, 29 per cent did not know and 57 per cent were happy. Another question relating to the opportunities for participation in the decision-making process, 12 per cent believed that there was a lack of opportunity, 31 per cent did not know and 56 per cent of the respondents claimed that they had opportunities.

**Role Clarity** [Scale Score 4.07]
All the questions drew clearly positive responses. Clear expectations 79 per cent agreed; work objectives were well defined 77 per cent agreed; knowing the level of authority in the College 73 per cent agreed and clarity about professional responsibilities 89 per cent agreed. The highest scoring question that probed whether the staff were clear about their professional responsibilities, scored 4.44.

**Feedback** [Scale Score 3.40]
The statements on encouragement, opportunities for feedback, and recognition for good work all scored at a higher level than the state benchmarks [3.69, 3.56 and 3.75 respectively]. Nevertheless, three questions drew significant negative responses. Thirty seven per cent were not happy with the regularity of feedback, 27 per cent were not happy with the structure and process of feedback and 14 per cent were not happy with the quality of the feedback.

**Curriculum Coordination** [Scale Score 3.95]
The statement concerning structures and processes that enabled curriculum planning to proceed drew the clearest positive response at 79 per cent agreement, generating a score of 4.14, yet two questions drew uncertainty or a negative response. Twenty one per cent considered that there was insufficient contact between different parts of the
College, 38 per cent had no considered opinion on the subject and 12 per cent considered that curriculum coordination was ineffective.

**Student Orientation [Scale Core 3.95]**
All four questions drew positive responses from the majority of staff. *Students being treated as responsible people* 71 per cent agreement; *the concept of students as individuals* 64 per cent agreement; *students encouraged to experience success* 90 per cent agreement and finally the question on *access to advice and counselling* 71 per cent agreement. Despite this, the overall score [3.95] was marginally below the state benchmarks of 4.07. This could be the result of significant numbers of staff who did not know the answer to these statements. For example, 21 per cent of staff for the statement about *students being treated as responsible people* and 27 per cent of staff for the statement about *the concept of student individuality*. The statement that drew the most positive response was the one concerning students being encouraged to experience success, with a score of 4.42.

**Effective Discipline Policy [Scale Score 4.13]**
Eighty five per cent of staff believed that *the rules and sanctions are well understood by the staff and the students*, 88 per cent agreed that rules were *enforced in a consistent fashion* and 92 per cent agreed that there was an *agreed philosophy on discipline*.

**Student Misbehaviour [Scale Score 1.76] – a negative dimension**
In this category with the lowest, best, score in the survey, 92 per cent of staff believed that *students were generally well behaved in the College* and 88 per cent of staff believed that *staff mutual support was very positive*. The question about whether *students who do not want to learn create problems* generated the widest spread of opinions, with 25 per cent not having a view. This question generated the score closest to neutral at 2.41.

**Excessive Work Demands [Scale Score 2.99] – a negative dimension**
Two statements drew higher scores than the state benchmarks, that is worse, responses: *staff are overloaded with work* at 3.02 and *there is constant pressure for staff to keep working* at 3.30. All four questions drew significant *don’t know* responses. *Too much
expected of staff, 40 per cent chose did not know in response to this question; 42 per cent of staff chose did not know if they were overloaded with work; 46 per cent did not know if there was no time to relax and 33 per cent did not know whether there was constant pressure for staff to keep working.

School Distress [Scale Score 2.25] – a negative dimension
Despite this category being well below, that is better than, the state benchmark; there were indications of school distress. Forty three per cent of staff believed that staff experienced a lot of stress and 15 per cent believed that staff felt anxious about their work. Finally, a third of staff had no opinion about staff stress and staff anxiety.

School Questions [Scale Score 4.04]
The highest scoring question in this category, achieving a 91 per cent agreement, stated that the College community had a clear understanding of the Christian philosophy on which it had been built. Eighty one percent believed that, their work in the College was their Christian ministry and that their curriculum was Bible based. A smaller proportion, 73 per cent, acknowledged that the teaching philosophy of the College was based on the Christian worldview. The final question revealed that 27 per cent had not used learning technologies more in 2000 than in previous years and 31 per cent did not know if this was true for them or not.

Summary of Staff Opinion Survey
The overall impression from the Full Diagnostic Staff Opinion Survey was that the staff are very happy with their working environment within the College. From the four categories for which statewide benchmarks were available for several years, the College scored significantly higher than the 75th percentile in three of those categories school morale, goal congruence and professional interaction. In addition to this outstanding achievement, the college was ahead of the statewide benchmarks in 11 out of the 14 categories. Against this backdrop of remarkable results, it is interesting to consider some of the more notable positive and negative responses to the individual questions:
The most significant positive responses:

- 96 per cent felt accepted by other staff in the College and 85 per cent registered that they received support from colleagues.

- 94 per cent confirmed their commitment to the College goals and values and 88 per cent stated that their personal goals agreed with those of the College. 87 per cent considered that the College had clearly stated goals and objectives.

- 92 per cent considered that the students were generally well behaved. The same proportion of staff recognised that the College had an agreed philosophy on discipline and 88 per cent believed that the rules and sanctions were enforced in a consistent fashion. 89 per cent agreed that the staff supported one another when dealing with student misbehaviour.

- 92 per cent stated that they took pride in their College.

- 91 per cent believed the College community understood the Christian vision for the school.

- 89 per cent of respondents said that they were clear about their professional responsibilities.

- 85 per cent were able to approach the College management to discuss any concerns and grievances, while 84 per cent considered that the management could be relied upon when things were difficult.

The most significant negative responses:

- 43 per cent claimed to experience a lot of stress in the College while the same proportion of respondents recognised that there was constant pressure to keep
working. 33 per cent said they were overloaded with work in the College and a further 23 per cent considered that there was no time for staff to relax. On a similar theme, 23 per cent believed that too much was expected of staff in the College.

- 37 per cent felt that they were not given regular feedback on their performance and 27 per cent considered that there was not an adequate structure to provide feedback.

- 27 per cent were disappointed at not being asked to participate in decisions concerning administrative polices and procedures.

- 23 per cent felt that the College did not take an active interest in their career development and professional growth and 19 per cent believed that the professional development offerings did not take into account their individual needs and interests.

- 21 per cent of respondents felt that there was insufficient contact between different sections of the College on curriculum planning.
4.2.2 Documentary Analysis

Student Achievement

The results for the year 2000 Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) have been examined followed by an analysis of some of the results of the University of New South Wales Educational Testing Centre 1991-2000.

Like School Comparison of VCE 2000 Results

The first cohort of students in the history of the College sat for their VCE in the year 2000. Consequently, these results offered an ideal opportunity to take stock of the students’ performance and to consider the quality of the College’s teaching. Although it was tempting to place a great deal of significance on these results, it was important to consider a number of caveats that affected these results:

- It is statistically inappropriate to place too much significance on only one year’s sample.
- The number in the cohort, 26\(^1\), was small and as such could more easily be influenced by extremes.
- It was the first year of VCE teaching in the College. Many of the staff were recent appointees and none of them had worked as a team in this setting before.

Note: \(^1\) The Internet incorrectly published the number for the College’s cohort of year 12 students as ‘26’, the actual number was ‘28’.

In order to analyse initial indications of the College’s standing as a VCE provider, it was sensible to compare the student’s performance with like schools. This practice was frequently conducted in the state sector to help individual schools identify their strengths and weaknesses. The most appropriate like school comparison was clearly with other Christian schools in Victoria preparing students for VCE in 2000. This group of 16 schools contains enormous variations that arguably made any comparison very problematic. Some of these schools had been offering year 12 studies for more
than ten years, some were country schools, some urban and some had large cohorts of VCE students, such as Christian School F with 59 students and some very small cohorts, such as Christian School P with only six students. The tables that follow also include four well known traditional private schools and one well known academically oriented state school to help provide some context for the data from the like schools group.

The data presented in Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 was accessed from the Internet (www.theage.com.au/education/2000/12/13/FFXLRQQ70GC.html), though this link is no longer active. Considerable care was taken in analysing the results of Sandford’s first VCE results. It was too simplistic to infer from these results that the College’s overall performance was successful, without first considering the students’ prior learning and without first understanding the skills and attitudes they brought to the school from their home backgrounds (Boyle, 1998).
Table 4.4 Like School Comparison for VCE 2000 - Ranked by Study Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>% Study Scores of 40 or over</th>
<th>Range for Improvement Index for VCE relative to GAT</th>
<th>Range for Tertiary Preparation Index for VCE relative to GAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private College A</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>108, 112</td>
<td>111, 115</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Private College B</td>
<td>251</td>
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<td>107, 111</td>
<td>111, 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Private College C</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>108, 113</td>
<td>111, 117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>High Performing State School</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>107, 112</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Private College D</td>
<td>195</td>
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<td>107, 110</td>
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<td>108, 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>47</td>
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</tr>
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<td>105, 105</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>94, 102, 90</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Christian School M</td>
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<td>95, 95</td>
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<td>92, 106, 88</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: www.theage.com.au/education/2000/12/13/FFXLRQQ70GC.html, though this link is not active)
Table 4.4 has ranked the schools according to the Percentage Study Scores of 40 or over. This indicated the percentage of the students entering VCE in a particular school that achieved a study score of 40 or greater out of a total maximum of 50. This was a relatively simplistic measure that only included the performance of the school’s top students (Boyle, 1998). Using this measure, 14 per cent of the College cohort achieved scores of greater than 40. This was a very good result, placing the College second to Christian School A in a comparison of all the Christian schools in Victoria. It also indicated that its result in this category was closely comparable to Private College D and a High Performing State School. In a comparison with all the schools that entered candidates for VCE in 2000 (486), Sandford Christian College ranked 82nd, placing it in the top 18 per cent of the state. It is important to remember that this statistic was based on a small sample on only one year, but nonetheless it certainly indicated that the College had prepared their best students for their future careers very well.

Table 4.5 ranked the data according to the low end of the range for Improvement Index (IIdx). This index made a comparison between the score achieved by the school in the VCE relative to the General Achievement Test (GAT). This index was an indicator of the performance of the school in preparing all the students for VCE. It looked at the improvement made by the school in the actual VCE subjects against the general abilities of the students as indicated by the students’ GAT scores. There are number of shortcomings with this measure. For example, the GAT was taken in the middle of the final year of secondary schooling, an aptitude test pitched at year 10 standard (Boyle, 1998). It only measured potential improvement over less than half of the VCE course. Some have used that point to argue for bringing the GAT forward to the end of year 10.

The IIdx placed the College at sixth place in the like school comparison. It is important to understand how the IIdx works. The range for the College ran from 98 to 107, a range of 9, mostly above 100. There was a 95 per cent probability that the school score lay within that range. If the school score was actually greater than 100, the school had added value to the learning of its students and in Sandford’s case this seemed quite likely.
Note that the spread of the range was a function of the number in the cohort. Generally, the smaller the number, the wider the range, e.g. Christian School P, with six students had a range of 14 IIIdx and Private College A with 301 students had a range of 4 IIIdx. Even though the schools were ranked according to the low end of the IIIdx range, it was not possible to say with total confidence that the students in the Sandford Christian College were actually any better than those schools immediately lower in rank. All that could be said with certainty was that the College students’ performance was better than schools with a IIIdx high point lower than 98, namely, Christian School O, with their range from 88 to 96. Similarly, the other schools immediately above the College in rank could not claim any superiority until Private College C, with their low point on the range being above the College’s high point.

What could be claimed with a reasonable degree of confidence was that the College’s performance was very good, especially in light of it being their first attempt at VCE. The results demonstrated that the students’ performance placed them in a similar position with like schools and their range of IIIdx was not dissimilar to that of Christian School A and Christian School G, both of which had been entering VCE students for many years.
### Table 4.5 Like School Comparison for VCE 2000 - ranked by Improvement Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>School</th>
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<td>High Performing State School</td>
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(Source: www.theage.com.au/education/2000/12/13/FFXLRRQ70GC.html, though this link is not active)
Table 4.6 Like School Comparison VCE 2000 - by Tertiary Preparation Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>% Study Scores of 40 or over</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Private College D</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High Performing State School</td>
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<tr>
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<td>99</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: www.theage.com.au/education/2000/12/13/FFXLRQQ70GC.html, though this link is not active)
The Tertiary Preparation Index (TPI) presented in Table 4.6 placed the Sandford Christian College fifth in the rank of like schools. This measure was calculated in a similar way to the IIdx. The difference was that the TPI made use of the aggregate score that the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) used for their ENTER score (tertiary entrance rank measure); whereas the IIdx made use of an aggregate score based on the Board of Studies’ study scores. Therefore, the main difference was that the TPI was calculated on the standardised scores while the IIdx used the raw score from the Board of Studies. Therefore, arguably, the TPI was more useful for schools with a higher proportion of their year 12 students aspiring for the tertiary sector. Sixty one per cent of Sandford’s year 12 students applied for university courses and 94 per cent of them were accepted on the basis of their 2000 results.

**University of New South Wales – Educational Testing Centre Results 1991-2000**

Unlike state schools, the College had not been obliged to conduct any systematic monitoring of student outcomes. However, the most comprehensive testing with aggregated results conducted over many years had been the University of NSW Tests in Science, Maths and English. These results were used to gauge student achievement, not only in 2000, but also back into the preceding decade. The significance of these results was only seen in the light of other corroborating data. The following are examples of caveats that needed to be considered when interpreting the results:

- These tests only measured, Science, Maths and English, there were five other Key Learning Areas (KLA) not tested.
- In order to attract a wide uptake, these commercial tests only tested a very narrow section of the curriculum, maximising their appeal to as wide a number of schools as possible.
- The nature of these tests tended to favour a narrow range of learning styles. More comprehensive results would have been generated if a wider variety of assessment strategies had been employed.
• The Science tests in particular tended to be very curriculum focussed as opposed to testing general Science ability. Therefore these results would be very good, if the set curriculum had been followed and poor if the College had used alternative curricula.

• The use of these tests had been very ad hoc throughout the previous nine years, with only selected year levels entering the tests, dependent on the judgement of staff and the availability of resources.

• The storage of the data had been rather haphazard. Science was the best recorded with date from seven years being presented. Maths and English only had one year’s data preserved each, 2000 and 1999 respectively.
Table 4.7 University of New South Wales - Educational Testing Centre Results 1991 - 2000

| Test | Y3 Coll | Y3 State | Diff | Y4 Coll | Y4 State | Diff | Y5 Coll | Y5 State | Diff | Y6 Coll | Y6 State | Diff | Y7 Coll | Y7 State | Diff | Y8 Coll | Y8 State | Diff | Y9 Coll | Y9 State | Diff | Y10 Coll | Y10 State | Diff | Av Diff | Av Diff |
|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|------|
| Sci '00 | 26.37 | 24.45 | 1.92 | 25.75 | 24.10 | 1.65 | 23.93 | 23.33 | 0.60 | 27.78 | 27.74 | 0.01 | 25.60 | 23.65 | 1.95 | 27.45 | 27.16 | 0.29 | 25.63 | 26.43 | -0.80 | 19.35 | 26.19 | -6.84 | -1.08 |
| Math '00 | 99 | 99 |
| Engl '99 | 28.05 | 25.40 | 2.65 | 32.71 | 31.42 | 1.29 | 40.63 | 39.13 | 1.50 | 39.10 | 39.42 | -0.32 | 50.85 | 46.34 | 4.51 | 51.32 | 49.25 | 2.07 | 40.73 | 42.3 | -1.57 | 42.12 | 45.23 | -3.11 | 0.87 |
| Sci '98 | 98 | 98 |
| 96 | 96 |
| Sci '95 | 15.04 | 14.93 | 0.11 | 15.08 | 15.67 | -0.59 | 23.35 | 21.65 | 1.70 | 22.91 | 22.66 | 0.25 | 18.32 | 20.01 | -1.69 | 16.69 | 16.30 | 0.39 | 0.02 |
| 95 | 95 |
| Sci '94 | 14.48 | 14.41 | 0.07 | 17.63 | 16.27 | 1.36 | 18.15 | 18.66 | -0.51 | 18.74 | 19.66 | -0.92 | 14.41 | 17.60 | -3.19 | 15.87 | 18.76 | -2.89 | -1.01 |
| 94 | 94 |
| Sci '93 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 93 | 93 |
| Sci '92 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 92 | 92 |
| Sci '91 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 91 | 91 |

(Notes: Tests administered by New South Wales but applied across the whole of Australia. All bold figures indicate results greater than Victorian state mean scores)
(Source: All the available results archived by the College from the University of New South Wales – Educational Testing Centre)
Table 4.7 compared the College data with the State of Victoria aggregated data. College scores higher than the state average were identified in **bold** type in the shaded columns. The extreme right hand column averaged the differences from the state scores, across all the grades entered in that subject in that year. The following are the key findings from the data:

- If the Science 2000 test results were discounted as anomalous, the average difference from the state scores would tend to improve throughout the last nine years. Considering that the majority of the data were for Science, this suggests that the teaching of Science may have improved during this time.

- If the year 12 students of 2000 were traced back through the data (Science Y10 1998, Science Y9 1997 etc), with the exception of their year 10 performance, all their scores were above statewide benchmarks. This could suggest that they were a particularly **good year**, with implications for the interpretation of their VCE results.

- In the last nine years only 16 year grade level tests had been conducted in the primary department (Y3-6) as against 32 tests in the secondary school (Y7-10). Eighteen per cent of the primary tests were below statewide benchmarks as opposed to 60 per cent of the secondary scores. Perhaps this suggested a weakness in Science in the secondary department, but the limited number and range of KLA tests made such conclusions little more than speculation.

**Curriculum - Time Allocation for Key Learning Areas (KLA) Prep – Year 8**

The data presented in this section were been taken from the Year Level Curriculum Documents for Prep through year 6. The data for the year 7 and 8 students has been taken from the secondary timetable. There were two reasons why this analysis has not included Years 9 - 12 data, namely the state benchmarks only go up to year 8 and the impact of the option blocks in the middle and upper secondary would make comparison of KLAs very difficult.
Some of the wide fluctuations in the primary grades, with particular reference to Science and Technology, could be explained by the way that these two subjects were taught by themes as opposed to discrete KLA blocks. This can be illustrated by theoretically aggregating the two KLA time allocations in question and comparing them with the similarly combined state means. There would be far less deviation from the mean scores if this approach were taken.
### Table 4.8 Percentage Time Allocation for KLAs Prep - Year 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eng</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>Sci</th>
<th>Tech</th>
<th>SOSE</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>H&amp;PE</th>
<th>LOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P-Y2</td>
<td>75th %</td>
<td>41.36</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>40.23</td>
<td>19.10</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th %</td>
<td>38.00</td>
<td>17.20</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>37.93</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3-4</td>
<td>75th %</td>
<td>39.99</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>36.20</td>
<td>20.21</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>9.62</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th %</td>
<td>33.37</td>
<td>19.01</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y5-6</td>
<td>75th %</td>
<td>38.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>9.62</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th %</td>
<td>31.73</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y7</td>
<td>75th %</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>16.64</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>16.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th %</td>
<td>14.99</td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y8</td>
<td>75th %</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>16.72</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>13.98</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>16.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>16.43</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>8.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th %</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>13.29</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.39</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>40.23</td>
<td>19.10</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Y2</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>37.93</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td>8.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>36.20</td>
<td>20.21</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>9.62</td>
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<td>4.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y5-6</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>9.89</td>
<td>11.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y8</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>16.43</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-6</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>36.69</td>
<td>19.88</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>9.37</td>
<td>10.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>35.32</td>
<td>19.81</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>12.65</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y7-8</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>16.43</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.89</td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>13.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 Percentage Time Allocation for KLAs Prep - Year 8

(Note: Series 1 is the State Mean, Series 2 the College Data
Source: Table 4.8)
In summary, the time allocation for KLAs by both the primary and secondary schools were closely in line with 2000 state benchmarks for like schools, the Prep to Year 12 Colleges. The primary school was closer to the state benchmarks than the secondary, though each school tended to have a number of interesting positive and negative anomalies.

- In the primary school, Science and Technology seemed to balance each other out overall, with the College appearing to offer more Science than the state but less Technology.

- The primary school offered much more Creative Arts (12.65) than the state mean (9.37), while they were below the state benchmarks in Health and Physical Education (H&PE) (College 7.75, state 10.29) and Languages Other Than English (LOTE) (College 2.97, state 4.37).

- The secondary school similarly balanced out Science and Technology with the College offering more Science than the state but less Technology.

- The secondary school was notably light in their allocation of time for English (College 14.71, state 16.43), H&PE (College 8.82, state 13.75) and LOTE (College 5.88, state 8.11).

- The secondary school had allocated high proportions of time to Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) (College 14.71, state 12.58) and the Creative Arts (College 14.71, state 10.57).
Student Retention and Student Absence

Student Retention

The term *student retention* is a measure from the College Development Review process referring to the school’s concern to retain enrolments in order to maintain funding and also as a measure of school success. A healthy retention rate at key points in the school such as year 6 and year 10 has been used to indicate that the parents are generally happy with the education afforded to their children. As this College has been undergoing consistent net growth for many years now, it was hard, and relatively academic, to discuss the student retention rates. However, Table 4.9 illustrates the growth in student enrolments during the four years prior to the study in 2000.
Table 4.9 Enrolments 1996 - 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>Total Prim</th>
<th>Total Sec</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: College Budget Documentation provided by the Business Manager dated 24/01/01)

In summary, the total student population over the quadrennium saw an eight per cent increase in 1997, 13 per cent increase in 1998, 12 per cent increase in 1999 and 18 per cent increase in 2000. Each year’s growth largely reflected the addition of one or more classes, as opposed to the gradual unplanned growth that filled up the few spaces in existing grades.

The College has had nearly full enrolments at all levels for the previous five years, indicating that planning has been based on realistic projections. These nearly full enrolments demonstrated the public’s confidence more than the actual retention rates at year 6, which had been at or near 100 per cent throughout the quadrennium.

The retention rate for year 10 was not relevant until 1999 when the College started their first year 11 class. In that year their retention rate was 111 percent including some new students who joined the school for the first time. The numbers in the two Prep classes were largely unchanged for three years until the third class was added, permitting growth to 72 in 2000.
Student Absences

The data presented in this section have been compared with the average number of days lost due to absence compared with the total number of days available in the school year. These statistics, generated from the class rolls, have then been compared with the state benchmarks for 2000. The total number of days absent per class was tallied for term 1 and 2, 2000. This figure was doubled to generate the annual absentee rate per student based on the number of students in each class.

The average absentee rate in Prep of 14.95 days per student was markedly above the mean state benchmark 12.54 days. This statistic was out of character with the rest of the College data, which tended to be significantly lower than the state benchmark data. This anomaly in Prep might suggest, but without any evidence, that the parents of the very young in the College may have been too protective of their children and kept them at home for minor problems.

The trends depicted in Figure 4.3 indicate that in like state schools in the lower secondary grades there was a gradual increase in absenteeism reaching a maximum in year 9. This College shows a complete opposite of this trend, with decreasing absence down to a minimum in year 9. However, on a much smaller scale, there was a peak in the secondary grades in year 10 that resonated with the state benchmark peak at year 9. The College trend from year 11 to 12 was rising while the state benchmark was markedly falling.
Table 4.10 Mean Student Absence by Year Level 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>State 75th Percentile 2000</th>
<th>State mean 2000</th>
<th>College mean</th>
<th>State 25th Percentile 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>14.95</td>
<td>14.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>14.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>13.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>13.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>11.43</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>13.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>13.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>12.39</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>14.38</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>12.03</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>16.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.78</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>19.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.35</td>
<td>19.68</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>18.66</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>22.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>17.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>14.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: College class rolls. State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training. (2002). Standards and Accountability, Quality Assurance in Victorian Schools Benchmarks 2000, School Management: 50)

Figure 4.3 Mean Student Absences by Year Level 2000

(Source: Table 4.10)
4.2.3 Student Opinion Survey

The student survey was offered to all students in years 5 - 12. The number of surveys completed is presented in the Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11 Number of students completing the student survey by year level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percentage of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>66(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>294</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: \(^1\) It was disappointing that the primary survey was conducted on the day when 20 of the year 6 students were out of class due to their participation in an annual lateral thinking competition. Consequently, the primary data lacked the responses of a number of the most able students.

Source: Data logged at time of administration by researcher)

The Primary students were asked to think of their main class teacher while answering the questions but the secondary students were issued with a unique cover sheet over their questionnaire that indicated a specific Key Learning Area (KLA) for their consideration. These cover sheets were generated randomly, so that all KLAs were covered by the survey. However, as the coversheets were intentionally removed from the surveys on completion, no specific data could be applied to a particular KLA. Consequently, it should be remembered that the analysis of the data from the secondary students reflect the full range of teaching they had received in the College.
Table 4.12 Primary (Y5&6) Variable & Question Means & Percentage Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Rating (per cent)</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Ques. Mean</th>
<th>Var. Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>1. My teacher cares about me.</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>32.14</td>
<td>65.48</td>
<td>97.62</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. My teacher understands my feelings.</td>
<td>9.64</td>
<td>16.87</td>
<td>45.78</td>
<td>27.31</td>
<td>73.49</td>
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<td>5.95</td>
<td>5.95</td>
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<td>28. My teacher understands my point of view.</td>
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<td>2. My teacher gets excited about the work he/she teaches us.</td>
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<td>21.43</td>
<td>55.95</td>
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<td>11. My teacher is enthusiastic about teaching.</td>
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<td>40.96</td>
<td>81.93</td>
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<td>20. My teacher makes the work we do in class interesting.</td>
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<td>16.67</td>
<td>36.90</td>
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<td>29. My teacher puts a lot of energy into teaching our class.</td>
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<td>13.10</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>47.62</td>
<td>85.71</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37. My teacher is inspiring to listen to.</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>17.66</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>71.43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy/Enthusiasm</td>
<td>3. My teacher treats students in my class fairly.</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>19.05</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>48.81</td>
<td>77.38</td>
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<td>12. My teacher keeps control of the class in a firm but pleasant way.</td>
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<td>41.67</td>
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<td>21. My teacher does not hold grudges against students in my class.</td>
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<td>26.19</td>
<td>46.43</td>
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<td>30. My teacher gets upset with my class only when we deserve it.</td>
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<td>47.62</td>
<td>77.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairness/Firmness</td>
<td>4. My teacher helps me with my work.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>54.76</td>
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<td>13. My teacher shows me how to do things when I am having difficulties.</td>
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<td>3.57</td>
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<td>59.52</td>
<td>96.43</td>
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<td>44.05</td>
<td>85.71</td>
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<td>31. My teacher takes time to help me when I have trouble with my work.</td>
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<td>17.86</td>
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<td>39.29</td>
<td>78.57</td>
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<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>5. My teacher expects high standards of work from me.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
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<td>14. My teacher makes me work hard.</td>
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<td>23. My teacher encourages me to improve my standard of work.</td>
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<td>13.10</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>46.43</td>
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<td>32. My teacher gives me challenging work which I am expected to finish.</td>
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<td>38. In class my teacher expects me to try my hardest.</td>
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<td>Quality of Instruction</td>
<td>6. My teacher explains things clearly to me.</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>51.19</td>
<td>92.86</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. I understand what I am taught in class.</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>43.37</td>
<td>49.40</td>
<td>92.77</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24. My teacher is easy to understand.</td>
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<td>16.87</td>
<td>39.76</td>
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<td>81.93</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33. The work I do in class is well organised.</td>
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<td>13.10</td>
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<td>39. My teacher gives us clear instructions.</td>
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<td>85.19</td>
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<td>40. My teacher is well prepared.</td>
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<td>2.38</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>52.38</td>
<td>95.24</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
<td>7. My teacher always corrects my work.</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>27.71</td>
<td>37.35</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. My teacher gives me helpful comments about my work.</td>
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<td>8.33</td>
<td>48.81</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>86.90</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25. My teacher praises me when I do well.</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>37.35</td>
<td>45.78</td>
<td>83.13</td>
<td>3.24</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34. My teacher tells me when I make mistakes.</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>51.19</td>
<td>86.90</td>
<td>3.32</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate rate of Instruction</td>
<td>8. I find that most of the work I do in class is too easy.</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>45.78</td>
<td>22.89</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>33.73</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. I find that most of the work I do in class is too hard.</td>
<td>23.81</td>
<td>57.14</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>19.05</td>
<td>1.96</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. I have no difficulty learning new topics.</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>39.76</td>
<td>22.89</td>
<td>62.65</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35. I am often taught things which I already know.</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>27.38</td>
<td>45.24</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>9. I often run out of time to complete my work in class.</td>
<td>26.51</td>
<td>33.73</td>
<td>25.30</td>
<td>14.46</td>
<td>39.76</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. There is plenty of time to complete my work in class.</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>32.14</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>20.24</td>
<td>58.33</td>
<td>2.69</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. I generally finish my class work well before other students.</td>
<td>22.89</td>
<td>31.33</td>
<td>27.71</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>45.78</td>
<td>2.41</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36. There is too much to learn in the time available.</td>
<td>15.48</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>13.10</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>2.40</td>
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</table>

(Note: The **bold** values represent the modal values)
## Table 4.13 Secondary (Y7-12) Variable & Question Means & Percentage Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating ( per cent)</th>
<th>Ques. Mean</th>
<th>Var. Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>1. My teacher cares about me.</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td><strong>50.30</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. My teacher understands my feelings.</td>
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<td>22.75</td>
<td><strong>42.51</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. My teacher accepts me for who I am.</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>35.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28. My teacher understands my point of view.</td>
<td>9.64</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td><strong>54.22</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. My teacher gets excited about the work he/she teaches us.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>14.97</td>
<td><strong>48.50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. My teacher is enthusiastic about teaching.</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td><strong>43.71</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. My teacher makes the work we do in class interesting.</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>20.96</td>
<td><strong>34.13</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29. My teacher puts a lot of energy into teaching our class.</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>35.93</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37. My teacher is inspiring to listen to.</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>26.51</td>
<td><strong>40.36</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy/ Enthusiasm</td>
<td>3. My teacher treats students in my class fairly.</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>14.37</td>
<td><strong>42.51</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. My teacher keeps control of the class in a firm but pleasant way.</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>19.28</td>
<td><strong>39.16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. My teacher does not hold grudges against students in my class.</td>
<td>8.98</td>
<td>15.57</td>
<td>35.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30. My teacher gets upset with my class only when we deserve it.</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td><strong>48.50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. My teacher helps me with my work.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td><strong>49.10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. My teacher shows me how to do things when I am having difficulties.</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>8.98</td>
<td><strong>51.50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. My teacher cares if I am not doing as well as I should.</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>9.04</td>
<td><strong>45.18</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>31. My teacher takes time to help me when I have trouble with my work.</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>12.65</td>
<td><strong>53.61</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>Helpfulness/ Responsiveness</td>
<td>5. My teacher expects high standards of work from me.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td><strong>40.12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. My teacher makes me work hard.</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>29.34</td>
<td><strong>46.11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. My teacher encourages me to improve my standard of work.</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td><strong>44.31</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32. My teacher gives me challenging work which I am expected to finish.</td>
<td>8.98</td>
<td>30.54</td>
<td><strong>40.12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38. In class my teacher expects me to try my hardest.</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>37.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>6. My teacher explains things clearly to me.</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>20.96</td>
<td><strong>42.51</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. I understand what I am taught in class.</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>11.45</td>
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<td>24. My teacher is easy to understand.</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td><strong>44.91</strong></td>
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<td>33. The work I do in class is well organised.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>13.25</td>
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<td>39. My teacher gives us clear instructions.</td>
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<td>19.28</td>
<td><strong>39.76</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>40. My teacher is well prepared.</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td>40.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Instruction</td>
<td>7. My teacher always corrects my work.</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>26.06</td>
<td><strong>41.21</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>16. My teacher gives me helpful comments about my work.</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>16.77</td>
<td><strong>46.11</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>25. My teacher praises me when I do well.</td>
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<td><strong>47.59</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.79</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td><strong>58.08</strong></td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
<td>8. I find that most of the work I do in class is too easy.</td>
<td>17.96</td>
<td>62.28</td>
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<td>17. I find that most of the work I do in class is too hard.</td>
<td>25.15</td>
<td><strong>58.68</strong></td>
<td>11.98</td>
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<td></td>
<td>26. I have no difficulty learning new topics.</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>24.55</td>
<td><strong>46.71</strong></td>
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<td>35. I am often taught things which I already know.</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td><strong>49.70</strong></td>
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<td>9. I often run out of time to complete my work in class.</td>
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<td><strong>38.92</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. There is plenty of time to complete my work in class.</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td><strong>42.51</strong></td>
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<td><strong>44.58</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>36. There is too much to learn in the time available.</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td><strong>53.89</strong></td>
<td>21.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The **bold** values represent the modal values)
All but two of the nine variables, for both primary and secondary students, had scores above 2.5, this being the mid value on the 1 to 4 scale. The two lowest scoring categories, where the students disagreed with the statements, were the *appropriateness of instruction* (2.46 primary, 2.30 secondary) and *time* (2.45 primary, 2.40 secondary).

The primary survey indicated that 23 of the 36 positively phrased questions drew the maximum modal score of 4, indicating that most strongly agreed; while 15 questions scored 3, indicating moderate agreement. In five categories, *energy/enthusiasm, fairness/firmness, helpfulness/responsiveness, high expectations* and *quality of instruction* it was found the majority of students strongly agreed with most of the questions.

Superficially, the secondary students’ results, while showing very consistent agreement with the statements, were mostly mildly agreeing in contrast with the primary students who tended to strongly agree with the majority of statements. Only five of the 36 positively phrased questions drew a maximum modal score of 4 indicating strong agreement. Twenty-eight questions scored 3. The following were the five questions that drew a maximum modal score of 4:

**Empathy**
- *My teacher accepts me for what I am*

**Energy/Enthusiasm**
- *My teacher puts a lot of energy into teaching my class*

**Fairness/Firmness**
- *My teacher does not hold grudges against students in my class*

**High Expectations**
- *In class my teacher expects me to try my hardest*

**Quality of Instruction**
- *My teacher is well prepared*

Both in the primary and secondary surveys, the following two categories had modal scores of 2, indicating that the majority mildly disagreed with these statements:
**Appropriateness of instruction**

- I find that most of the work I do in class is too easy
- I find that most of the work I do in class is too hard

**Time**

- I often run out of time to complete my work in class
- I generally finish my class work well before other students
- There is too much to learn in the time available

It was interesting to consider why these two categories had scored apparently poorly. The first two questions for consideration, from appropriateness of instruction, were, *I find that most of the work I do in class is too easy* and, *I find that most of the work I do in class is too hard*. In this category, the students’ modal score was a negative result, essentially indicating that the majority of students found the appropriateness of instruction just right, as these two statements, scoring mild disagreement, cancelled each other out. This category scored 2.45 for primary and 2.30 for secondary, both very close to the mid point of 2.50, an indication, considering the oppositional questions, that the teachers had probably done very well on the appropriateness of instruction.

Similarly, when the time category was considered, the modal values were nearly all negative but the numbers of students who responded positively indicated that actually the majority were around the 2.50 mark. Here again, scores in this vicinity indicated that the time factor was being handled very well and that the right balance was being achieved with the scores of 2.45 for primary and 2.40 for secondary.

Overall, considering all nine categories, the results suggested that students were very supportive with respect to their teachers and teaching. Excepting the two categories discussed above, the categories with the highest scores were seen as indicators of the students’ most positive feelings. In the case of the primary students, they highly rated helpfulness/responsiveness (3.37) and quality of instruction (3.35). The secondaries did not rate their schooling quite so highly. Their top three categories were helpfulness/responsiveness (3.19), high expectations (3.09) and quality of instruction...
The secondaries’ slightly lower overall scores may have reflected a variety of factors:

- The unsettledness of adolescence
- The difficulty of comparing the rating for one primary teacher with the full range of secondary teachers
- The apparent weaknesses in some parts of the secondary teaching as indicated in the Parent Survey
- Y5 and 6 are not representative of the whole of primary in the way that the whole of the secondary department had been surveyed

Despite these caveats regarding the potential unrepresentative primary survey and remembering that twenty academically gifted students from year 6 did not participate, the overall results were very encouraging. It was clear that the primary students felt very happy with their life in the College and were particularly appreciative of the helpfulness/responsiveness and quality of instruction of their teachers.

The far more comprehensive coverage of the secondary students’ survey was remarkable for its consistency in its positive affirmation of their College experience. The questions that received the most positive responses were worthy of special note as they encapsulated the students’ experience. Taken together, in the words of the survey statements, the students portrayed an ideal school environment:

They believed that their teachers accepted them for who they were while putting a lot of energy into their teaching, following detailed preparation for their classes. They believed that their teachers did not hold grudges and that they expected the students to work as hard as they could at their studies.
4.2.4 Parent Opinion Survey

The parent survey was delivered to all 364 families in the College. Responses from 183 families were received by the due date, representing a 50.27 per cent return rate.

The parent survey was conducted using a scale from 2 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree); there was an option for parents to indicate a don’t know response (scored as 1). Details of the responses to all questions are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.15 shows the strength of the satisfaction felt by the majority of parents. All of the variable scores were higher than the 75th percentile of the state data and, astonishingly, one variable score, student reporting, 6.54, was equal to the maximum value reported in the statewide benchmark data. Therefore, it was concluded that the parents of the College were extremely happy with the education being received by their children.

Interestingly, the category student reporting did not receive the highest score. The questions relating to the general environment of the school obtained the highest score at 6.64 variable, just 0.04 below the state maximum. In this category, two of the questions, relating to the school being caring and the students’ behaviour being of a high standard, both drew 100 per cent agreement from the parents. The other statements in this category, namely that student management was fair and reasonable and that the school was a safe and secure environment, each drew more than 98 per cent agreement. Without doubt, these were remarkable statistics!

Academic rigour was the lowest scoring category, drawing a variable score of 6.27. Despite this, the five questions in this bracket each drew parental agreement between 96 and 99 per cent. This category also had two questions where the modal value was 6, signifying moderate agreement. Teaching quality also had two questions with modal values of 6, this category being the second lowest scoring with a variable score of 6.39. Viewing the survey as a whole, 78 per cent of the questions drew responses with the maximum variable score of 7.
Notwithstanding the overwhelmingly positive response from parents, it was helpful for a deeper understanding of their perceptions, to consider the individual questions that drew the lowest agreement. There was a noticeable break in the percentage agreements. Nineteen questions drew agreement within the 97-100 per cent range, while the four remaining questions drew agreement just above the 96 per cent level. These four lowest scoring questions were:

- *This school provides sufficient challenges for my/our child in other areas (eg sport/music)* - 96.07 per cent agreement
- *The teachers in this school provide a stimulating and challenging environment for my/our child* - 96.13 per cent agreement
- *This school is meeting the social needs of my/our child* - 96.15 per cent agreement
- *This school has high academic standards* - 96.59 per cent agreement
## Table 4.14 Parent Survey Question and Variable Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>% agreement</th>
<th>Variable score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Quality</td>
<td>Teachers at this school motivate my child to want to learn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>98.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My child’s teachers are committed and enthusiastic in their approach to teaching</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>99.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers at this school provide a stimulating and challenging environment for my/our child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>96.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My child receives high quality teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>98.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My child’s teachers care if my child is not doing as well as he/she can</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>99.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic rigour</td>
<td>This school is meeting the academic needs of my child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>97.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school has high academic standards</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>96.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school has realistic educational expectations of my/our child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>98.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school is meeting the social needs of my/our child</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>96.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school provides sufficient challenge for my/our child in other areas (eg. sports/music, etc)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>96.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reporting</td>
<td>My child’s school reports are informative in that they indicate achievement level</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My child’s school reports are comprehensive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The staff at this school are approachable (by parents)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>99.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school provides helpful information about my/our child’s progress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>98.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General environment</td>
<td>The student management policy at this school is fair and reasonable</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>98.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school is caring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school has high standards of student behaviour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school has a safe and secure environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>98.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer responsiveness</td>
<td>The school takes the concerns I have seriously</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>98.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This school is managed well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>98.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe there is effective educational leadership within the school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am given the opportunity to be involved in the school’s educational activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>98.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General satisfaction</td>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with the education of my/our child</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>98.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I agree with the objectives of this College</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This College provides a distinctive Christian environment for my/our child</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The **bold** values represent the modal values. Source: College data)
Table 4.15 Parent Opinion Survey - Comparison with State Benchmarks 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>25th Percentile</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>75th Percentile</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>6.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Rigour</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Environment</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Responsiveness</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>6.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Reporting</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Figures in **bold** indicate highest values, blanks indicate no data available for School Questions)

**Parent Opinion Survey - Written Responses**

In addition to the parents’ numeric responses to the twenty-five standard questions, there were nine questions that asked for written responses. Seventy-two per cent of the survey respondents (133 returns) made one or more written responses with the majority answering all nine questions at some length.

The following questions were asked. They were the standard questions the Department of Education survey applied to all state school communities in Victoria:

**What suggestions do you have for improving the College?**

1. The range and appropriateness of the subjects being taught at the different levels
2. The standard of work expected
3. Grounds/building
4. How the students are taught
5. Discipline/individual care
6. How the College is run
7. Student reporting – frequency, clarity and depth
8. Parental involvement
9. Are there any other comments you would like to make?
Analysis of the Written Responses

1. The range and appropriateness of the subjects being taught at the different levels
Nearly a third of respondents, 31 per cent, wrote in positive terms, a further 17 per cent suggested that the College should add a wider range of practical subjects, particularly in the secondary school. The majority of comments were asking for more woodwork and metal work. Another 12 per cent advocated an increase in foreign languages (LOTE) on offer but there was no unanimity in the particular languages they were suggesting. The remaining responses were calling for a wide variety of improvements, which included a broader offering of extra-curricular activities and a larger number of VCE subject options for years 11 and 12.

2. The standard of work expected
Over half were content with the current standard, 29 per cent considering it excellent and 22 per cent thought it satisfactory. Of the reminder, there was no clearly identifiable polarity; however nine per cent felt that the standards were too high and six per cent called for more homework for the students.

3. Grounds/building
Over a third of respondents, 35 per cent, believed that the facilities were excellent, however, the parents did highlight a number of practical suggestions for future developments. Twelve per cent made reference to the cramped car park facilities, 11 per cent called for cleaner and more numerous toilets and nine per cent felt that the facilities generally were too cramped. Significant suggestions from a smaller number of parents included the call for a grassy area for the Kinders and Preps to play, generally more shade for the students and improved library facilities.

4. How the students are taught
Nearly a third, 31 per cent, of parents who responded felt that the current situation was satisfactory. A further nine per cent wrote about how pleased they were with the Christian grounding and a further six per cent were delighted with the individual attention given to their children. However, 15 per cent of parents expressed concern
over the size of the classes and 11 per cent wrote critically about the Personalised Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) system.

5. Discipline/individual care
Forty-two per cent of the respondents believed that this aspect was very good or excellent; a further nine per cent felt it was satisfactory and six per cent felt that the individual care was good. Nevertheless, nine per cent said that the College needed to show greater acknowledgment of the differences in the temperament of students when meting out discipline, six per cent wrote negatively about corporal punishment and six per cent did not like the merit/demerit system.

6. How the College is run
Eighty-two per cent of the parents’ comments indicated that they were pleased with how the College is managed; 53 per cent considered the management to be excellent or good; 14 per cent considered it to be satisfactory; while 15 per cent commented in glowing terms about the College Principal’s leadership. Of the remaining 18 per cent of respondents there was little unanimity, however, in this group four per cent made critical observations about the College’s response to criticism.

7. Student reporting – frequency, clarity and depth
Forty-seven per cent considered this to be excellent and a further 16 per cent felt it was satisfactory. However, 11 per cent of parents called for more communication between parents and teachers and five per cent felt that the reporting system needed improvement.

8. Parental involvement
Seventy-three per cent of respondents were delighted with the level of involvement while 11 per cent requested more.

9. Are there any other comments you would like to make?
Seventy-four per cent of parents made positive comments. The significant brackets included: 34 per cent who considered the College to be great; 26 per cent commented on the Christian aspects; and four per cent mentioned their delight with the growth of
the College; three per cent referred to the Maths being weak and a further three per cent voiced their request for greater challenges for the bright students.

Summary of findings of the parent survey

In light of the state benchmarks of like schools, the College parents seemed to be unequivocally delighted with the education available. Their response to the general environment category, that scored second highest after the school specific questions, clearly represented an extremely positive atmosphere in the community. This was expressed specifically in their praise for the teachers and the College Principal, and their unambiguous satisfaction with the school reporting system that scored equal to the maximum score in the statewide data.

Against this background of broad satisfaction, it was interesting to note the nature of the parental concerns expressed in the survey. Given the overall satisfaction levels, their specific concerns might well have been voiced more as illustrations of general attitudes rather than major causes for concern demanding immediate action.

The categories of academic rigour (6.27) and teaching quality (6.39), though the lowest categories in the survey are still very high compared with the state benchmarks, they are still very high indeed. It was interesting to note that the state benchmarks dipped in these categories as well, suggesting that the College followed the norm in this respect. Therefore, these scores may have reflected the survey design as much as the reality they were designed to assess. However, despite the majority of the parents’ general satisfaction with these aspects of the College’s education, there was some resonance with the parents’ written responses in the survey. Questions were raised about the efficacy of the PACE system, the impact of oversized classes, the teaching of Maths and there was a call for greater challenges for the brighter students.

Finally, at a more general level, despite their overwhelming satisfaction with Sandford Christian College, the four most widely discussed practical concerns were the need for more practical subjects, a wider range of LOTE subjects, more student toilets and better communication with the teachers.
4.2.5 Summary of the College Development Review

Organisational Health
The morale of the organization was found to be exceptionally high from the perspective of the students, the parents and the staff. The results of the staff survey in particular found that practically all the respondents felt accepted by their colleagues, considered the students to be well behaved and took pride in their College.

The review also emphasised the enormous appreciation right across the community for the College Principal and the senior management team. Of particular significance was the unity of staff in support of the College goals and values as they found a remarkable agreement with their own personal goals and values.

The organisational health of the College was also demonstrated by the staff survey’s findings that the leadership have not imposed undue work demands and the working environment was a less stressful place than the average like state school in Victoria. Perhaps this was due in part to the fact that, as a whole, the staff viewed their work in the College as a calling from God, and as such they were serving a higher authority than just the leadership of the College.

Against this remarkably positive background, there were a number of concerns that any healthy community might have as they constantly search for ways to improve their organization in the future:

- More than a third of staff acknowledged that they had experienced a lot of stress, were concerned with work overload and lack of regular feedback on their professional performance.

- Some staff were ambivalent about the subject of participative decision-making. The majority felt happy with the process but the review found that some were disappointed.
• There was a call for more communication between the various groups within the community.

*Teaching and Learning Environment*

The parents were overwhelmingly delighted with the education on offer for their children, their response to the *general environment* category in their survey having gained the highest variable score apparent from the school questions. The parents were particularly appreciative of the way that the College was managed, the approachableness of the teachers and the character of the College Principal.

The students were similarly very pleased with their education. They showed particular appreciation for their teachers’ energy and enthusiasm; fairness and firmness; helpfulness and responsiveness; high expectations and quality of instruction. Remarkably low absenteeism rates were found compared with statewide benchmarks.

Regardless of this positive assessment of the teaching and learning in the College, some areas of concern were identified:

• There was general satisfaction expressed that the PACE system was being replaced but they were concerned that elements still lingered.

• The limited range of practical subjects, LOTE and the sizes of some classes.

• Both parents and students identified the need for greater challenges in the students’ learning, particularly for the academically gifted and the senior secondary students.

*Student Achievement*

The College’s first year 12 cohort of 28 students gave a very creditable performance in their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2000. The results were not dissimilar to other Christian schools, which had been offering year 12 studies for many
years. The results of the University of New South Wales Educational Testing Centre indicated that the primary department, in particular, regularly achieved results above the state average.

The documentary study revealed that the College had a remarkably low absenteeism rate compared with state averages. This was particularly significant in the secondary department. The study also noted the phenomenal growth in student numbers over the last four years from 8 per cent growth in 1997 to 18 per cent in 2000.

Despite these very good results, the documentary evidence has revealed two areas of concern:

- The University of NSW tests in Science in the secondary department revealed that for more than half the tests entered the aggregated results were below the state average

- The Prep. grade absenteeism was above the state benchmark
4.3 Past Student Survey

The Past Student Survey was mailed to a sample of past students from Sandford Christian College. The questionnaire was designed to find out their opinions on the impact the College had had on their adult lives. In other words, it was an attempt to understand how successful the College had been at reaching its stated aims and objectives.

The responses were divided into two distinct chronological groups:

**1. The Early Years 1978 - 1990**

There were 23 replies from students who left the College between 1979 and 1990. Some of these respondents were reflecting on the earlier College that was under totally different control for the first five years of the College’s life. However, it was deemed appropriate to incorporate these replies as they reflected a sense of continuity despite the two different administrations.

**2. The Recent Years 1992 - 1999**

There was a distinct break in the responses with no replies from students who left the College in 1991, so it was decided to make an arbitrary divide at that point. There were 48 replies from students who left in the eight years 1992 to 1999.

This analysis attempts to summarise the main findings from the survey and to present the data in a coherent manner that can be considered in the light of the College Development Review, which has been discussed in the preceding subsection of this chapter.

4.3.1 The Early Years 1978 - 1990

**Academic Qualifications**

The survey found a broad range of academic qualifications, with the majority having done some tertiary study. One had not completed year 10, three had completed year
Ten, four their VCE, nine a Certificate at TAFE and six had Bachelors degrees. None had any higher degrees.

**Occupations**
Twenty six per cent of respondents were homemakers; the remainder were in a very wide variety of occupations with no one type more significant than any other. They included a hairdresser, a microbiologist, a singer/entertainer and a pastor.

**Current Church**
Eighty seven per cent said they were *born again* Christians when they left the College and 83 per cent claimed that they were currently actively involved in a local church. Twenty six per cent of respondents stated that they were members of the oversight church, Sandford Christian Fellowship. Nine per cent attended an Assemblies of God church and nine per cent a Spanish speaking Church. The remainder attended a wide variety of Pentecostal or Charismatic churches.

**Would they recommend the College?**
Sixty four per cent claimed they would.

**Extent of agreement with the College Aims**
Scores of 2, 3 and 4 represented *disagreement*; 5, 6 and 7 *agreement*; therefore aggregate scores less than 4.5 represented *disagreement* and scores greater than 4.5 reflected *agreement*.

The standard deviation of the responses has been presented alongside the score for each of the College Aims. This measures the degree of conformity amongst the respondents. Smaller standard deviations represented closer and more consistent agreement with the College Aim scores. Where the standard deviation was larger, this reflected a wider variety of opinions within the sample, thus diminishing the significance of the particular College Aim score.

Table 4.16 presents the results of the 23 respondents. It must be stressed that the very small size of the sample precludes any detailed analysis, however it was interesting to
note a number of features. The College Aim that scored most positively was c. *Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics*, with a score of 5.74 out of a maximum 7.00, however the College Aim that drew greatest conformity of responses, as measured by the standard deviation of the data, was a. *Demonstrates the love of God and teaches Biblical truths*.

The College Aim that drew the least conformity from this group of respondents was h. *Provides a secure and supportive environment where responsible relationships may be developed amongst all members of the school community*. The College Aim that drew the lowest score, just under the average of 4.50, was f. *Provides a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students with 4.30*. Perhaps this finding reflected one of the key difficulties of the early days, namely their ability to provide a broad curriculum that could meet the needs of all the students. This corresponded with some of the conclusions from the parents’ survey that reflected the need at the time of the survey for more practical subjects, a wider LOTE choice and a greater number of options at VCE.

It seemed apparent that the Early Years’ leavers recognised clearly the Christian values of the College, the demonstration of the love of God and that they received Biblical teaching. However, they were divided about how secure they felt in their environment because some of them did not view themselves as successful in developing good relationships within the community.
### Table 4.16 Early Years 1978 - 1990, results of the survey on the College Aims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a</strong> Demonstrates the love of God and teaches Biblical truths.</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b</strong> Develop in students the desire to serve God and society, and the skills to exercise leadership.</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c</strong> Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics.</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d</strong> Promote excellence in all aspects of the school life.</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>e</strong> Assist students in discovering and developing, as fully as possible, their unique talents and capacities.</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>f</strong> Provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students.</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>g</strong> Offer experiences which will motivate and challenge intellectually, aesthetically, physically and spiritually.</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>h</strong> Provide a secure and supportive environment where responsible relationships may be developed amongst all members of the school community.</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>i</strong> Develop self-disciplined young people who are optimistic, confident, articulate and resourceful.</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>j</strong> Encourage students to possess a zest for learning and an understanding that learning is a life-long process.</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Past Student Survey)
**Significant Memories**

The past students were asked to comment on the **most significant memories of their time in the College.** They were encouraged to include either positive or negative memories or both. Thirty-one positive memories were cited as compared with 23 negative ones by the students from the Early Years.

**Positive Memories**

There was a wide array of comments in this category – the most frequently cited comments are tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made at the College</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian values and Bible teaching</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative Memories**

There was an even wider spread of comments in this category - the most frequently cited comments are tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over-discipline or heavy-handed-discipline</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate curriculum</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal punishment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lasting Impact of the College**

The past students were asked what, if any, they believed had been the lasting impact of the College on their life. There were 10 positive comments by the Early Years students but only five negative comments - the most frequently cited positive comments are tabulated below along with an indication of their significance, followed by a paraphrase of all five negative comments:
Positive Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian education and Bible teaching</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the skills of goal setting</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing their moral code for life</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative Impact

- The College culture made it hard for me to integrate back into secular society
- The system (PACES)
- My whole school life was a source of rejection for me, SCC was merely a part of this (left 1983)
- The College taught me discipline with spankings
- It was misery, the College left me with no lasting impact or any benefit

Any other comments

Finally, the survey gave opportunity for the past students to make any other comments. These have also been classified into the positive and negative and summarised below. There were five positive comments, all of which are paraphrased below, and 10 negative comments, with one stand out main point:

Positive Comments

- The PACE system suited me perfectly (left 1989)
- My negative comments reflect the early years, SCC is much better now
- Despite the negatives, I still want to send my children to attend a Christian school (left 1980)
- Overall my time was positive (left 1979)
- I will never forget the College, both good and bad memories
- They did a great job with the limited resources back then
- The College has changed enormously since I was there (left 1982), as it stands I would choose to send my own children there over any other school. I know a number of current students and they love it. My husband is a youth pastor in our church and he recommends the College to parents after seeing the results in the kids at church
4.3.2 The Recent Years 1992 - 1999

**Academic Qualifications**
A range of academic qualifications was reported, with the majority of respondents stating that they were in secondary or tertiary education at the time of the survey. Ten had not completed year 10, nine had completed year 10, 17 their VCE, five a Certificate at TAFE and seven had gained Bachelors degrees. None had any higher degrees.

**Occupation**
Exactly 50 per cent of respondents were secondary students, while 17 per cent were currently engaged in tertiary education. The remainder were in varied occupations with no one type more prevalent than any other. They included schoolteachers, nurses, an electrician, a removalist and a nutritionist.

**Current Church**
Ninety per cent said they were *born again* Christian when they left the College and 75 per cent claimed that they were currently actively involved in a local church. Forty per cent of respondents stated that they were members of Sandford Christian Fellowship. Two attended an evangelical Chinese Church; two attended a Baptist Church and a further two attended an Assemblies of God Church. The remainder were involved with a number of different churches.

**Would they recommend the College?**
Sixty three per cent said they would.

**Extent of agreement with the aims of the College**
Table 4.17 presents the results from the 48 respondents. While this is a larger sample than the Early Years, it is still rather small to conclude too much from the results other
than to note the major trends. The College Aim that scored most positively was again c. *Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics*, with a score of 6.33 out of a maximum 7.00, and it was also the College Aim that drew greatest conformity of response.

The College Aim that drew the least conformity from this group of respondents and the lowest score of 4.65 was f. *Provides a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students*. It is interesting to surmise as to the reasons why some of the more recent leavers still believed that the College failed to provide a totally relevant curriculum. Was this still a reflection of the stretched resources issue of the previous decade or perhaps a reflection of the intentionally narrower curriculum than state schools, which was in keeping with the College’s primary aim to nurture Christian values?

The more recent leavers seemed to be more certain of their agreement with the College’s Aim to nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics, though this may have simply reflected the larger sample of the Recent Years. However, the wide spread of opinion on the suitability of the curriculum for all students does suggest that this may have been a genuine concern for some, coupled with the findings from the written comments.
Table 4.17 Recent Years 1992 - 1999, results of the survey on the College Aims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a  Demonstrates the love of God and teaches Biblical truths.</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b  Develop in students the desire to serve God and society, and the skills to exercise leadership.</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c  Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics.</td>
<td><strong>6.33</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.83</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d  Promote excellence in all aspects of the school life.</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e  Assist students in discovering and developing, as fully as possible, their unique talents and capacities.</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f  Provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students.</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g  Offer experiences, which will motivate and challenge intellectually, aesthetically, physically and spiritually.</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h  Provide a secure and supportive environment where responsible relationships may be developed amongst all members of the school community.</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i  Develop self-disciplined young people who are optimistic, confident, articulate and resourceful.</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j  Encourage students to possess a zest for learning and an understanding that learning is a life-long process.</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Past Student Survey)

**Significant Memories**

The past students from the Recent Years group were asked to comment on the most significant memories of their time in the College. They were encouraged to include either positive or negative memories or both. Eighty-two positive memories were cited as compared with 35 negative ones.
**Positive Memories**

There was a very wide array of comments in this category. The most frequently cited have been tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made at the College</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian values and Bible teaching</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Services</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The discipline system</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting opportunities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative Memories**

There were comparatively very few negative comments in this category, which was a positive indication in itself. The most frequently cited comments are tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over-discipline or heavy-handed-discipline</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems with friends</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal punishment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncaring teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lasting Impact of the College**

The past students were asked what, if any, they believed had been the lasting impact of the College on their life. There were 38 positive comments by the Recent Years past students but only four negative comments. The most frequently cited positive comments are tabulated below along with an indication of their significance, followed by a paraphrase of all four negative comments:

**Positive Impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian education and Bible teaching</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made while at the College</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Christian School</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the skills of goal setting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 4 Sandford Christian College Development Review and Past Student Survey 196
**Negative Impact**

- Knowing I never have to go back (left 1993)
- Very poor grounding in Maths (left 1997)
- The transition to a secular school and Uni. has been and still is very difficult
- There was a lack of opportunities for evangelism as all my friends were Christian

**Any other comments**

Finally, the survey gave opportunity for the past students to make any additional comments. These have also been classified into positive and negative comments and summarised below. There were 21 positive comments, the most frequently cited tabulated below along with an indication of their significance. There were 10 negative comments, with one stand out main point:

**Positive Comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian values and Bible teaching</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good School</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made while at the College</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative Comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comment</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3 All Years 1978 - 1999

This section examines the combined data for the whole sample of 77 past students. This comprises 23 from the Early Years, 48 from the Recent Years and six returns that did not include the date the student left the College. It only addresses those sections where an aggregated data analysis adds to the reader’s understanding, that is; Would they recommend the College, the extent of agreement with the College Aims, the significant memories, the lasting impact of the College and any other comments.

Would they recommend the College?
Sixty per cent claimed they would. This figure has been depressed a little below the average of the Early Years and Recent Years responses, on account of it including the six undated surveys of which only 20 per cent stated they would recommend the College to friends and relatives.

Extent of agreement with the aims of the College
Table 4.18 presents the results of all 77 respondents. While this is a larger sample than those discussed in the two earlier sections, it is still a small number to draw great significance from the results other than to note the major trends.

Overall, the College Aim that scored most positively was, for the third time, c. Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics, with a score of 6.09 and it was also the College Aim that drew greatest conformity of response measured by the standard deviation of 5.02. The College Aim that drew the least conformity from this group of respondents and the lowest score of 4.42 was again f. Provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students. Tables 4.16 and 4.17 are effectively summarised in Table 4.18, however this analysis has lost any distinctions that could be drawn from the difference in the date of leaving the College during the 1980s or the 1990s.

On the whole, the past students were in broad agreement with the College Aims, with only one falling just marginally into negative territory, namely the issue of the relevance of the curriculum for all students. The main finding from the data in Table 4.18, coupled with the findings from the written comments, indicated that the
respondents were most united in their recognition of, and appreciation for, the College’s Christian goals.

Table 4.18 All Years 1978 - 1999, results of the survey on the College Aims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Demonstrates the love of God and teaches Biblical truths.</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Develop in students the desire to serve God and society, and the skills to exercise leadership.</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics.</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Promote excellence in all aspects of the school life.</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Assist students in discovering and developing, as fully as possible, their unique talents and capacities.</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>7.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students.</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>7.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Offer experiences, which will motivate and challenge intellectually, aesthetically, physically and spiritually.</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Provide a secure and supportive environment where responsible relationships may be developed amongst all members of the school community.</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Develop self-disciplined young people who are optimistic, confident, articulate and resourceful.</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>6.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Encourage students to possess a zest for learning and an understanding that learning is a life-long process.</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Past Student Survey)

**Significant Memories**

The past students were asked to comment on the *most significant memories of their time in the College*. They were encouraged to include both their positive and negative memories. Overall the respondents cited 113 positive memories compared with 58 negative ones.
**Positive Memories**

From the varied responses in this category, the most frequently cited comments have been tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made at the College</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian values and Bible teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Services</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The discipline system</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The suitability of the curriculum</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting opportunities</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative Memories**

There was half the number of negative comments compared with positive responses, which was positive indication in itself. The most frequently cited comments have been tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over-discipline or heavy-handed-discipline</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuitable curriculum</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal punishment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems with friends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncaring teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnatural segregation of boys and girls</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much religion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lasting Impact of the College**

The past students were asked what, if any, they believed had been the lasting impact of the College on their life. There were 48 positive comments by the students and 10 negative comments. The most frequently cited comments have been tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:
### Positive Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian education and Bible teaching</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made while at the College</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the skills of goal setting</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Christian School</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing their moral code for life</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving for excellence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Negative Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy school days</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to integrate back into society</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Any other comments

Finally, the survey gave opportunity for the past students to make any other comments. These have also been classified into positive and negative comments and summarised below. There were 26 positive and 20 negative comments. The most frequently cited are tabulated below along with an indication of their significance:

#### Positive Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian values and Bible teaching</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good School</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring teachers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships made while at the College</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall a positive experience</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Negative Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most consistent comments</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PACE system</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good at developing relationship with Jesus</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary of the Past Student Survey

It was important to recognise that the results of this survey had to be viewed in the light of the small response rate. This rate was made doubly significant because the survey spanned such a long time period, from 1978 to 1999. It was evident that the
College had changed enormously since the formative period, hence the rationale to divide the survey into two parts. On reflection though, it was somewhat surprising that the results from both sections were fairly consistent in most aspects.

Has the College *Put them into the hands of God?* The survey of the Early Years reported that 87 per cent claimed to be *born again* Christians when they left the College and that 83 per cent of them, at the time of the survey, claimed to be actively involved in a local church, indicating little change in their Christian commitment since joining the wider community. On the other hand, the Recent Years survey reported that 90 per cent claimed to be *born again* Christians when they left the College but only 75 per cent were actively involved in a local church at the time of the survey. There were obviously so many variables involved in such a comparison but, superficially, it seemed as though the College was not quite producing the consistent Christian commitment that they had in their Early Years.

It was interesting to consider the relationship that Sandford Christian Fellowship had with the College. While performing the role of the sponsoring church for most of the College’s history, it has grown rapidly itself along side the growth of the College. To what degree has this church been *putting the College students into the hands of God?* Twenty six per cent of the Early Years respondents reported this church to be their local congregation. This had grown to 40 per cent of the Recent Years’ past students. Did this significant growth reflect the effectiveness of the church’s youth ministries more than the work of the College?

Another major contrast between the Early Years and the Recent Years respondents was that the former reflected a very wide representation of different occupations, with the majority in home duties, whereas the Recent Years respondents were overwhelmingly current students either still in secondary education or in a tertiary institution. The researcher suspected that the fact that the College had taken on VCE classes only as recently as 1999, must have influenced this characteristic of the survey, as a number were obviously reflecting on their College experience while at another secondary institution.
The single most consistent finding of the survey across the twenty-one years was that the past students recognised the success of the College’s Aim to nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics. The respondents had held a wide range of opinions on many other areas of College life, reflecting a healthy cross-section of the past student body, adding even more significance to the pivotal finding of the survey, namely the nurture of Christian values.

The survey also highlighted a number of subsidiary characteristics. For example, a great number of respondents wrote at length about the significance of the friendships they had made while in the College. Nearly as many wrote about the impact of the caring teachers on their development into responsible adulthood. Significant numbers also spoke with great appreciation for the PACE system of learning that had suited them perfectly. These observations must have very positively influenced their memories of their time in the College.

A balanced summary would not be complete without a reflection on some of the negative comments raised by the survey. A number of past students, from both the Early and Recent Years wrote about the heavy-handed discipline system, indicating that they felt it was not sensitive enough to the needs of the individual. Nearly as many past students made reference to what they perceived to be an inadequate curriculum that was not broad enough for all the students. This was corroborated by the question on the College Aims that identified this area as the least successful of all the aims. Perhaps related to this was the significant numbers who identified the PACE system as being inadequate for some styles of learning.

The past student survey most probably drew a greater proportion of the more extreme views both positive and negative, on the basis of requisite motivation to respond to the survey, than would have been the case if all the past students could have been questioned. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that these 77 extreme respondents acknowledged that nine out of the ten College Aims were achieved for them during their time in the College. The only one to just miss a positive endorsement was the aim that related to the adequacy of the curriculum.
Chapter 5 Results of the In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups

5.1 Introduction

The participants in the in-depth interviews and the focus groups represented all sections of the community known as Sandford Christian College, from the church and board, through the school leadership and management, to the staff, students and parents. They responded to directed questions as well as being given freedom to raise their own observations.

This chapter seeks to present an understanding of the in-depth interviews and focus groups in a coherent, logical framework. It starts at the macro level and concludes at the micro level. The origins of the school are considered, followed by a consideration of the effects on the community of the College’s very rapid growth. The discussion continues with a lengthy consideration of the visionary leadership of the Senior Minister\(^5\) and the Principal, followed by a critical examination of the management structures that have been established.

The chapter concludes by looking at some critical aspects of the daily life of the College such as the curriculum taught and the behaviour of the students. It was notable that the participants in this research took the opportunity of the confidential discussions to raise more negative concerns than to highlight positive achievements. However, it was the researcher’s belief that this study clearly reflected a very successful Sandford Christian College despite numerous participants having raised concerns out of a natural human tendency to seek answers. Overall, the participants focused the majority of their time on the positive aspects of the College’s leadership, growth and unity.

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\(^5\) Referring to titles as opposed to names has hidden the participants’ identities. When this occurs the title is capitalised to indicate the personality as opposed to the generic title.
Table 5 groups the coded themes identified in the transcripts of the interviews and the focus groups. They have been gathered under six headings in an attempt to highlight the most frequently discussed subject matter. The chosen terminology has been designed to link with the themes of the literature identified in Chapter 2 and the outcomes of the College Development Review presented in Chapter 4.

Table 5 Coded Themes from In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian Foundations 5.2</th>
<th>Growth and Change 5.3</th>
<th>Leadership Styles 5.4</th>
<th>Management 5.5</th>
<th>Teaching &amp; Learning 5.6</th>
<th>Student Behaviour Management 5.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origins of the Vision for the College</td>
<td>Growth and Problems with Growth</td>
<td>Senior Minister SCF</td>
<td>Effective Management</td>
<td>The Students</td>
<td>Poor Student Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion for Christian Education</td>
<td>Creating Community Culture</td>
<td>SCC Council</td>
<td>Ineffective Management</td>
<td>The Teachers</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>A united community culture</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>PACES</td>
<td></td>
<td>Corporal Punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class sizes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structure of this chapter follows the themes of Table 5. The most frequently cited source materials are the transcripts of the in-depth interviews and the focus groups. When an interview has been referenced, the position of the participant has been noted followed by the page number e.g. (Council Chairman, p. 4). When the source was a focus group, the suffix FG has been added. Two interviewees, namely the bursar and the Principal both gave two interviews, indicated by I and II respectively e.g. (Principal I, p. 5). In preference to quotation marks, when lengthy direct quotes have been used, they are presented as discrete paragraphs of italic text. When phrases have been directly quoted they have been presented in italics within the text, backed up by the appropriate reference. Occasionally, italics have also been used to emphasise a word or to draw attention to a recurrent theme.
5.2 Christian Foundations

It was striking that in a Christian school that regarded itself as successful the interviewees and the focus groups did not talk more about the school’s Christian foundations. Whilst opportunity was given for it to be addressed, little was said, perhaps because very few participants were personally involved with the school at that time. The discussions tended to concentrate on the more tangible aspects of the participants’ contemporary involvement within the community.

5.2.1 Origins of the Vision for the College

The school was initially established in 1978 in a disused state school on a rent-free basis in return for the maintenance of the property (Diary, p. 103). They used the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system that provided individualised learning without the need for fully trained staff. It was the only programme that would enable them to start a school at the time (Council Chairman, p. 4). The founders were passionate in their belief that education should be based in the church (Diary, p. 104), laying the foundation for the strong church-school relationship that exists today (Principal I, p. 5). This strong relationship was reinforced five years after the foundation of the school when Sandford Christian Fellowship was invited to take over the church and the school (Diary, p. 103-5).

Financially the school wasn’t viable. In fact administrators from another school looked and suggested we just disband the whole school… and just close the whole thing down. It wasn’t financially viable; they couldn’t see it being financially viable (Council Chairman, p. 2).

However, the leadership of Sandford Christian Fellowship under the oversight of their founding pastor respected the team who had had the vision for the school in the first place. So much so, that fellowship made a tentative agreement to take over the running of the school on the condition that it had to be self-funding and it was never to be a drain on church resources (Council Chairman, p. 3). The succeeding senior minister in Sandford Christian Fellowship was more cautious but still wanted the
school to survive and serve the Christian community. He had studied the effect on the oversight church of some Christian schools in the United States that had run into financial troubles.

The founding pastor’s heart is (still) burning for the school and so even now he’ll pop in and check everybody out and say ‘how you doing’ you know, ‘what’s enrolments like?’ so he’s had an ongoing love for the school and a connection and a zeal (Business Manager II, p. 9).

Sandford assumed responsibility for the College from the end of 1982. The current principal had been a teacher in the College since 1981 and was appointed principal from 1985. The community believed that his appointment as principal had received God’s blessing (Diary, p. 104).

He proved that he was indeed the right man for the job and throughout the following years, he has built, with the hand of the Lord upon him, an increasingly successful College (Personal Communication⁶, 2002: 41).

There were sacrifices for the staff at the time, but it was a vision they all shared. We went for it and God’s blessed us and this is where we are today. Our Principal is an excellent leader, I mean he’s got vision but he has also got a lot of sense. He understands what a dollar’s worth, and the best way to spend it. The College has really prospered under his hand...(Business Manager I, p. 4).

5.2.2 Passion for Christian Education

The founding headmaster believed that the current principal’s leadership was God driven and that as a pastoral person he has been God’s man for the College (Diary, p. 109). The Business Manager and the Secondary Sport Teacher caught the Principal’s passion for the school, stating that he gave himself a hundred and fifty percent and that

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this passion, shared by the staff, was a unifying factor that impacted even the students (Business Manager II, p. 4; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 13):

*I think that the leadership here is God-anointed and He has placed that mantle upon the Principal to be the leader at this place...I think it’s his warm and personable type of personality, you can have the one-on-one talks with him. You can speak to him honestly and openly. At the same time in front of a group whether it’s the staff during a staff meeting, whether it’s the kids lining up or respecting him through what he says. It’s just his ability; I don’t know how to put it into words* (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 7).

This passion for Christian education was difficult to define. In the Principal’s case, what did *God driven, God’s man, God anointed or that mantle* really mean? Only the members of the community would use and understand these terms because they were part of their daily language. Perhaps some of the answer comes from the nature of the community itself. A tangible expression of the Principal’s passion for Christian education was demonstrated by the fact that he conducted all the enrolment interviews himself, and therefore from his perspective he protected the community by his filtering process (Council Member, p. 14, 16; Principal II, p. 11). Further tangible expressions of passion for Christian education in the community included:

- Sandford Christian Fellowship saw the school as a ministry of the church, expressing part of the church’s vision to raise up a generation of young people that could make a positive influence on the world. In fact, the Senior Minister of the church believed that *every city needed a really strong Christian school* (Senior Minister, p. 1, 7).

- Speaking of the College council, the Principal said. *I think so long as your governing body is sound and committed to the original vision, then I think things will continue...If you are selecting people that have a strong affinity with what the school is about as well, then it perpetuates the vision. It just keeps on going* (Principal II, p. 5, 6).
• As an illustration that the College community supported the wider Christian schooling movement, an infants teacher who was frustrated with her limited resources was encouraged to write Big Books herself with one of her mums who was a children’s author and to make them available to other Christian schools around the country (Infants Teacher, p. 5).

• During discussion on the future growth of the College, the Principal remarked that finding an additional campus for a section of the school would perhaps be quite cost-effective rather than building new facilities on the current site. However, he recounted that many families had moved into the area to be closer to the school and their practical commitment to the vision could not be easily ignored (Principal I, p. 6).

Any attempt to measure a passion for Christian education was subjective. However, it can be implied by the community’s actions and the issues discussed. The Principal’s reflections on the Christian schooling movement in Australia after more than 20 years, indicated that he felt that the passion for the schools’ Christian distinctive was still very, very strongly held across this nation. He spoke of the very strong commitment on the part of the executives of Christian schools to maintain their Christian distinctive character in relation to the constitution for a new Christian schooling organization being established, namely, Christian Schools Australia. This new body was being designed to replace Christian Community Schools, and it was hoped that many of the Christian Parent Controlled Schools and some of the independent Christian schools would join as well (Principal II, p. 5).

At the College level, the staff often spoke of their passion for Christian education in terms of their work being their Christian ministry (Council Member, p. 16; Business Manager I, p. 12; Infants Teacher, p. 5; Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 3; Staff FG I, p. 1). This was best expressed by one of the teachers in the second staff focus group and one of the infants’ teachers:

\[I\text{ take a holistic view of life. My whole life is my Christian ministry because I am a Christian and I have given my life to God. So wherever I am and whatever I do I}\]
consider that to be part of my Christian ministry. Raising my children is part of my Christian ministry, teaching part-time piano is part of my Christian ministry, teaching here at Sandford is part of my Christian ministry (Staff FG II, p. 1).

...my biggest joy is being here, rather than sharing an office with someone in the state school where they were just negative all day, just speaking about the children negatively. It’s just really nice to be able to sit in the staff room and no one is bagging any one. That has probably been my greatest joy. And also everyone seeing it as beyond a job...Most people that I know here, including myself, are motivated because of the ministry we do here, the love of the children, rather than doing it because we get paid. It’s more than a job; it goes deeper and motivates you. (Infants Teacher, p. 1).

A further perspective that reflected the community’s passion for Christian education was the view that spiritual values were prized above academic results. A new parent council member, who used to home school his children, was very adamant about his choice of school specifically for this aspect, despite their home being within the catchment of some of the best state schools and being well able to afford elite private schooling (Council Member, p. 2).

However, the Assistant Principal Secondary, while recognising this, also felt academic results were important. Since his appointment in 2000, he has been actively working on lifting the academic standards in the secondary department. He recognised that the goal of spiritual values first, had at times, led to the acceptance of weaker academic performances:

There is probably a perception by some that because this school has a niche market of catering for Christian families, it therefore prides itself on Christian education and on running the pastoral side of school more than the academic. What I’d very much like to see is a Christian character and worldview expressed in every aspect of the life of the school. Consequently, I’ve been very conscious of the need to try and promote students’ involvement in scholarships, summer schools, state-wide or nationwide competitions that will help stretch and promote a more lateral approach to learning...(AP Secondary, p. 6-7).
Nevertheless, the promotion of Christian values has remained central. To summarise these reflections on the College’s passion for Christian education, the Business Manager, observed that:

…the foundation of what we are about…our selling point…the thing that is going to attract people is our offering something that is distinctly Christian…not some sort of a façade of it… There is an expectation that God is part of the curriculum, he is part of everything we are doing and teaching, in the quality of our teachers, our staff, the way we look after our buildings, the way we conduct yourselves. Everything must be Christian...(Business Manager I, p. 5).

5.2.3 Prayer

Prayer formed the fibre of the place (Business Manager II, p. 3). Many spoke of prayer being central to all that they did within the school, praying for the students, students praying for staff, teachers praying for each other, prayer partners and early morning prayer each day (Council Member, p. 16; English & Drama Teacher, p. 3-5, 8; Infants Teacher, p. 1, 8; Parent FG II, p. 2; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 3-4; Staff FG II, p. 11).

The infants’ teacher, a relatively new teacher to the school, was probably the one who talked most about this very personal facet of Sandford life. At the end of her interview she described her feelings about working in the College after her experiences in over 50 other schools as an emergency teacher:

This school is very open. Whether it’s because of the church, Sandford Christian Fellowship or whatever, it is open to God, open to where God wants to take it or what God wants to do in it. All the staff are open to what God wants to do…you can see the movement of God through that. He works through the children and he works through the staff and encourages us. The Holy Spirit is in our room every day, I know he is, he is guiding me everyday. He is saying, why don’t you try it this way? It’s like, I never
thought of that! Sometimes, just a thought. That’s what I believe goes beyond a normal school...

This school goes beyond that and says, ‘God what do you want to do with this school?’ That is where the success comes because it’s the fruits of the children that leave the school, and it’s what God does in teachers’ lives while they are teaching them, all these things bring about that success and move God forward in the community...

If a child comes into my room and they are sobbing, they just need some prayer and a cuddle and just to know that...I am not going to be a successful teacher in Maths if their heart is just not there, we have just got to deal with that and say ‘lets all pray, and let’s just work out the problem or whatever’. After a minute they will be fine...(Infants Teacher, p. 7-8).

Here the teacher has described her own daily experiences but she also expressed her conviction that all the staff were open to what God wants to do. This was an expression of more than a belief in prayer per se, but also a belief in a God that actually responds to people today who genuinely ask; God, what do you want to do with this school? It would be quite normal for teachers in an independent school to be saying that the management or the board of governors make all the decisions, but here, this young teacher genuinely believed that this community was serious about prayer for their provision and direction. She believed that the prayers of the College community had actually begun a physical healing process for her. When she first came to the school she would typically only get eight hours of sleep a week, but she was thankful to God for starting the healing process of her insomnia. She thought that she would not be teaching if it wasn’t for the support and prayers of the College (Infants Teacher, p. 3).

The founding headmaster spoke of the early days of the College as being a succession of miracles in spite of the staff. They had so many needs that they used to post on the church notice board and for which they received miraculous answers from the most unexpected sources (Diary, p. 103). Also, the Business Manager, who started in the College in the early 1980s (Business Manager I, p. 3), echoed these sentiments,
remarked on how the finances had worked out over the years despite her own limitations and how she believed that the College was now flourishing because of God’s grace (Business Manager II, p. 3).

These snapshots from people’s lives present a picture of a community that, despite not talking much about their Christian foundations compared with the other themes, actually believed that the supernatural has had a major impact on their history and the success of the College since its establishment.

5.3 Growth and Change

Since its foundation, apart from a rationalisation that took place following the takeover by the Sandford church, Sandford Christian College has seen phenomenal growth in numbers.

In 1991 there were 13 teachers (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 1) and a decade later there were 57. At the end of 1985 there were 180 students and they were talking about plans for 300, but that soon doubled with plans for 600 (Council Chairman, p. 7). In 2000, the year of this research, there were 641 students including 47 in Kindergarten (Diary, p. 91). The decision had been made for Year 7 to go triple-streamed from the following year and they were looking at a total of 1000 by 2006 (Parents FG II, p. 1, 11; Principal I, p. 4). The leadership were even considering multiple campuses in the future, as the current site could not sustain numbers in excess of 1000 students (Senior Minister, p. 5).

Change had become a way of life for the community. The Principal pondered…we have grown fairly consistently, for many years now…into 2000, we had a 20 per cent increase, probably our biggest growth ever (Principal II, p. 4).

Yet, there were only five specific references made to change; it was as if the community expected change to accompany growth and consequently it did not deserve much comment. The conversations about change were all value neutral, simply
passing comments. Three related to the enrolment policy considered at length in an earlier study of this College (Twelves, 2000: 77), and one related to the leadership style discussed in the next section (5.4).

The final observation on change, by the Assistant Principal Secondary, contrasted the transition from a K-10 to a K-12 school that took place instantaneously, compared with other changes that needed to be made more gradually (AP Secondary, p. 1). He was alluding to the cultural changes needed to raise the profile of academic performance, a concept echoed by a recently employed secondary teacher (English & Drama Teacher, p. 5). The decision to extend the school to Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) level suddenly opened the door to new enrolments in Year 11 and, subsequently, in Year 12. It also created greater interest in Year 7 enrolments as parents realised that they could place their children in the school right through the secondary years for the first time (Principal I, p. 5; Principal II, p. 1). The offering of VCE subjects subtly began the process of raising the academic expectations of the community.

5.3.1 Growth and Problems with Growth

In contrast with the subject of change, growth and its associated problems were widely discussed. Participants raised 73 issues relating to growth, 28 in a positive light and 45 stressing the problems. There was ample evidence that most were at least content with the pattern of growth, seeing it as a given, but this did not hinder them speaking at length about the difficulties they were facing as a result of the mammoth growth (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 1).

From the positive perspective, most comments emphasised the rate of growth. The head of the primary department linked growth with prayer, as she talked about finding the right rate of growth for the school while the staff consistently prayed for a dynamic vision for the College. She seemed very content with the progress made by the College, which had evolved through time (AP Primary, p. 3-4). The Senior Minister of the oversight church, held a very pragmatic position, having stressed the limitations of the site (Senior Minister, p. 4) he also expressed his:
theory that if something is healthy it’s going to grow! So if people want to get into the school and there are waiting lists, that’s a pretty good indicator that there is some demand there…(Senior Minister, p. 9).

The tenor of the whole interview with the Senior Minister was that a balance existed between making careful astute plans while pushing the Principal a little, and his own highly visionary leadership typical of Pentecostal churches (Senior Minister, p. 3-4).

The Principal’s perspective on waiting lists was similar to that of the Senior Minister’s; namely that their size reflected the College’s success (Principal II, p. 7). However, the Principal also demonstrated caution in the way he spoke about confirming the validity of waiting lists before making the final decision to add an additional stream to a grade (Principal II, p. 3).

All these quotes from the Senior Minister and the Principal did not imply that the teaching staff were not consulted about the key decisions on the rate of growth. They were. These decisions were first approved by the College council and then by the senior management team, consisting of the Principal, Business Manager and the two Assistant Principals in charge of the primary and secondary departments respectively. Then the plans were put to the whole staff for their opportunity to raise concerns. The staff were generally very appreciative of this opportunity and indicated that they were pleased with the faster-than-expected growth rate. It was implied that they were adjusting to the continual changes and were looking forward to the improved facilities that a more fully-developed school promised to provide (AP Secondary, p. 8).

Further positive references to growth made mention of the buildings. The participants were accepting that the buildings were generally of simple construction (Council Member, p. 6) but were none-the-less beautiful facilities (Primary Curriculum Coordinator, p. 1). The head of sport was also positive. He was delighted to report the decision to expand the playing fields to the west of the campus from the beginning of 2001 (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 2).
To facilitate the anticipated growth towards their latest target of 1000 students, land had been purchased to the east of the property. The land, previously bushland with some development restrictions, had been purchased by the church. The extra space was designated to be primarily for the expansion of the College. Buildings had been permitted on the land as long as they were built on poles with access by raised walkways to mitigate the impact of potential flooding (Council Chairman, p. 10; Principal’s Newsletter 17 November 2000, p. 4). The negotiations with the Council for this land were very long and delicate as the area was environmentally sensitive (AP Secondary, p. 9).

At the time of the study, the most recent building project was the double story ‘Oval’ secondary wing. This was built larger than immediately required as a buffer to accommodate glitches with future building permits (Principal II, p. 3). It was in full operation from the start of 2001 and illustrated better management than some of the earlier buildings that were at that time being considered for double story upgrades but had not originally been built with adequate foundations for the double story option (AP Primary, p. 3-4).

Moving on to a consideration of the range of subjects on offer, several participants were very positive about this, saying that the range was excellent for the size of the school (Principal II, p. 2-3), that the VCE range was fairly generous (AP Secondary, p. 7) and conceding that the obvious limitations that did exist presented no real problems for the students’ long-term education (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 6). The parents raised positive aspects of growth seeing the new staff as a great source of new ideas (Parents FG II, p. 11) and the small class sizes at VCE were a positive draw card (Parents FG I, p. 1).

Nevertheless, from the negative perspective, there were 13 comments from seven participants who raised concerns about the limited range of subjects and bemoaned the fact that an academic culture had not yet been established. There was also concern over the lack of sporting facilities for team games (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 1-4):
I guess I’m just speaking of my own opinion. I’ve only been here a year and a half...and having been a PE teacher, I’ve had parents approach me with requests such as, ‘can we enter the school into this and can we do that?’ There’s been a number of different things. I’m still learning to deal with them. Sometimes I can see that as pressure,...I guess we’re at the point where we’re not quite ready for it and I guess I feel I’ve got my hands tied and I’d love to see this great sports programme and I can sort of sympathize with the kids but I just want them to lay off a bit sometimes (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 4).

The Secondary Sport Teacher was open about his frustrations. He was very eager to establish a broad sporting programme and he had the support of the Principal, but there were not sufficient staff and physical sporting facilities to make it possible at that time. He was the only participant to express this concern so clearly (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 3).

There was a more generic concern, expressed by two teachers, that the teaching structure had hindered the individual student’s needs:

*It is distressing when you can’t cater for individual differences. You might see some kid and you really want to send him in that direction or encourage in this direction, and you haven’t got time or resources or an aide to come in and help. That’s a source of stress. You really can’t do the job you know you really could do if there was a little bit more time and resources.*

*I agree we want to cater for the individual, but the structure doesn’t always allow it and so you’ve got this tension. You have 30 in a year 8 Maths class, and their abilities range from about year 4 to year 10 and you’ve got to try and cater for them as individuals. So that is fine in theory but in practice it is very difficult* (Staff II FG, p. 13).

Further, in support of these concerns, there was a perception from some junior secondary students that the College rules were too restrictive and inhibited individuality (Junior Secondary FG, p. 9). Some senior secondary students agreed that
the ability range in some classes was often too wide (Senior Secondary FG, p. 8). This may have contributed to the perception by some that the secondary department was excessively driven by curriculum because of financial constraints, as opposed to being geared to meeting each individual student’s needs (Staff II FG, p. 12).

The second most commonly expressed concerns about growth were the ten comments that suggested that the College had been growing too large. The anxieties related to a fear that the family atmosphere and personal care might be lost (Infants Teacher, p. 3; Parents FG I, p. 1; Principal II, p. 6; Staff I, p. 8; Staff II, p. 13). One parent took his anxiety to the extreme, raising his fears as to who his children might be mixing with in the future, as the larger the school grows he would have less chance of knowing all the children. He was also concerned about families coming in from non-Sandford Christian Fellowship churches and thus diluting the College community (Council Member, p. 8-9). This was quite ironic as his own family were not from Sandford Christian Fellowship (Council Member, p. 5)!

One of the primary grade staff raised the concern that the College did not like to be forced to use church facilities as a temporary measure while the their building programme was underway. Both the Prep Department and the Kindergarten classes were operating in the church property until 2000 this physical separation and inconvenience of sharing facilities had caused tension and disruption (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 1). One problem that had not been anticipated was that the older buildings were not wired for the computer network (Business Manager I, p. 10). However, the most widely discussed issue was the perception that the students’ toilets were not adequate in size or cleaned regularly enough (Parents FG II, p. 11-12; Principal I, p. 6-7).

The researcher discussed the results of the parent survey with the Principal, highlighting the finding that 10 per cent of those who had made written comments on the physical facilities felt, that the school needed better toilets. The Principal’s retort was that he could not fathom where the data were coming from, as he had not previously been made aware of their concerns (Principal I, p. 7). To demonstrate the
depth of feeling on the subject, the most outspoken parent’s response to a question about the toilets was to raise the question:

Where are they? We need more! A child was looking for a toilet but couldn’t find one so went into a disabled toilet. It was very dusty and dirty. I hear complaints from my kids but that’s because kids play up and throw stuff around. It is always dirty. There were spider’s webs. It doesn’t look like it has been cleaned for a while. I think they need special ones for the younger ones, especially as the school grows (Parents FG II, p. 12).

The school had one toilet block for all grades and although the split lunches had helped enormously, it was evident that lack of these vital amenities was an issue related to growth. The Principal’s response was surprising, as it would be expected that a rapidly growing school might have issues in this regard. Perhaps an explanation for the need for all students having to use the one toilet block, was the view that the school had been solely geared to the primary children and as a result this created resentment amongst some of the senior students (Senior Secondary FG, p. 1).

Finally, in this consideration of the problems associated with growth, four respondents commented on work place stress and strained relationships. On account of the limited outdoor play areas and perhaps the limited toilet facilities, the primary school had a separate lunchtime to the secondary students. This had resulted in an increased number of duties and it seemed, more importantly to some, that separating the off-duty staff had diluted the sense of collegiality across the College (Primary Curriculum Coordinator, p. 3, 8; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 4). The Primary Curriculum Coordinator also cited her disappointment that during the early years, when the school was much smaller, she had a good relationship with the Principal, but now she rarely saw him (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 10). One of the infants’ teachers shared this view, evidently longing for more personal contact with the Principal but realising that with the growth of the school this was to become an increasingly isolated event (Infants Teacher, p. 6).
Some of the VCE teachers were required to offer up to three VCE subjects each. This expanded the College’s subject range but put great stress upon the teachers concerned (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 11; Staff FG I, p. 5). For example, the Secondary Sport Teacher regretted not being able to give more to the students because of his excessive workload and therefore he saw a need for a student counsellor (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 10). The Principal admitted that it was sometimes hard to mix the old and the new staff as both groups had such different expectations (Principal I, p. 6). The staff focus groups also admitted that a number of staff probably indicated high stress levels on their survey due to the demands of growth. They were at pains to point out that the stress could be regarded as productive stress because it would eventually get easier with time as more structures and courses were established (Staff FG I, p. 5, 8; Staff FG II, p. 13). They could also see that in the future there would be less stress caused by tight budgetary constraints (Senior Minister, p. 11), but in the meantime there were some hints of built-up resentment (Staff FG I, p. 5; Infants Teacher, p. 4).

5.3.2 Creating a Community Culture

The Sandford Christian College participants in the research believed that they were actively creating the culture or ethos of the community. There were over 50 references to creating community culture from across the interviews and focus groups. The Senior Minister was clearly proactive in this regard:

...we can lead the school the way we want it to be led and we can set-up an environment and a culture that’s what we want it to be... (Senior Minister, p. 6). I think about the climate that many of the teachers have created. I think there’s a warmth and a care, most of the teachers are there not because it’s a career but because they really love children. So warmth and care, I think there’s exuberance too, they’re pretty enthusiastic teachers, they believe in what they’re doing so I think that really helps set a climate. Warmth, care, exuberance, enthusiasm, they’d be some of our standout characteristics (Senior Minister, p. 10).
The references to building a school culture fell into three groups; a response to external pressures, the development of their discipline structure and finally the establishment of a community of carers that support family values.

With regard to the first category, the Council Chairman explained his rational for the College’s existence. He believed that the College offered a viable alternative to the state system for discerning parents who were actively seeking an alternative culture for their children:

…as a parent myself, and speaking with most of the parents, their whole concern is the secular schooling system…we really don’t want to expose our kids to it until they’ve got a really good Christian basis and can stand on their own two feet. I would think that is the key thing for most people who send their children here…We just see that the threefold cord, if you like, of the Church and the school and the parents working together is the way it should work (Council Chairman, p. 5-6).

This model of church, school and parents working together as a team was widely regarded as the best model for Christian schooling (Business Manager I, p. 4). It highlighted two different influences on community culture in addition to the school’s, namely the church and the home. The Principal extended the idea with his view that their enrolment policy, that he regarded as closed to children from non-Christian families, positively impacted the school’s culture by only admitting Christian cultural norms to enter the school (Principal I, p. 2).

The children in the Primary Student Focus Group were not as sure about the closed the enrolment policy as the Principal, but they still reinforced the notion that the home did have a significant bearing on the establishment of the ethos of the College. They reported that:

It really depends on the child’s background. Some people come from non-Christian families. One mum may be divorced except she is a Christian and she has her problems and the children take on those problems, so they act up in school and they might hate God for a certain reason because of their family background. It really
depends on the children, but the school does everything they can to help them (Primary Student FG, p. 13).

Further to this issue of the families’ credentials, the Principal, when asked, ‘What happens if a parent backslides (becomes no longer committed to their Christian faith)…is there pressure on that person or family to move on, (that is to take their child out of the school)?’ responded:

I guess, if a family really changed their values or a parent really changed for some reason, they would be the ones that would move on because we are fairly up front and purposeful in what we are doing at school. So, if a family changed they would become uncomfortable with our style and they may probably choose to move on themselves (Principal I, p. 2).

Here the Principal was describing not only an aspect of the enrolment policy, but he was also expressing his tangible belief in the potency of their community culture that they had created which would be strong enough to even make a parent withdraw their child if they no longer agreed with its moral values.

The parents were very pleased with the overall culture in the College. They believed that the school’s principles were just right; however, they applauded the school’s striving for even higher achievement from their children, particularly those in the primary years (Parents II, p. 6, 10). Some of the senior secondary students believed that in their earlier schooldays the way the school’s values had been applied was too restrictive (Senior Secondary FG, p. 13). One student said that they used to walk around the school so tense, just thinking what they had done wrong (Senior Secondary FG, p. 4).

On the whole, the students indicated that they appreciated the disciplined, structured community culture (Senior Secondary FG, p. 2). Illustrating this, a senior secondary boy observed:
.....the main thing I have noticed about this school is a lot of people think they shelter us too much. But personally, I feel that this is not true. I know a lot of my friends have come and gone from the school and although they weren’t the best students, as soon as they left they started getting into drugs, alcohol and all that, and they went totally warped. I see them sometimes and they say, I wish I had stayed at Sandford ...(Senior Secondary FG, p. 2).

Turning to a wider perspective on building community culture, what was uppermost in the minds of the participants was apparent from 25 observations about the mutual care and the family values being established within Sandford Christian College. For example, despite the need for the school to operate a surplus budget, the school gave fee reductions to poorer families (Parents FG II, p. 7; Principal II, p. 12), thus adding force to the caring community culture over a purely business culture.

Further, the Principal spoke at some length about his concern to work hand-in-hand with the values of Christian homes, not taking over their role, but reinforcing family and parental values. He saw this as one of their key distinctions from the state education system, and one where the school community reaps positive benefits from their partnership with the home (Parents FG II, p. 11; Principal I, p. 1-2).

The senior secondary students were the most vocal and appreciative of the mutual care and the family values. They described the school as friendly, honest, tolerant and caring. They believed that the staff understood them, knowing their names and felt it was a really nice place to be. One student stated that Sandford was the best of five different schools they had experienced and that it had greatly improved their confidence. Another said that they would send their children to Sandford as they appreciated the high moral values (Senior Secondary FG, p. 1, 3, 12, 13).

At the public school they just think for themselves, not for other people. The cheekier you are in the public school they will say you are smart, and if you are more like naïve and loving they will say you are stupid. ‘Why did you give that to someone?’ It is totally different and that’s exactly what I want for my daughter - to be brought up that
way as a Christian...My daughter just loves her teacher as well as everybody in the school (Parent II FG, p. 2, 3).

This parent had a strong conviction about the peer culture of the public system compared with Sandford. Another focused on the impact of some teacher attitudes in the public schools, where teachers might undermine and belittle children with their comments. She believed that this would not happen at Sandford. The same parent was concerned about student peer pressure in the public system that would see no harm in holding an occult séance, for example (Parent II FG, p. 2).

One of the primary students also noted the negative aspects of peer culture in public schools:

My friend goes to a non-Christian school, but he's a Christian, and everyone swears at each other and the teacher doesn’t care. The teacher even swears at the kids...what a school! I wouldn’t want to go there (Primary Student FG, p. 13).

The Principal, conceded that some parents chose Sandford as a reaction to the public system but he hoped that the majority would have chosen positively, recognising the intrinsic value of Christian education. He also sensed that there was a feeling amongst prospective parents that public schools could prepare students for VCE better than Christian schools and in that sense they had an uphill struggle to convince them to enrol (Principal I, p. 3). The Principal went on to accept that state schools did not provide the spiritual values permeating the whole curriculum and therefore there was dissatisfaction with the public system on the part of Christian parents, which made the Christian schools attractive (Principal II, p. 10).

The staff spoke appreciatively of the culture of their work place believing it to be positive and supportive:

This is the most positive place that I’ve ever taught in. I am far more settled and happy. There are no clusters of people complaining all the time and running down the management and saying what an awful place it is. That is not happening here. So I
am more settled and contented and the feedback I’ve had from my immediate superiors has been really good and encouraging. Although it doesn’t happen all that often, when it does happen it is beautiful and it just makes you feel good! So I’m happy (Staff FG II, p. 8).

Another teacher’s experience of the community culture emphasised her freedom to share her faith and the unity in the community:

You just have such an opportunity to share with the children. You are open with your faith. And I have found this year, having a lot of personal problems; the allowances made for me by management have been overwhelming. Management have basically considered my person more important, not just the job, it is like they have really looked after me as a person and not just as a teacher, so that is fantastic!

The students are real people and we have the opportunity of interacting as real people...there is very rarely the us/them business that I remember from my school days...This school perhaps still has a danger of going that way as it increases in size, because as a small school of 300, 400, 500, even perhaps with 600, there is still that family atmosphere possible, but we would have to be careful to safeguard that if we want to keep it (Staff FG I, p. 8).

The school’s caring community culture was shown by the tangible expression of Christian family values to its staff and its determination to maintain this family atmosphere, despite the growing community. The parents were also delighted with their choice of school, extolling the teachers’ time commitment and devotion to their children (Parents FG I, p. 6). One parent said that they often heard comments from people who were very happy that their children were at the school (Parents FG I, p. 14).

To conclude these remarks on the growth of the College, the problems this has brought about and the community culture they have sought to build and maintain, it would be fitting to quote the final words of the first parents’ focus group. In this instance, one
parent, despite their preceding discussion on the issues of growth, described Sandford Christian College as like *heaven on earth*:

*I have had two older children that went through the state school system and since our boy started here it’s been like heaven on earth, really, as far as I am concerned with their education, and I am happy...So, I’m supportive* (Parents FG I, p. 16)!

### 5.3.3 A United Community Culture

One of the most prolific themes to emerge from the interviews and focus groups was the theme of *unity*. There were 53 references to unity; the majority highlighted various aspects of the *excellent relationships* within the community while there were some that alluded to the unifying effect of the *caring community*.

The theme of *excellent relationships* is considered first. It appears that the seeds of this unity were planted when Sandford Christian Fellowship took over the ailing five-year-old school. The founding pastor of the Sandford fellowship had an *excellent relationship* and respect for the pastor of the school’s former covering church. The Council Chairman believed that this was the key factor underlying the decision to go through with the take over of the College (Council Chairman, p. 6).

The Chairman also spoke about the relationship between their current senior minister and the present principal, recognizing that this relationship was extremely beneficial to both men and their respective organisations (Council Chairman, p. 11). In support of this, the Assistant Principal Primary described a time of vulnerability for the College Principal when his close friend, the then deputy, left to take on a role in the covering church. She spoke of a *big gap or void* for the Principal after his colleague’s resignation. She used this situation to illustrate the Principal’s personality type where his close friendships were seen as important for the success of the organisation (AP Primary, p. 2). The English and Drama teacher’s comments confirmed this trait (English & Drama Teacher, p. 7), and the Senior Minister described the significance of their *relationship*:

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*Chapter 5 Results of the In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups* 227
In the day-to-day running, my key relationship would be with the Principal, who’s one of our elders; he’s on our leadership team. I think that’s a crucial link in that he’s on the leadership team of the church to follow where the church is going; he’s linked in, he’s not ‘out there’. Also the person that’s running the school is on a team that I’m leading so although I don’t meet with the Principal personally every week, the fact is we have a good relationship...I’d see that’s the key, probably the key for our success is this relationship. Because you can have all the policies, procedures and organisational structures but if the relationships aren’t working then things can get askew (Senior Minister, p. 1).

The relationship between the home and the school was described as good on the whole, most parents being very supportive (Infants Teacher, p. 5; Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 4, 5), however the parent body did contain some critical thinkers:

When we were first deciding to send our son...I felt that Sandford was extremely insular, very inward looking, quite dogmatic, extremely conservative and rigid. Why did I send my son here?...We were actually considering not sending our son to the secondary school here because of the narrowness of subjects and the sort of fairly inward-looking view I felt the school had in secondary school, which I felt was not very good for secondary school students who have to become part of the world, go to university and work later on. But all the complaints I had I took to the Assistant Principal Secondary. He really addressed them so well and he really had such a vision that it was going to be a terrific school. One of the best things is that he didn’t pooh-pooh any of my complaints. He took them extremely seriously and as a result our son is staying on for his secondary school...So, I’ve been very pleased with the school. Initially we had reservations and we put our son in for a year to test it, but we are very pleased and think it is an excellent decision we have made (Parent FG I, p. 2).

A new recruit to the College council saw that the key to any successful organisation was the way people related to each other. He described how he had very much enjoyed his experience of joining the council and he said that from his perspective the members related with one another very well, in an honest and open manner (Council Member, p. 3, 12).
On the same theme of effective relationships at the school level, the Business Manager described her experience in the senior management team. She said that she loved getting together with the others, even though their meetings took a long time. She felt that she could express things and be more open than in other environments because of the level of mutual trust, knowing that they all had a common purpose (Business Manager II, p. 11). From another perspective, also reflecting excellent relationships, the meetings were described as flowing really well and the Principal got a chance to relax as well as being focussed on the task (AP Primary, p. 6, 7).

The second element of the theme of unity was identified as the caring community that looked after its own. The Secondary Sport Teacher spoke of the time when he first joined the school as a student following their family’s move from Tasmania. It was the caring community that his parents were impressed by in Sandford Christian College in their search for a new school for their son:

The reason I came to the school was because Dad…visited three Christian schools in the area. From those three, the reason he chose here...was just the caring community attitude that drew him to the school (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 6).

As a participating teacher in the research, he spoke of the care, the prayer support, the love and the obvious interest of the teachers in the students (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 4). He felt that there was a particular sort of discipline within the classroom that made it conducive for the teacher to approach the student and actually find out where they were at. This enabled the teachers to focus on each student and to build relationships with them. The outcome of this was that the teachers were able to speak one-on-one with the students in a natural manner (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 9). In answer to the question, ‘Why do staff like working here?’, one of the teachers in the first focus group said they felt supported in the community and referred to the sense of Christian community that many experienced at the school:

The people make life worth living. They care. It is like being in a family, for me anyway, with family all around the world, it is just my family and I love it. I just love bringing my whole self to school instead of leaving my Christian self at the gate, which
Finally, in consideration of the *united community culture*, the participants used various expressions to convey the elusive meaning of the word *unity*. The Principal described the school as serving *many, many different local churches*. He was acknowledging that they did not want the families to feel pressured into joining Sandford Christian Fellowship (Principal I, p. 5). In order to rationalise this approach, they saw themselves as distinctly Christian but non-denominational (Business Manager I, p. 6), the Council Chairman having conceded that the College only drew 50 per cent of its students from the covering church. Thus he was recognising their significant ministry role to the other churches with whom they were in unity (Council Chairman, p. 6).

The Principal’s role in fostering *unity* was seen as very important. The Assistant Principal Primary talked about her proposition that he should address the general staff meeting every second week to express his *vision and passion and to maintain team unity* (AP Primary, p. 5-6). Likewise, the Secondary Sport Teacher recognised the Principal’s pivotal role in maintaining *unity* (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 4, 13). The Business Manager also stressed the importance of having the right person in the principalship because of the need to have both the church and school leadership *aligned in the same direction* (Business Manager II, p. 1).

It was evident that the community held strong convictions on the importance of actively building their own distinctive culture, especially in terms of their *excellent relationships*, the *caring community* and *unity*. The participants’ discussions were more centred around community-building strategies than on physical growth issues, which were primarily the domain of the leadership.

**5.4 Leadership Styles**

Ten themes relating to leadership style were identified in the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups. The terms used for the styles were largely those of...
the participants’ themselves although, two of the terms collaborative and dictatorial were used only occasionally. In this report, the context and descriptions of styles have been provided in order to establish the connection with the terms more commonly found in the literature. The numbers of references to each style are indicated in Figure 5:

![Figure 5 Leadership Styles](image)

**Figure 5 Leadership Styles**

It was interesting that controlling leadership had the highest frequency of references from a community that was described as happy, and like heaven on earth (Parents FG I, p. 16). Perhaps this reflected a concern that the leadership might become controlling again, given the leadership’s reputation early on in the College’s history for being dictatorial in style (Staff FG II, p. 10). The majority of the references to controlling leadership did not identify individuals but rather related to the school as a whole, and perhaps the senior management team by implication.
The next two themes by frequency, collaborative and visionary leadership, were much more predictable in a community that has prided itself on its collegiality and culture of mutual support in the midst of rapid growth (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 1). The references to collaborative style were approximately evenly split between the Principal and the senior management team, while the theme of visionary leadership related primarily to the Senior Minister, with the balance referring to the Principal.

The discussion of independence mainly concerned the Principal and the College council, and reflected their strong adherence to the vision as well as a reluctance to be too closely controlled by any Christian schooling organisations. Sandford Christian College was known as one of the few independent schools in the new Australian Christian schooling movement (Business Manager I, p. 4). The theme of integrity was usually used in reference to the Principal and was used to emphasis his honesty.

Delegated leadership was most frequently discussed in the context of the structure of the leadership and governance of the College, with references being evenly divided between the College council, Principal and the senior management team; whereas the question of stability of leadership was more exclusively used in regard to the College council and the Principal. Situational leadership was raised in the context of the Senior Minister and Principal.

The small numbers of comments that related to dictatorial leadership were chiefly reserved for the current or past members of the senior management team, whereas the single reference to servant leadership was attributed to the Assistant Principal Secondary.

The consideration of all ten leadership styles separately would not have been an effective description of the data presented by the participants, nor would it have afforded any depth of understanding to the key levels of leadership. In order to present a much richer and more meaningful perspective of the College’s leadership it was decided to focus on the various leadership roles and then to apply the style descriptors to them. The next four sections apply each of these ten styles to the four main levels of leadership in Sandford Christian College, namely:
1. The Senior Minister of Sandford Christian Fellowship  
2. Sandford Christian College Council  
3. The College Principal  
4. Senior Management Team

5.4.1 The Senior Minister of Sandford Christian Fellowship

The Senior Minister believed that vision comes from God and he made no apology for claiming to be the one individual that regularly received the main vision for the church and its various ministries. He quoted Biblical precedent to support this claim:

*From a biblical point of view, I would see God tends to give vision to individuals...He came to David, He came to Moses, He came to an individual, gave them a vision and then empowers them. Nehemiah was another example. Then there’s a team to talk to about it, Moses and the elders and whatever but God tends to give vision to individuals rather than to committees or groups. That’s a biblical perspective...*

*In our church environment, Pentecostal churches would typically lean on the side of high visionary leadership, that would be one reason why many of the mega churches are probably more of the Pentecostal persuasion because a strong leader who gets a sense of vision and can communicate that, motivates people, builds a team around them to make it happen and that’s why the church is successful.*

*On the other hand, some other types of churches that are a little more democratic, a group hires the pastor to do a job...So to balance all that out, the flipside is you don’t want some leader who’s got some hair-brained idea that really...there’s no accountability. So the way it works in the church here, is that we are governed by a team of elders, of which I am an elder and one of them is the first among equals, which is one phrase we use, which is the Senior Minister. So the way it works here as far as the big picture vision is concerned, that’s something I have to pray and give a lot of time to but I process it through a team to provide balance...*(Senior Minister, p. 3).*
It was interesting to note that the Senior Minister drew a clear parallel, both directly and by implication, between his view of vision and the success of the College. He believed that his vision has been highly influential on the success of Sandford Christian Fellowship and College. This quote also described his style of leadership, namely, to be accountable to others with whom he would work through the implications of the vision, as well as being collaborative with his close team of leaders.

As the Senior Minister of the church, he expressed a very genuine interest in the College (Senior Minister, p. 1). He believed that he would get the vision going with the Principal, whom he also regards as a visionary (Senior Minister, p. 4). He also noted that the vision needed to be big enough for people to grow within it, without being confined. This recognised that good staff need room to grow, just as plants in plant pots, and may have been a reference to the Principal, whom the community regarded as having grown enormously since he became leader of the College (Senior Minister, p. 3).

Despite the church responsibilities that pulled the Senior Minister away from the school, he noted that he was on the College council that met ten times a year, of which he would not miss more than two (Senior Minister, p. 1-2). The Senior Minister was the main visionary in the recent decision to move towards the triple streamed College of 1000 students and he also raised the idea of an additional campus in the future (Senior Minister, p. 5; Business Manager II, p. 8).

Finally, the Senior Minister talked about his own leadership style. He was very clear about describing himself as a situational leader. He would certainly refute that he was autocratic (Senior Minister, p. 3), instead believing that he used a consultative style (Business Manager II, p. 6) and that he was a good delegator (Senior Minister, p. 1). He described how he had used situational leadership:

...one is an extremely confident, motivated, visionary, bang bang leader and someone else is, maybe a little new to the experience, maybe a little less motivated...I will lead them differently. You don’t use the same leadership style for every person; you use it differently in different situations. So with the Principal, he’s a pretty highly motivated,
confident person, he doesn’t need a strongly directive approach. So in relating to him I’d be more of a coach - how’s it going? What can I do to help? If someone else is running a ministry I may need to say ‘hey you may need to do this’ be a little bit more directive (Senior Minister, p. 2-3).

5.4.2 Sandford Christian College Council

The covering church will be increasingly challenged over the degree to which it can continue to own the direction of their school (Senior Minister, p. 8) as opposed to allowing other churches to have increasing control (Senior Minister, p. 1). Already there were two council members from other churches (Senior Minister, p. 8), which reflected a willingness for change, and an embracing of collaborative principles. However, it was evident that the Senior Minister was concerned about where this trend would lead. Whichever way the future unfolds on this issue, the Council Chairman was open to change and recognised the need for a better balance of members in order to increase their effectiveness. He believed there should be a representative with an educational perspective external to the College, in addition to the Principal (Council Chairman, p. 11).

The College was in fact governed by the board of directors of the church, which had delegated management of the school to the College council (Principal II, p. 7). The council was not democratically constituted as the members were appointed (Principal II, p. 7; Senior Minister, p. 8). Its mission was to help the school succeed and to empower the principal. The council provided an objective viewpoint for the principal outside of his daily routine, which was primarily focussed on the finances, budgets and buildings (Senior Minister, p. 9).

The Chairman had been associated with the school since the early 1980s when he was asked to establish the first council (Business Manager I, p. 8). The continuity of the membership of the council has been seen as one of its greatest strengths (Senior Minister, p. 8). The Chairman’s leadership has been greatly appreciated. One of the newest members described him as a quiet achiever, an absolute solid guy, just a great guy... (Council Member, p. 12).
The Chairman was quite forthright in his view of how his council should govern. He was evidently a passionate believer in the church oversight model for Christian schooling. Typically these schools came under the Christian Community Schools umbrella, which has more recently been superseded by Christian Schools Australia. This was not the case in Sandford Christian College’s case as it was independent. The Chairman was opposed to the parent-controlled model that was not governed by any one church but usually a committee of caring Christian parents from a number of churches. Such schools were generally part of the Christian Parent Controlled Schools organisation.

*The trouble with a lot of the Christian schools is that they are parent controlled. There are so many forms of control of schools. We have always been against the parental control model. I have always been wary of being a parent-controlled and I guess the Principal is very strong on this too. When you get a mish-mash of different types of control, we just feel you could be walking into trouble so we didn’t feel comfortable in doing that* (Council Chairman, p. 9).

These comments showed their intention to maintain control and not to let their vision be sidetracked by the most vocal parents of the day. This resonated with the Senior Minister’s views on the importance of vision for the direction of the College. If he believed that he and his team had the right vision, they would be unwilling to allow their direction to be diverted by parent-power in the future.

A further illustration of the council’s objective to retain control came from discussions with George Moran’s Christian schooling organization. Moran had approached a number of Christian schools with a proposal that they join his organisation and he would apply for government funding on their behalf. Moran’s system enabled one such school known to the Council Chairman, to fall by four funding categories, and thus increase their recurrent grant revenue considerably in return for ceding their control to George Moran. The Chairman admitted that the financial temptation was fairly strong, but they decided against joining up on the basis that they would lose their autonomy (Council Chairman, p. 9).
The College council was an *ends board* (Senior Minister, p. 2), that is to say, one that had delegated management to the Principal, who was the CEO of the organization (Senior Minister, p. 1). The Principal and the Business Manager controlled the council meeting agendas (Business Manager II, p. 8). Although they were the only two members of College staff on the council, there had been no pressure for more representation on account of the enormous trust the community had in the Principal to represent them effectively (AP Primary, p. 8).

More pointedly, if there were any issues that the community needed addressed, they would naturally seek to have the matter resolved at the College level as the Principal had been *delegated to manage* the College. As a result of this structure, there was little direct connection between the College staff and the council members, other than the fact that the majority of council members were parents who regularly saw staff at parent-teacher interviews (Council Member, p. 13).

### 5.4.3 The Principal

The Council Chairman said that the council believed that they had God’s man in their current principal, as he had as great a vision as the Senior Minister. The council saw him as the visionary for the College in the same way they saw the Senior Minister as the visionary for the church (Council Chairman, p. 11). The Business Manager had developed a picture that described the Principal’s visionary attribute. She called it *peak-to-peak vision*, meaning he could see clearly the next peak or objective from the current position and he rallied the community to press forward to the next hurdle without being overcome by detail (Business Manager I, p. 5). The Principal was known for giving valuable input to the staff, setting high goals while challenging the staff to continually improve (Council Member, p. 16; English & Drama Teacher, p. 7).

The Principal developed a *warm and personable relationship* with members of the community where one-on-one talks were very easy (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 7). However, from a contrary perspective, he *played his cards close to his chest* (Council Member, p. 5), not being willing to become too personally involved with his staff (AP
Above all, he was widely noted as a man of integrity (AP Primary, p. 7-8; AP Secondary, p. 3; Business Manager I, p. 4; English & Drama Teacher, p. 2). His Assistant Principal Primary, described him most eloquently...as a man of real integrity...you could not meet a more honest person... This testimony was made in the context of her commenting on her complete trust in him at College council meetings, thus negating the need for further staff representation on that body (AP Primary, p. 8). The Principal was perceived to be doing a fantastic job even in the tough times (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 5, 8), not compromising his high moral standards (AP Primary, p. 10; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 5;) while commanding the respect of all and being gracious enough to forgive genuine mistakes (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 5, 7). Indirectly, an infants teacher recognised that the College’s leadership and, by implication, the Principal’s was a strong leadership, as the staff did not walk all over their leaders as she had observed in some of her earlier appointments (Infants Teacher, p. 6). She went on to comment about some honest confrontations that she had had with the Principal:

_I respect the Principal; I have brought some challenging issues to him, many times. I have had to sit in his office and cried. The last time I did that was just a few weeks ago and I wrote it down, and he really respected me. I can approach him about anything and there were some pretty serious issues...I really like the leadership here – in a way that they are the leaders and you can approach them, say this is a good idea, but when it comes to it, it’s their decision and whether you like that or not, you respect that...When you have a crowd pleaser, wanting to please everyone, rather than saying ‘hang on, we have to set this boundary here’, it just does not work. I have come to appreciate that a lot about the leadership here_ (Infants Teacher, p. 6).

The Senior Minister of the church regarded the Principal as indispensable, his role as crucial to the success of the College, and the culture of the College as a direct reflection of the Principal (Senior Minister, p. 1, 9). He noted the pivotal role the Principal was playing in the life of the College (Senior Minister, p. 11):

...we’ve chatted through this, I mean if he wasn’t there and you had to put someone in who maybe wasn’t from our church, that’s a whole new dynamic. Or if you put
someone from our church that didn’t have the same competencies that he did. So he’s the key man right now, carrying a pretty big load just with maintaining the school, let alone all the buildings and expansions we’re doing (Senior Minister, p. 10).

In addition to being a good listener and delegator (AP Primary, p. 3; Council Member, p. 4; English & Drama Teacher, p. 8), the Assistant Principal Secondary, described the Principal’s leadership style in some detail as consultative, approachable and resulting in the sense that people felt heard:

…the Principal’s leadership style is similar to the one that I’ve chosen to adopt. I’ve been very impressed with his consultative style, he shows an obvious degree of humility in the sense that he does value the staff, he values the students and really sees that personal integrity is important. I think that there is no one that could rightly dispute any of those traits in him. I think that a lot of that, in addition to his wisdom, has helped shape the College over a long period of time. I understand he took on his leadership role at a relatively young age as far as principals go...He’s had a huge impact on the development of the College and I’d have to say that working under him and with him has been a privilege because it’s really helped me to grow and in turn sow back into the school and I think a lot of people could easily underestimate how difficult the role of a principal can be. It’s very hard to quantify what a principal does and very hard I think to appreciate how difficult the most senior role in the school is….the buck stopping with that person etc. I think that he takes a lot of it in his stride he takes it very well...he’s prepared to admit when he doesn’t know about a particular area and needs the advice of other people, he consults fairly widely (AP Secondary, p. 3-4).

Reflecting on the Principal’s leadership style, the staff believed that the school was very collaborative (Staff FG II, p. 10) and democratic (Staff FG II, p. 9). The staff felt safe, illustrated very graphically by the comment that they never felt that the boss was going to chop their heads off (Staff FG II, p. 15).

Without doubt, the Principal’s role in the College was indispensable. His strong visionary style was tempered by his warm and approachable manner that was full of
integrity. He was above all a collaborative, consultative leader who drew the respect of the whole community.

5.4.4 Senior Management Team

The senior management team was established to consider College council proposals, issues, urgent business and some staff initiatives (AP Secondary, p. 4). This group was made up of the Principal, as the CEO (Senior Minister, p. 8), Business Manager and the two assistant Principals, primary and secondary. Previously the group was larger, numbering six instead of the current four. The other two were the infants’ co-ordinator who at the time of the research became the Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, and the previous head of secondary. The current Assistant Principal Secondary, had been invited onto the senior management team to represent years 11 and 12 (AP Secondary, p. 4).

The reduction in size had probably helped discussions to flow a little more freely...the more people you have on a team I suppose the harder it is to have a free flowing conversation. I don’t think that the dynamic is necessarily better because you obviously don’t have the benefit of the two extra people, but I think that’s been more than made up for by the fact of the free flowing conversation...good relationships on that team really do help it to work well (AP Secondary, p. 5).

The team met regularly for half the day on Monday afternoons to talk about stuff. The staff in general were unaware of what they discussed, so some felt a little excluded, especially if they had been in the school for some time and were more actively involved in the past. Nevertheless, the staff recognised that in a large organisation such discussions are to be expected (Staff FG I, p. 3).

The Business Manager commented that she was less involved with the staff on a daily basis than she was formerly (Business Manager II, p 4). The Assistant Principal Primary, had worked in the school for nearly as long as the Principal, and over that time she believed that she had become less black and white in her thinking. However,
the Principal, being an effective listener, attempted to find *win-win solutions* after protracted negotiations that generated tension between them on account of her desire for quick resolutions. Nevertheless, she could not speak more highly of her leader (AP Primary, p. 10).

The comments made by the interviewees and focus group members seemed to be polarised in their perceptions of the senior management team. The majority raised concerns about the team being too controlling, while the remainder reflected a perception that the group was very collaborative in its management.

At a superficial level, the school’s leadership was described as controlling. For example, the children were *encouraged to put their hands up to worship God* in chapel services. They were *not forced*, they *didn’t get into trouble if they didn’t* but they were definitely *encouraged* (Primary Student FG, p. 12). In contrast, the children’s perception of the school’s approach to discipline did not disapprove of the way they were being treated:

*...the teachers are really good and they really care. In the state school you wouldn’t get that. In some other Christian schools you still don’t get that. I talked to a friend who goes to a different Christian school and she said they let the kids do whatever they like. Like run around and stuff and they don’t discipline them. This school has, overall, a good balance of discipline and fairness. But there are a few areas that need working on. Everyone loves the school and I love the school* (Primary Students FG, p. 12).

Further areas of apparent excessive control quoted included the management’s censorship of the VCE English books that could be chosen for study (Principal I, p. 9). Consequently it was considered wiser to carefully select books permitted in the library rather than risk offending some highly sensitive parents (Business Manager I, p. 9). A junior secondary student felt that the rules governing hairstyle were *far too strict*, claiming that they *personally disliked the hair rules* (Junior Secondary FG, p. 1, 2).
One of the newer teachers, the English & Drama teacher, talked at length about the rigorous interview process she had undergone to be appointed onto the staff at Sandford Christian College. It was her perception from discussions at the interview, that the College’s stand on certain doctrinal issues differed from her own, implying that the leadership strived for uniformity or control over what was discussed in the school community. She went on to say:

I feel as a teacher you have a responsibility to stand by the ethos you’ve been given. You’re given a special position, so it’s very delicate. With the junior students, I would, in particular, stand by...the faith that ‘we’ believe in...but if I had a senior student and I felt it important for them to see that I had a personal relationship with God that’s my own I would share on a personal level with them (English & Drama Teacher, p. 3).

This quotation was from a very candid discussion about her entry into the community through the interview process conducted by the senior management team. The discussion covered her own unique stand and her wish to be employed as she was. As a result, she was determined to be completely honest about her views, which she knew might be at variance with the College norms and its Pentecostal background (English & Drama Teacher, p. 1). The fact that she was successfully employed dispelled the assertion by some that the senior management team was too controlling of people’s views. Nevertheless, the experience of this teacher also reflected the College’s fundamental desire to maintain unity of expression on doctrinal issues.

In the closing remarks of one of the staff focus groups, one of the teachers was more explicit about their perception of control:

I think some people can perceive and get a little upset about the amount of control that might be exerted over staff. I think some of us, I mean all of us, tend to be treated like students...There is a lot of control that can cause some to get very distressed at times and forget just what a great place this really is. This is a part of the Kingdom of God. We are all doing a really important job here and we are all put here for a specific purpose. I find that part of my job is to remind some people of that...We feel we are treated like kids at times, but then, you look at the other side of the coin and we have
advantages here that you would never get anywhere else. So it is a matter of keeping a balanced view (Staff FG II, p. 15).

Another member of staff stated that they knew of staff who had left because they felt powerless to change things in the early days. It was their view that if people were not satisfied with the way things were done then they could find another school. In response, another teacher who had been on staff for over ten years said that the school had noticeably changed for the better, it had improved heaps in that time (Staff FG I, p. 2).

The Assistant Principal Secondary, believed that most staff understood the necessity for decisions to be made by a limited number of people. Yet in the same part of the interview he extolled the Principal’s approachableness and the fact that most staff felt valued and heard by him. He rationalised the streamlined decision-making process by referring to the practice by which...policy was established by the school board and then the day-to-day aspects were discussed at the management level (AP Secondary, p. 4). However, implying an openness to others’ views and input, he described his own style of servanthood as an essential attribute in the sense of being available to people (AP Secondary, p. 1). His style was very much in contrast to his predecessor’s. She was described as having a dictatorial style, being a little bit behind the times (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 9).

In a discussion with the Principal about the results of the staff survey on the decision-making process, the Principal was not surprised that there were some who felt dissatisfied with the process. He cited the College’s recent growth and the addition of new staff who had come to the school with quite different expectations. Suffice to say, he was aware that there were some staff who would appreciate a greater involvement and he admitted that he had been considering ways of involving them more than in the past (Principal I, p. 14).

Finally, in this overview of the impact of the senior management team, positive comments were made about the collaborative style of leadership pervading the College. The comments discussed above alluding to the possibility of excessive
control often carried riders that the College was a great place to work (Staff FG II, p. 15). The Assistant Principal Primary, was very excited about her primary staff meetings, you have got everyone giving their two bobs worth on everything. However, she observed that at the general staff meeting everyone was quiet, listening and thoughtful (AP Primary, p. 7). Perhaps this more reflected the size of the meeting than the presence of either controlling or collaborative leadership. The Assistant Principal Primary, concluded that staff were always consulted on major projects and building plans and she had never heard of any staff having sought more consultation (AP Primary, p. 5, 6). Perhaps the truth lay in the middle!

5.5 Management

There was less than half the number of references made to management than there had been to leadership issues and the comments were easily classified as examples of either good or poor management. It was also evident that there was some misunderstanding of terms on the part of at least one of the participants, because when they were asked about the Principal’s leadership style they began to describe his management style (Council Member, p. 3-4).

5.5.1 Effective Management

Allusions to good management fell into two parts. The more general, subjective observations are considered first, followed by the more specific concrete examples.

The Principal, who knew all the senior students’ names (Senior Secondary FG, p. 12), was appreciated for his gift as a good communicator (Primary Curriculum Coordinator, p. 3), and inspired the staff with confidence in the management (AP Primary, p. 6). In turn, the staff felt understood and appreciated by the Principal, whom they respected and trusted on account of the care he took in making any decision. This was illustrated by this quotation from the Secondary Sport Teacher, who described the management structure from the College council through the
principal to the assistant principals, and from the senior management team to the team leaders and the classroom teachers:

_The way he makes decisions! I’ve never seen him make a decision that hasn’t been thought through. Whether it’s a small decision or it’s a large decision, I’m sure he spends time praying about it, speaking with the Lord about it. Going through all the right channels to make sure that the decision is made correctly. Getting advice from the board… I guess with the senior management team, there’s a small group there, then he’s got the board and then below that there’s the assistant principals who would take care of the teachers and also the staff team leaders just below that who look after specific teachers. I think all that has allowed for a real process for a decision to be made and every voice can be heard, allowing for people’s thoughts and opinions to be heard but not always answered in the way they might like. When people feel they are heard I think that they feel they are appreciated. It does create a positive atmosphere amongst a group of people who would be working in any situation_ (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 7-8).

Confidence in the College management was evident. A number of staff testified to the fact that teachers’ issues were quickly addressed, only one problem having to be taken to the board directly in twenty years (AP Primary, p. 9; Business Manager I, p. 9; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 8). Confidence was also placed in the two assistant principals, secondary (AP Secondary, p. 6; Parent FG I, p. 12; Senior Secondary FG, p. 4) and primary. The latter’s eye for detail and the management of her teachers’ programmes was greatly appreciated (AP Primary, p. 3, 4, 9; Infants Teacher, p. 6; Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 5, 9, 10; Staff FG II, p. 7).

The participants illustrated some _good management_ practices by quoting a wide variety of very specific examples. The Principal referred to management’s perspective on the setting of the annual student fee level. In answer to a question about how the school had attracted its enrolments, he said:

_Even though we have a comparatively low fee, when you compare us with the larger, or wealthier private schools, we are generally a quarter of their costs, so they charge_
per term what we would charge in a year. But for a family, if you have three in the school, it is going to cost you 6 to 7 thousand dollars. For our families that is not insignificant. So in other words, what I am saying is, there is a genuine sacrifice for people to put their children in the school. They are doing it because we can offer something to them that they can’t get or they have concerns with what’s out there free. We wouldn’t have them if they could get what they have here for free somewhere close, somewhere more convenient. We would not have them enrolled here if they could get that free in a local state school (Principal II, p. 10).

When the Principal was pressed to comment on how the parent community was actually handling the fees, he explained their approach to setting the annual fee increases:

We are not starting fresh every year, there is a history and so you are getting a feel from year to year how your parents are going with the fee levels. There will always be those who struggle enormously so we have fee remissions for those families. You have this large middle group and that’s the group you need to have a feeling for in terms of, can they afford fee increases and those sorts of things? So as a growing school we need to keep income at a very healthy level to meet the demands of building programs which are huge. But at the same time we have to accurately judge what our school community can afford. So you go external and look at what is happening in similar schools and what their fee increases may be from year to year. You look at the increases in the education industry in terms of what is happening, salary increases, and all those sorts of things. They all have to be taken into consideration. At the end of the day you have to offer a quality educational program. It cannot be done on love. There is a cost to it. So in the end, it is judging, knowing the school community (Principal II, p. 12).

Their careful management has been supported by the issue of re-enrolment forms towards the end of each year to the current families to assist them in their planning for the succeeding year (Council Member, p. 6). Other ways that the finances have been managed well have included the College council consistently reducing the debt level
per student (Council Chairman, p. 1), and their classification of teaching loads with small classes as less than full loads (Business Manager II, p. 10).

There were some examples of high spending that were expected to bring significant long-term benefits. The timing of these innovations illustrated brilliant visionary leadership whilst their implementation demonstrated excellent management. Three examples were the opening of the double stream year 7 with small numbers marketed as a specific attraction to families (Principal I, p. 12), the introduction of some classes with only two or three students at VCE level for subjects that they wanted to grow in succeeding years (Principal II, p. 2) and the high priority placed on the utilisation of computers despite the expense (Staff FG II, p. 5).

Moving away from financial management, the school structure was considered to be sound (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 3), however, the Assistant Principal Primary, argued for the need for a new structure (AP Primary, p. 12). Perhaps this was merely reflecting a school in transition from small to large, and whose management was preparing for future growth (AP Secondary, p. 1).

Finally, to conclude this brief review of effective management practices, two illustrations from two different spheres not developed earlier: all the secondary teachers had their teaching programmes checked once per week by their team leaders (Staff FG II, p. 7), and it was said that poor student behaviour was identified quickly and the boys dealt with (Parents I, p. 12). These examples illustrated a school management that appeared to be maintaining its standards and not allowing slackness to set in.

5.5.2 Ineffective Management

Despite all the success stories described above, some of the respondents did have some concerns to raise, not all was perfect at Sandford Christian College.
Some of the questions about management cited *the early days*, the years before the school was taken over by the current oversight church. It was suggested that, although nearly 20 years earlier, poor management decisions in the early history of the school may have impacted upon the school at the time of the study (Council Chairman, p. 1). The school offered a very low fee base for many years in order to attract enrolments, to the extent that at the time of the take-over by Sandford Christian Fellowship, the school was not viable (Council Chairman, p. 2), and for the sake of the vision, some positions at the school in the early days went unpaid (Staff FG II, p. 1).

Regarding the current situation, there was one concern raised in one of the parent focus groups about the College management. They cited their experience of delays by management in responding to parental concerns (Parents FG I, p. 12). However, to put this in perspective, aggrieved staff were the group that raised the greatest number of concerns about the College’s management, compared with the one parental comment and none from the students.

Perhaps a legacy of earlier miss-management, on occasions staff have had to pay for their teaching resources themselves and at least one teacher has found the Principal to be too busy and less personable than she would have liked (Infants Teacher, p. 4). Another teacher reported that she was working to the best of her ability but felt that she *failed to fit in* (Staff FG I, p. 6). One of the administration team complained that there were no regular performance reviews for their section of the school (Staff FG II, p. 8). A further staff member thought that the general staff meetings were too long, too consultative and concentrated on too much trivia (Staff FG II, p. 7, 10). Finally, one long standing staff member, felt that, for all the talk about good relations between the church and the school, she could see no evidence of it other than for the Principal’s own relationship with the church (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 4).
5.6 Teaching and Learning

This penultimate section of the results chapter continues the progression from the initial dream about the school through issues of growth, leadership and management to the core business of the community - teaching and learning. The following subsections consider the students, the teachers, the Personalised Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) system, and finally the class size issue.

5.6.1 The Students

Enrolments influence outcomes. If the school had a selective enrolment policy in terms of academic potential then obviously there would be excellent academic outcomes, but there was no hint of such a policy, quite the contrary. Therefore the Principal’s expectations appeared realistic:

Well, I think we have to demonstrate that those students that should be getting very good results, do get them. But there is no doubt there is a huge education job I have to do as well, in terms of parents’ understanding that our sort of school has children from all different sorts of socio-economic and education backgrounds and that some students will do very well and some will struggle significantly. And so they need to, the whole school community needs to understand that a range of results is what is normal and to be expected. What we are looking for is students that, do as well as we know they can do (Principal I, p. 4).

There were a high percentage of Asian families enrolled in the school whose views of education were very different from the typical Australian one. Therefore it was understood that their expectations would have influenced the teaching and learning to some degree:

That’s true. I think we Asian parents need to make more adjustments...the expectations that we have are all relative because I have heard, in my classroom,
parents say, ‘The children are doing so much, too much homework.’ And others say, ‘It is not enough, mine do another couple of hours.’ (Parent FG II, p. 9).

If you come from an Asian culture then the parents would say the academic standards are not high enough. They educate their students a lot harder. I think they have more class room time, more getting stuck into books, and things like that. Let’s forget about sports and outings. Let’s stop Drama. Let’s get stuck into schoolwork, serious stuff, times tables from Grade One, which we did. I can’t remember now what Grade you start with times tables. So I think it has a lot to do with culture (Parent FG II, p. 9).

The parents, in general, had confidence that their children were being prepared for academic success in adult life:

...one of the things we liked when we came to the school was I looked at the blackboards around the school and saw they had nouns, verbs, times tables and that sort of thing and I looked at the Principal and said, ‘You teach this?’ and he said, ‘We do, indeed’. I now teach at university level and I’ve got students coming through from the top private schools who cannot do basic Arithmetic, they cannot tell me two tenths equals 0.2, and these are our future nurses who will be giving medication based on calculations and they just kill their patient because they don’t know how to do calculations. They cannot spell, they cannot write. So I have been very pleased with what I’ve seen here. I can only go on Secondary,...comparatively speaking to other schools in the state, academically, they are right up there with them. I am hoping that when my daughter finishes year 12, she will be able to do basic Maths and spell, read and write...I am passionate about the love of learning (Parent FG II, p. 12).

While the school did not select on the basis of socio-economic and education backgrounds (Principal I, p. 4), there was an intentional closed enrolment policy that only took children from Christian homes (Principal I, p. 1). The rational behind this was so that they could focus their attention on realising their vision that all their children should be taught of the Lord with home church and school in harmony (Principal’s Newsletter, 1st December 2000). Therefore it was evidently surprising to one of the primary students that some of the children were from non-Christian homes
(Primary Students FG, p. 12). Perhaps the reality was that the vast majority were from Christian homes but this student happened to know the one or two exceptions.

The Assistant Principal Primary recognised that her children were being prepared for a full time impact on their world. She was thinking well beyond what happened between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm each workday. She was always concerned with the impact of the teachers’ teaching on the children’s learning:

*The children are always being trained not just to receive information, but also to acquire the tools to go out there and evangelise and to make sure that the Word has a good grounding in their life...I just know from last year when I was teaching, Monday morning in particular; ‘Who did you impact on the weekend?’...That’s why it is always important to talk about the shows on TV, so that their whole life is influenced; but in a nice way, so that no child feels condemned* (AP Primary, p. 11).

Irrespective of their home lives, the teachers described the students as *warm* and *friendly* (English & Drama Teacher, p. 5; Junior Secondary FG, p. 10), and were trusted and competent enough to help the staff with their computer system (Staff II FG, p. 6).

The school had a *good name*, largely generated by the reputation of the students. Visits to retirement villages by the school choir and the primary concert, where the local press were invited to attend and to report on the event, were quoted as examples of ways in which their reputation was being enhanced by the current student body (AP Primary, p. 11).

So far this section has considered the journey from enrolment to graduation. This next part considers the rather more intangible, long-term impact of the College on the adult lives of the students. The Senior Minister posed the hypothetical spectre of children leaving his College to enter *little Christian ghettos* destined for mere survival, as a most unsatisfactory outcome. He would much rather the young graduates, *go out and engage* with their culture (Senior Minister, p. 7).
The Assistant Principal Primary revealed her perspective on this long-term goal when she expressed her feelings on seeing an ex-student return to ‘show-off’ his baby:

There’s nothing nicer than having a student come back and showing you their children and just saying what the school did for them…he was a student I had way back, may be 19 years ago, and now he is grown up and married and working at the church. I said to the students, nothing blesses a teacher more than when you have had a lovely student and when you meet them years later and they have the same qualities. That is what the whole thing is about, lifetime foundations (AP Primary, p. 11).

One council member, based on testimonies he had heard, was in no doubt about the College having had a significant influence on the children. He felt that the children were cared for, loved and enabled to blossom and reach their potential (Council Member, p. 10 - 11). He believed one of the great strengths of the College was the compulsory weekly church service. Those students he had spoken with evidently cherished their time at Sandford. He observed that the value of school life, as with many things, is often not realised until it is over (Council Member, p. 11-12).

Both the Business Manager and the Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator added anecdotal detail to the question of the impact of the College on the graduates’ adult lives. Each spoke about particular ex-students they had known and what each had gone on to do in adult life. Two had returned to Sandford as teachers and one was the financial manager of Sandford Christian Fellowship (Business Manager I, p. 2, 3; Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 5).

Finally, one unusual twist to the discussion regarding the impact of the College on past students was the not uncommon phenomena of ex-students, having left for financial or family difficulties, later returning after a few years, as the draw of Sandford was so strong (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 7).
5.6.2 The Teachers

There were 52 references to the high quality of the teachers compared with 39 comments about teacher’s perceived mistakes or failures. The positive themes are considered first followed by the negative ones. The positive references have been grouped into three sub-sections, the teachers’ employment process, their qualities and finally some organisational traits that were believed to have directly impacted on the teachers’ performance.

The employment process for teaching staff was regarded as unique and rigorous (Business Manager I, p. 5; English & Drama Teacher, p. 1). There was an emphasis on employing teachers with a good record of success (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 11) and who would make their time in Sandford Christian College their Christian ministry (Council Member, p. 16, 17). In answer to a question on how the school would maintain the distinctive Christian ethos despite the predicted growth, the Business Manager cited the significance of the interview process in this regard:

...you want people who are really switched on and really actively involved in their own church and see this as another part of their ministry they would have in caring for and teaching these children...It is so important where we draw our teaching staff, admin staff and other support staff from; because if you keep guards on those things, even though numbers grow...(Business Manager I, p. 6).

The employment of staff involved two distinct panel interviews (AP Primary, p. 9). The English and Drama Teacher was a recent addition to the staff, having previously taught in the Catholic system, and she remembered the process clearly. The faith aspects of the process were discussed earlier in Section 5.4.4 on the Senior Management Team.

Success at the first interview allowed entry to the broader second interview that focussed on the applicant’s teaching perspectives. The English and Drama Teacher’s resume was not taken at face value, and so the interviewers inquired, in particular, about her knowledge of certain curriculum areas. Following this interview, references
were followed up. Finally, there was effectively a third interview, this time a telephone interview with the Principal. Needless to say she was successful (English & Drama Teacher, p. 2). Upon appointment, new staff were given a three-month review and, since 2000, all staff had received annual performance appraisals (Business Manager I, p. 4; Staff FG I, p. 6; Staff FG II, p. 7).

The parents thought the quality of the teachers was wonderful (Parents FG II, p. 2) and that they were very approachable (Parents FG II, p. 5, 8). In a question about the validity of the parent survey they had just completed, one parent offered this testimony:

*I just want to say something about the teachers...we have had occasion to see the teachers this year in relation to one of our children. We sat down and discussed things, and worked out strategies together. They are always happy to see me. I think they would rather that I would go and see them if I have a concern rather than hold back. I just think they are wonderful Christian teachers and you know your kids are safe here...*(Parents FG II, p. 2).

In addition, the teachers were seen as really nice, very patient and were not prone to victimising the children (Primary Students FG, p. 3, 8; Senior Secondary FG, p. 10). The junior secondary students spoke highly of several teachers as people who understood them and had genuine affection for them. One was particularly noted for being very spiritual (Junior Secondary FG, p. 2, 7, 9, 10, 11). In short, the student/teacher relationships were seen as very good (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 9).

A further theme that related to the quality of the teachers was illustrated by the teachers’ love of working in the College (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 13). The teachers were regarded as mentors or heroes for the students (Business Manager I, p. 6; Principal II, p. 13) while their commitment was unquestioned. Illustrating this commitment, students who joined Sandford from other schools were given generous attention and individual tutorials were established at lunch times for children in need of specific help (Staff II FG, p. 12). A perceptive senior student, describing one of his brilliant teachers, went on to say:
Our teacher absolutely loves his subject, we love it too because...of the way he expresses it through emotions – it is not boring, we have so much fun with him and we learn so much...he is so strict with us but at the same time he knows how to have fun. If it wasn’t for him I would hate the subject. I think his subject is really boring but he makes it so interesting, because of the jokes he puts in, he gets everyone involved (Senior Secondary FG, p. 10).

While discussing the reasons for the College’s overall academic results being above the state benchmarks, the Principal referred to their enrolment policy, which he felt favoured children from the more conscientious homes, and he also praised his teachers’ excellent performance (Principal, p. 1). One or two subject areas were singled out specifically for their strength of teaching. The level of Maths teaching was at its highest point ever (Principal, p. 10), and a primary student highlighted the subject of Fitness as being taught particularly well. From his perspective, the College lead the state schools in most areas of the curriculum (Primary Students FG, p. 10).

Finally, mention was made of a number of organisational traits that impacted the teachers’ roles. For example, it was recognised that the Assistant Principal Secondary, had excellent/exceptional/outstanding organisational skills (Senior Secondary FG, p. 7) and that overall there was more positive reinforcement of teachers than there had been in the past (Staff II FG, p. 14). So much so that teachers were understanding that it was acceptable to disagree at times with the leadership (AP Primary, p. 7), while still presenting a united front when standing by the school ethos in public (English & Drama Teacher, p. 3). In recognition of the professionalism of the teaching staff, the subject heads had been encouraged to undertake research into other schools’ specialist facilities when considering new building projects (AP Primary, p. 5) and, subsequent to all staff being given professional development in Information Technology, they were expected to implement the Information Technology roll-out across their area of the curriculum (Principal I, p. 9).

No school has perfect teachers and Sandford Christian College was no exception. The final part of this section reviews the criticisms made about teachers. It was interesting
that all the negative comments came from the students’ and parents’ focus groups, whereas the individual in-depth interviews did not raise any similar concerns, perhaps because the participants felt safer in the group setting to voice their complaints. The junior secondary students were the most vocal in their complaints about teachers. The majority of them focused on their perception that the teachers had not dealt with disobedient teenagers very well (Junior Secondary FG, p. 6, 8, 11). Other complaints covered a wide range of issues including the view of one student that his class was boring at times (Primary Students FG, p. 10) and one parent’s observation that the placing of a first-year-out teacher on a Grade 1 of 31 children was a big ask (Parent FG II, p. 7).

Perhaps the most striking teaching issue raised, was the concern expressed in two focus groups about the late return of students’ work (Junior Secondary FG, p. 9; Primary Students FG, p. 9). The junior secondary students expressed it this way with these telling comments. Each line was a different student’s comment:

We wait a whole term.

We did a project and I don’t remember getting a mark back.

We just got some stuff back from last year.

Same with me...we remind the teacher, and they say ‘It is coming, I am busy’. ‘But you are a teacher, you are supposed to be up to it’ we say (Junior Secondary FG, p. 9).

Secondly, some parents expressed disappointment with the choice of subject matter in the curriculum. In their view, the staff were rather slow to accept that this could be a problem. For example, they were in favour of including drug and sex education in the curriculum. However, they recognised that there was an expectation that, as all the students homes’ were Christian, they would all be receiving good instruction and modelling from the home; therefore precluding the need for any such programmes in the school curriculum (Parents II FG, p. 3, 4).
A further concern expressed by some of the primary students was that one of their teachers held grudges. Others denied this, but complained that she had many favourites. One student went on to explain this situation in more detail:

*She doesn’t exactly hold grudges, but if you’re not good at her work...she might not be as nice to you as some of the students who are good at her subject. So she treats the person for how they work other than for who they are. She has got our best interests at heart, but sometimes it doesn’t workout correctly* (Primary Students, p. 7).

Another concern frequently mentioned related to the students’ inability to understand the accents of immigrant teachers. The junior secondary students talked about this:

*Some teachers are from a different country and to get used to them talking...sometimes it is a bit hard to understand them, because they are born in different countries...and they have different accents, so it is hard.*

*You ask, ‘can you repeat that?’ And they say, ‘I was not speaking in my native tongue’. ‘Yes, but I can’t understand your accent’. And they get really annoyed at you...they speak too fast...*

*We just correct the teachers because they speak wrong* (Junior Secondary FG, p. 4, 5).

Finally, at a more general level, there were some concerns over more intangible issues relating to the quality of teaching. For example, some students found the homework was not challenging enough (Senior Secondary FG, p. 5) and others commented that the class work, in general, was not hard enough. However, as discussed earlier, this may have been more a reflection of cultural expectations (Parent II FG, p. 9) than teaching standards (Parents I FG, p. 7). Some parents jokingly asked, why they did not get the ‘A’ grades for their children’s project work since they did most of the research (Parents I FG, p. 7)! In other words, this was a polite complaint against the project style homework being set.
Of importance to some of the junior secondary students was the extent to which they felt understood by their teachers. Each line was a different student’s comment:

*There is one teacher that I love and she is just really nice to all of us.*

*Yes, but that is one teacher. Generally, they don’t understand you* (Junior Secondary FG, p. 7).

Perhaps this sense of isolation, evidently felt by one, was behind comments from another primary student and a junior secondary student that children were afraid to ask questions for fear of the reaction from their teacher (Junior Secondary FG, p. 5; Primary Students FG, p. 8). The older students admitted that *everyone was scared of* one particular teacher, because she set such high standards of behaviour, which the students implied were out of touch with modern teenagers’ expectations (Senior Secondary FG, p. 12).

Those students who felt that they did not have rewarding relationships with their teachers, may have been the ones that considered that the school was failing them. This apparent failure was possibly not helped by the absence of established programmes addressing the socialisation needs of the students:

*…they don’t have anything to do with encouraging socialisation. They treat that as the parents’ responsibilities to see that we socialise* (Primary Students FG, p. 11).

However, another student in the same focus group gave this rejoinder: *In year 4 I too felt left out. They were being really mean to me and stuff and my teacher actually took me out and said, ‘I have noticed a change, you are not happy. You are not performing very well. Your work has gone down. What is the matter?’ She didn’t have to spend all the time she spent with me, but she did* (Primary Students FG, p. 11).
5.6.3 Personalised Accelerated Christian Education (PACE)

Personalised Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) was a style of learning characterised by individuals workbooks selected for each student at their own level and introduced into Sandford Christian College at its foundation. It was ideal for a small school beginning with many grades in the one classroom and a minimal number of trained teachers (Council Chairman, p. 4). There were 10 points raised in support of the PACE system, notably by the Council Chairman and some parents in the first parents’ focus group. However, there were 18 points raised in opposition to the PACE system, distributed between students, staff and parents.

The Council Chairman was the most vocal supporter of the study’s participants. He recognised their tremendous value in meeting the needs of each student at their own level. His own son, who had gone through the College, was a gifted student who benefited from the system in the early days. At that time, the department inspectors who studied the PACE system in action in the College, said that it was exactly what they wanted to see happen in the state system, namely a spiral system that built on previous learning (Council Chairman, p. 4, 5).

Another of its strengths was that it reduced the level of competition between children. The Chairman quoted the experience of his own daughter in the school:

...she went in at year 7, and was able to go back to year 3, because she came from a state system, without feeling or being put down. She caught up by year 9. She filled in, because she’d had such a dreadful background. She was able to fill in all those subjects and her self-esteem just rocketed. In fact, before she had had about 40 per cent days off from school, but I can’t remember her missing a day at Sandford. On the first day she said they just loved the kids, but part of that was because she was able to go back without being put down. That was the situation in the past, when she had always felt that she was a failure in the class because she would miss so much and had all this competition, one group against another, and she would always be letting her group down and everyone picked on her. But in this system nobody even knew she was doing work at year 3 level. She was just on a lower PACE and nobody cared. She
stayed with her own peers, her own age group, and just worked in other areas (Council Chairman, p. 4).

One teacher recognised that the PACE system was the answer for the wide spread of levels in the same grade (Staff I FG, p. 3, 4), and a number of parents listed a broad range of benefits. The PACE system was seen to help with reading, phonics, explaining minor points and instilling respect for authority in the students (Parents I FG, p. 9, 10, 11). The parents also noted that they found the materials were often interesting to read and made effective use of cartoons as teaching tools (Parents I FG, p. 11).

Another parent was a strong advocate of the PACE system for two reasons, their value for religious education and the English language:

…I appreciate those PACEs, I really do. I think they get positively brainwashed with ‘God made heaven and earth’, and my daughter’s English is now excellent. We came out from Germany and she wasn’t able to speak English before she attended Kinder here (Parents I FG, p. 8).

However, this same parent was also very articulate about their faults. She was concerned about the amount of time the children were spending on PACE work in class, leaving little time for teaching. She also voiced her concern that the PACE work was not synchronised with the subject matter being taught in class, and finally she quoted a nonsense she had experienced with the half-yearly reports. Her child had achieved 100 per cent in her General Studies PACE, but her achievement grade on the report was ‘D’. The teacher explained that the PACE did not count towards her final grade, which was based on participation in class discussion. The fact that her daughter was very quiet and shy, was the reason for her low grade. This mother was querying why her daughter had to do so much PACE work (three days out of five, both as homework and in class) when it was not counted in her final assessment (Parents I FG, p. 8)?
One long-serving teacher, the Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, admitted that she, along with several other staff, were opposed to the PACE system (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 13, 14). She suggested that the domination of the PACE work had contributed to the school’s poor standing in the community in the early days, as most in the community did not understand it and regarded it as an inferior education system (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 9).

Other observations from the parents included the fact that they hated the system, they were boring and repetitive, they were not realistic, were so evidently written in the 1960s and were in urgent need of re-writing (Parents I FG, p. 1, 9, 10). On graduation of their child from primary to secondary, one parent illustrated/conveyed their depth of feeling about the PACE system in their blunt ultimatum to the Assistant Principal Secondary:

*My son actually hated the PACE work and when he was going into secondary school I said to the AP Secondary, ‘There aren’t any PACEs? Because if there are we will be moving our son because he just can’t bear them.’ There is only one PACE in the secondary school, which is the Science PACE. But I find they are banal…but my kids don’t like them. My second son, he just goes through the roof! But they just have to do it, but my son doesn’t like them. I mean, personally, those little cartoons at the top with Miss Lovejoy and they are all so perfect! They make me want to throw up* (Parents I FG, p. 9)

It was believed that the use of the PACE system had adversely influenced the development of specific subjects. There were four references to Maths being weak on account of the use of the PACE system (Senior Secondary FG, p. 6; Principal I, 10). There were also four references to weak Science for the same reason (Junior Secondary FG, p. 2; Parents I FG, p. 9; Senior Secondary FG, p. 6). No other subjects came under any direct criticism.

Finally, current understanding of different learning styles of students was quoted as a justification for why the PACE system needed to be phased out. It was recognised that a teaching and learning system that focused exclusively on the written word and the act
of repetition to effect learning alienates all those who learn best through other mediums (Principal I, p. 8; Staff I FG, p. 4).

The Principal was aware of the negative attitudes towards the PACE system and reported that there had been a move away from them for a number of years. As a result, the PACE system was programmed to cease in the secondary department from the start of 2001 (Principal I, p. 7, 8) and the primary teachers were at that time conducting an evaluation of the PACE system’s effectiveness (Staff II FG, p. 10).

One parent’s delight at the demise of the PACE system was clearly evident:

*We used to have a lot of PACE work in secondary and that’s been wiped out mostly, thank goodness, because they are the most driest boring things as far as I am concerned. It is just read, write your answers and I think it should be interaction with the teachers and may be with the World Science program on TV for Science or something like that. So thank goodness that sort of thing seems to be going. I think with new teachers in the school they are bringing new ideas and enthusiasm* (Parents II FG, p. 11).

**5.6.4 Class Sizes**

Finally, in the review of the teaching and learning environment at Sandford Christian College, the question of the most optimal class size is considered. In the early 1990s the Secondary Sport Teacher was a student in year 10, and in 1999 he joined the staff as a teacher. He remembered the caring attitude of his teachers, many of whom were, at the time of the study, his colleagues. He also remembered with gratitude the small class sizes (there were only 12 students in his year 10 level) that permitted his teachers to go the extra mile in his school days (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 1). More recently, the small class sizes at VCE were regarded as an advantage to the College, illustrated in 2000 by a girl who had left after completing year 6 but wished to return for the class size advantage when she heard that the College had extended to year 12 (Parents I FG, p. 1).
There were 10 adverse comments about the class size issue, but one parent was quite supportive:

...I don’t think, in general, that the class sizes at the moment are too big. From what I hear of other parents’ comments about other schools and the way things are run. Here classes are the maximum I suppose that they can be, but I don’t think it affects the children as much as we believe as parents. But I am looking at it more from a Secondary point of view (Parents I FG, p. 1, 2).

Another parent was less gracious:

I just think that 30 is a bit much. I have a child in year 4 and year 6 and the classes are up around 30 and if it went over 30 I would not be happy (Parents I FG, p. 2).

The general consensus was that the areas of greatest concern were in the primary grades. In these years reading skills are being established, and the achievement of this basic level of literacy is so crucial to success in the later years (Parents I FG, p. 1, 2). Other parents focused more on the social interaction of the Prep grade (Parents I FG, p. 4). They considered the class was too large and they implied that because of this the teacher was less able to monitor the nasty behaviours of some (Parents II FG, p. 5). Another parent observed that the class size issue was affecting children in different ways (Parents I FG, p. 4), and another remarked that simply adding a second teacher to larger classes was ineffective, as the two teachers observed the same child differently, causing confusion to the parents (Parents I FG, p. 3).

The Principal had recently set the ceiling on class size at 30 (Business Manager II, p. 11), despite one parent’s understanding that there were classes of 30, 31 for the little ones (Parents I FG, p. 2). The Council Chairman also reiterated their goal of keeping the classes less than 30 (Council Chairman, p. 12). The parents had called for a maximum of 28 (Parents II FG, p. 8), exacerbating the Principal’s dilemma over the enrolment of a third family member after the first two have been placed; when this last
child was begging for a place in a class already with 30 children (Business Manager II, p. 11).

The year 6 class, at the time of the research, had had 30 students for five years, 31 at one time and years 8, 9 and 10 had been very large as a consequence of this grade flowing through. With the double streaming of year 7 the class sizes went down to the low twenties. The year 11 and 12 classes frequently only had one, two or three students in some subjects (Staff I FG, p. 5).

The Principal acknowledged that this subject was of significant concern for some parents:

...30 is now our maximum. For a school that provides the range of specialist teachers and classes that we do, I feel that's very acceptable in a general classroom. The reality is that I am wondering why there hadn’t been a huge amount of comment about class sizes until more recently. So I am wondering, of course, the thing that has changed is our state education system where we have had it in the political headlines; with the change of government, there has been this emphasis on reducing class sizes. Whether that has happened or will happen remains to be seen...Christian schools have traditionally had larger class sizes in terms of being younger and establishing those sorts of schools, but you need to have that. You just can’t run on low class sizes. While our average in the primary school might be about 26 or something like that, for some people their children are in a class of 30 and they are concerned about that. And I talked to Asian families who are migrating here from classes above 40 and to them our class sizes are absolutely wonderful. So it is all a matter of perspective...We see 28 as our sort of ceiling with the option of going to 30 to allow new families to come into the school (Principal I, p. 13).
5.7 Student Behaviour Management

The final section of this chapter, which has sought to identify the themes from the in-depth interviews and focus groups, concludes with an examination of how the College managed poor student behaviour. The first part sets the context and the subsequent sections examine two specific areas, bullying and corporal punishment.

5.7.1 Poor Student Behaviour

There were 10 comments that made mention of poor student behaviour, five of which were from the students themselves. These comments often tended to be brief passing references in different contexts. This low level of discussion on poor student behaviour was taken to infer that most students behaved very well indeed (AP Primary, p. 11). The teachers frequently praised the students throughout the study. The year 11 and 12s were seen as warm and friendly, and the year 9 students volunteered to pray for their teacher prior to her attending a funeral service (English & Drama Teacher, p. 5). A primary teacher was grateful that she saw no evidence of the College having lost its sense of community in spite of its growth (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 1). The comments about behaviour reflected a community that was infrequently troubled by poor student behaviour.

Some parents had unrealistic expectations about student behaviour, reflecting an assumption that staff should not have to deal with such behavioural issues, rather than a concern that no action was being taken. They believed that because it was a Christian school, and given that they paid fees for the education, the children should be perfect (Parents II FG, p. 3). One primary student explained what it was really like:

There are a few kids who swear and stuff, so we don’t get sheltered fully from the world, if you know what I mean. By the time we are in year 12 and ready to go on we will have enough experience to handle it...the good thing about this school is they don’t encourage that sort of stuff, but when it does happen they address it (Primary Student FG, p. 13).
Nevertheless, the Council Chairman was concerned about the spiritual tone of the College subsequent to their long awaited move into years 11 and 12 for VCE. He had heard stories from a neighbouring Christian school that had progressed to the senior years much earlier than Sandford, and the tone had been lowered as a consequence. He had no evidence that the same was happening in Sandford Christian College, but he was, nevertheless, on his guard (Council Chairman, p. 6, 7).

The students themselves had their own explanation for why some students behaved badly. They implied that the troublemakers were the ones that found the work too difficult (Junior Secondary FG, p. 3) and in the senior years, the General Maths class was quoted as an example where disruption occurred because the students were struggling to keep up with the work (Senior Secondary FG, p. 7, 8).

The only other general reference to poor student behaviour concerned the example of some students who, on one occasion, brought alcohol into the school. An ex-student, who had subsequently been appointed a teacher, the Secondary Sport Teacher, spoke of his part in this incident in his youth, some 10 years earlier, that had resulted in his temporary suspension from school (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 5). The Assistant Principal Primary, said she was unaware of the school’s current policy on such a matter as a similar incident had not recurred to her knowledge. She was well aware of the primary policies but had never had to address such an issue in her part of the school. She imagined that the school would have *a zero tolerance attitude* to alcohol and drugs (AP Primary, p. 1).

The few examples given of swearing, disruptive behaviour in some classes and the bringing of banned substances into school, demonstrate a community that has rarely had to deal with major disruption, but when issues have occurred, they have been dealt with effectively. The next two sections examine two very specific issues that received much more discussion from the participants.
5.7.2 Bullying

The Assistant Principal Primary, started her interview with a discussion of the bullying issue:

*This year is probably the first time that we have had a main issue on bullying. We had a slight incident last year and we thought we had fixed it up last year, but in fact we didn’t and the same issue has re-arisen, the same student at Grade 6. So what has happened this year is that I am going through the process that I would have done last year, except I am going one step further and now I have interviewed the parents and filled them in on what is going on at school. From all accounts this has turned the whole thing right around. I have got the parents on board, explaining to the parents what we are working through…*(AP Primary, p. 1).

In contrast two parents held a different view about the problem of bullying. They raised girls’ bullying as an example of how the school, in their opinion, was slow to accept the existence of problems within the community:

*...Christians will hide under the blanket and not face what is happening. I’ve had a problem where they wouldn’t really accept what the situation was leading up to, and when I used the ‘word’, the teacher backed off and was quite shocked and wanted me to explain. And I thought I don’t have to explain. It is information that is being sent round the school. I am talking about bullying, and this is within the girls’ situation. I think it had been building up to that and I think they were very slow – loving and gentle in one way – and not quite as strong as what they should be in some areas* (Parents II FG, p. 3).

The other parents’ focus group had a far-reaching discussion about bullying. They attempted to analyse why some bullying had occurred and whether it was due to the growing size of the classes. One parent thought that *the teachers were spread too thin* to operate effectively; they felt that the teacher in question *would not have had the time* (Parents I FG, p. 3). Another parent summed up the situation from their own children’s perspective:
We had some huge problems with our oldest son, but we really feel that he would have issues wherever he went, anyway. But one of the things we’ve seen change in the school is the way they deal with the bullying issue. Because when Daniel was young it was more like it was almost a witch-hunt as to who the kids were and it was such a big deal that they hated the other kids, you know. Whereas, our youngest son we didn’t know, we had an issue at the beginning of the year and we were really reticent to do anything about it because of what happened with Daniel. We wanted it handled better than it had been...

The teachers asked them to write anonymously if they were frightened or if they had been bullied by someone. It was anonymous. They had to have something concrete to be able to say about it. Because of this approach, it was sorted out and it was sorted out nicely...There is still bullying and there will always be, we’ve all got to accept that, at some time or another, my child could be the bully or my child could be bullied (Parents I FG, p. 3).

Despite this pragmatic acceptance of bullying in the community and their evident appreciation for the new styles of student management, the parents still wanted more time with the teachers in order to address bullying issues (Parents I FG, p. 16). But the overriding conclusion was in accord with the Assistant Principal Primary’s perspective, namely, that the school had taken bullying very seriously and had found effective strategies to address the situations whenever they occurred.

5.7.3 Corporal Punishment

This section and this chapter concludes with a review of the participants’ responses to the use of corporal punishment in the College. A little earlier in the focus group that debated the bullying issue, the parents discussed the use of the paddle, a wooden bat used for corporal punishment.
One parent believed that there were a lot of issues with the paddle system and they contended that there were a lot of people who found it very hard to swallow. Another parent reported that both her boys and girls had been given the paddle. She stressed the importance of understanding the child first, as one daughter would cry about getting a detention whereas one of her sons took the paddle as a matter of course and could laugh about it afterwards. Overall, there were widely differing angles on the issue, one parent admitting that the school’s use of corporal punishment was one reason for choosing the school. They did not want their son ever to get smacked but reasoned that it signalled the school’s serious approach to discipline (Parents I FG, p. 15).

From these comments, it could be construed that corporal punishment was a regular daily event, but at least one parent was under the impression it had been phased out (Parents II FG, p. 13), while a student observed that this kind of punishment was kept secret. Another student confirming that in their class, the paddle was only used once or twice and at most three times a term (Primary Student FG, p. 2).

Some thoughtful students in the primary focus group believed that the paddle was used too hastily for minor incidents, leaving no greater punishment for serious misbehaviour. The students suggested imposing a detention for swearing and first time bullying offences, but they conceded that the paddle could be used for repeat offences of bullying (Primary Student FG, p. 2).

One of the infants’ teachers was questioned at her interview on corporal punishment. Her response revealed her true feelings about the issue:

...he asked about corporal punishment, in terms of hitting the children, and I went, ‘No, no, no!’ Not realising that they had the paddle here!! So the second time I went for the interview I looked up the ‘spare the rod, spoil the child’ verse, so that I could show the Principal that I was supposed to be here (Infants Teacher, p. 2)!
In contrast, the Secondary Sport Teacher, who had been a pupil in the school, recounted how he had received corporal punishment himself along with another past pupil, now a year 3 teacher:

*At the beginning of year 10,...I think someone brought some wine to school and my friend and I had a taste. We were called into the Principal’s office and both received four wacks, to break a long story down we had to wait over the weekend for our punishment so that was hard enough as it was. We got to school Monday expecting probably six,...the week after both my friend and I were made house captains in the school...The Principal had forgiven and forgotten and moved on and I appreciated that. He doesn’t hold grudges, he forgives* (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 5).

It would be fitting for the last word on the issue to go the Principal. His view was that corporal punishment had been very effective:

*It still is part of our student code of conduct, it is still stated in the handbook that is sent out to anyone who enquires about the school, and parents sign off on it. Not as a specific thing, but part of the overall deal, and so, as you have indicated, for close to 90 per cent of the school, it is not an issue for them. It doesn’t surprise me that there is a percentage that don’t feel all that comfortable with it, and hope it is an issue they never have to confront in their school life* (Principal I, p. 11).

The Principal estimated that there would be between 10 and 15 paddles per year across the whole school. He did not believe that the number was excessive and said that it was used wisely (Principal I, p. 11). Clearly in his eyes, corporal punishment was part of effective student management.
5.8 Summary

This chapter began by considering the origins of the vision and the early history of Sandford Christian College. Quite a number of the participants were able to recall those early days in detail and recognised their vital role in shaping the united culture that the current College council and staff have more recently been crafting. A great deal was discussed on the subject of leadership at the different levels in the school from the Senior Minister down to the senior management team. There was a strong emphasis on the role of the Principal in developing the specific community culture that so many saw as successful at the time of the study.

The remainder of the chapter that considered the management, the teaching and learning and finally the students’ behaviour highlighted a great number of very positive aspects of community life of the College. In particular, there was much appreciation for many of the characteristics of the students and the teachers. These final sections of the chapter also raised concerns but never suggested that the school was failing in any substantial way. Rather, they merely reflected conscientious parents, students and staff, who revelled in their opportunity to raise their personal perspectives. The fact that the participants felt sufficiently confident to do so, illustrated one of the College’s demonstrable leadership styles; namely the collaborative approach.

Summaries of the Focus Groups’ data are provided in the Appendices.

- Students - Appendix 5
- Parents - Appendix 6
- Staff - Appendix 7
Chapter 6 Discussion - The Nature of Success

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is a synthesis of the findings of the College Development Review together with the conclusions from the interviews and focus groups. The results have been applied to the three research objectives; namely to qualify the degree of success of Sandford Christian College’s education, to describe an exemplary Christian school and to illustrate the impact of the College on the lives of the students.

The heart of this non-denominational, co-educational, church sponsored community of teachers and learners was their desire to fulfil their vision, namely that:

All their children should be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of their children. (Principal’s Newsletter, 1st December 2000)

6.2 The degree of Success of Sandford Christian College’s education

The literature review considered the question - what was success? Tesse (2000) sought to grapple with the balance between the influences on success from both the home and that of the school, while Rose (1988), very significantly for this study, highlighted the balance between the influences of the church and the school. Neither was able to quantify the degree of influence on student outcomes of home, church or school. Davies (1994) argued that the financial health of the school was a valid measure of success, and specifically in the Christian schooling context, Hill (1991) questioned the use of student academic outcomes as a valid measure of success because competition between students based on final scores contradicted the Biblical ideal that emphasised teamwork above personal endeavour (1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Davies, 1993: 1).

The position on success taken in this study reflected Chan’s (1972) stance, namely that the degree of success was the extent to which the College had achieved their stated aims and objectives. In Chan’s terms Sandford Christian College has been very
successful, though the school considered in 2000 was a very different community to that which was founded in 1979 (Australian Association of Christian Schools, 2000 - 2001: 41; Personal Communication, 2002: 41).

The primarily quantitative College Development Review found many of the measurable criteria were significantly above the Victorian state benchmarks. Notably, three of the criterion scores in the staff survey indicated they were successful by exceeding the 75th percentile of the state benchmarks. In this study, measurement of success per se has not been attempted, but key indicators, both positive and negative, have been used to illustrate, inferentially, the degree of success. The data has been grouped into three categories, leadership, management and aims and objectives.

6.2.1 Leadership

Leadership in the College was described as approachable and one that did not make excessive demands on the staff. Staff exhibited very high goal congruence with the organisation’s vision. This compatibility of outlook between the employees and their leadership inferred that one of the keys to success could have been their extremely rigorous employment process that, over the years, has produced a highly unified faculty team (English & Drama Teacher, p. 1-3).

Consistent with the staff’s high morale, they applauded the Principal’s character. However, some felt that the leadership was too preoccupied with the issues of rapid growth, while a minority believed the leadership to be too hierarchical in its decision-making. These significant but minority findings did not detract from the overwhelmingly positive results but merely reflected the reality of tensions inherent in a rapidly growing organisation.

Australia’s most detailed philosophical study of Christian schooling to date, asserted that most of the new Christian schools’ leadership had battled with internal conflict between the church oversight and their school’s leadership which was characterised by the church’s patriarchal, authoritarian leadership style (Long, 1996a: 401).
of this has been that their communities frequently experienced disruption caused by too frequent changes in the school’s leadership (Davies 1993) and thus they were not regarded as successful schools (Twelves, 2000: 40).

In contrast, this research supported the assertion in the literature that outstanding leadership was a key characteristic of successful schooling (Bear, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989: 99) and the appointment of the right principal was a prerequisite for success (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998: 63; Gurr et al., 2003; Rutter et al., 1979: 203; Walsh, 1999: 3, 41). The Principal’s ability to unite the staff (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 3), his long Principalship (Diary, p. 111) and his integrity (AP Primary, p. 7-8; AP Secondary, p. 3; Business Manager I, p. 4; English & Drama Teacher, p. 2) all resonated positively with key attributes raised in the literature describing effective school Principals (Beavis, 1997: 292-293; Gardner, 1995: 203-238; Jones, 1992: 307; Rose, 1988: 199; Wallace, 1995: 17).

6.2.2 Management

Low work place stress, high parents’ satisfaction and, from the staff’s perspective, high school morale, were all indicators that Sandford Christian College was an excelling school. The parents’ proactive involvement in the school community exemplified Magill’s principle (1986: 58) that parents should feel supported by the school in their role of the nurture and education of their children. The parents also felt appreciated for their active involvement in their children’s education, reflecting one of Weeks’ (1988: 79) preconditions for successful Christian education. Most of the negative observations about the management seemed to have reflected tensions that would normally be anticipated in a rapidly growing school community.

Long (1997) had argued that the Australian Christian schools were stressful work places for staff, particularly because of the role conflicts he perceived had existed between the church and the school communities (Long, 1997: 25). Some Sandford staff did acknowledge that they felt that there was too much stress in the work place; however, they said it was on account of excessive workloads (Secondary Sport
According to the staff survey some felt that there was too little feedback on their performance. These issues, while important to acknowledge, did not indicate any fundamental structural flaw in the College and therefore by implication supported the view that Sandford Christian College was a much healthier place to work in than many other Australian Christian schools according to Long’s thesis. The generally high school morale mirrored the effective workplace championed by Agyris (1964: 215), who noted that staff thrived much better in more collaborative environments where effective interpersonal relationships were seen as essential for success (Bolman & Deal, 1997: 15).

6.2.3 Aims and Objectives

Sheerens and Bosker (1997: 4) suggested that the extent to which the school’s desired level of output had been achieved was a key measure of school success. This position was echoed in the Christian schooling context by Chen’s study of Chinese Christian schools (1972: 3). Chen defined success in the schools he studied as the extent to which the schools’ stated aims and objectives had been achieved. Here in Sandford Christian College the Past Student Survey focussed attention on this approach. The College’s aims and objectives were (College Handbook, 2000: 2):

a. Demonstrates the love of God and teaches Biblical truths.
b. Develop in students the desire to serve God and society, and the skills to exercise leadership.
c. Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics
d. Promote excellence in all aspects of the school life.
e. Assist students in discovering and developing, as fully as possible, their unique talents and capacities.
f. Provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students.
g. Offer experiences, which will motivate and challenge intellectually, aesthetically, physically and spiritually.
h. Provide a secure and supportive environment where responsible relationships may be developed amongst all members of the school community.
i. Develop self-disciplined young people who are optimistic, confident, articulate and resourceful.
j. Encourage students to possess a zest for learning and an understanding that learning is a life-long process.
Aims and objectives ‘a-c’ and to some extent ‘g’ could be grouped under the heading ‘to promote the Christian faith’. Of the recent graduates from Sandford Christian College 90 per cent claimed that they were born again Christians when they left the school, but at the time of completing their survey, only 75 per cent were currently involved in a local church. Therefore, while the statistics were high, they demonstrate that there had been significant attrition in their Christian adherence over time. Thus reflecting moderate success as opposed to great success.

None of the American studies outlined in the literature review attempted a survey of past students. Chen’s Chinese Christian schooling study was the only other research of this kind (Chen, 1972: 11). Unfortunately, the findings were not strictly comparable in most instances because Chen’s survey focussed on attitudes to relationships, choice of husbands and marriage (1972: 226-7) as opposed to the College’s aims, church attendance and significant memories of Sandford life. Nevertheless, some comparison was possible, in that Chen acknowledged that 95 per cent of one school’s graduates claimed to be born again Christians (1972: 84) compared with Sandford’s 90 per cent.

In more material terms, aims and objectives ‘d-g’ could be measured in terms of the first year 12 class’s performance at the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2000, the year of this study. The results were very good, placing them on a par with similar schools that had been teaching the VCE for over ten years. Further, the College Development Review recognised that specifically, the primary grades, and the secondary departments of the Humanities and the Creative Arts had achieved a very high academic standard. The review also acknowledged that the College had become more academically orientated with the phasing out of the Personalised Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) packs.

In the United States, Parsons (1987) reported that any success for the new Christian schools would reflect poorly on public education (Parsons, 1987: 183). While this has not been examined here in Australia, there was an implicit sense from this research that this would also be true here, as dissatisfaction with public education was certainly a contributory factor to Sandford’s success in the minds of the parents (Parent II FG, p. 2).
Little has been written about the academic standards of the new Christian schools (Peshkin, 1986: 155) and together with their relatively young age, many being less than 21 years old, explains why the data would be of uncertain validity (Ho, 1996: 32). Many of these schools were established relatively easily as they employed the PACE system (Smith, 1984: 157) that did not require many trained staff (Rose, 1988: 113-122). As the schools became established, the PACE system was eventually replaced by the more conventional teacher directed learning, which in Sandford’s case, has been recognised as a contributory factor to the school’s academic success (English & Drama Teacher, p. 5; Parent FG II, p. 9; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 1-4).

The aims and objectives ‘i and j’ were aspirations for the creation of confident, resourceful young people with a love of learning. These criteria were attributes that would be ubiquitously expected from any successful school, but being difficult to measure, are considered in the next section that reviews the essence or intrinsic character of this College. As a whole, on the limited evidence available at the time of the study, the aims and objectives of the College were being achieved and to this extent the attributes discussed form part of the nature of the success of Sandford Christian College.

6.3. The Essence of Sandford Christian College

The first section of this chapter considered the degree of success of Sandford Christian College’s education. This section addresses the second research objective; namely the goal to discover the essence or the central meaning of Sandford that has made it successful. After a detailed consideration of the qualitative and quantitative data, the most frequently occurring themes that addressed this objective were teased out, compared with the literature, and finally grouped together into five relatively discrete sub-sections. Together they portrayed a picture that was the essence of Sandford Christian College:
1. The origins and vision
2. The Principal’s leadership
3. The teachers’ Christian ministry
4. Christian objectives above the academic
5. The creation of a distinctive community culture

6.3.1 The Origins and Vision

Origins and vision were firmly preserved in the dynamic role the College had with their covering church. This symbiotic relationship was one of the key ingredients of the essence of Sandford Christian College.

Ever since Sandford Christian Fellowship became the governing body of the school five years (Diary, p. 111) after its foundation, vision has always been to the forefront of the leadership’s agenda (Council Chairman, p. 3; Senior Minister, p. 5). The Senior Minister was passionate about the importance of vision for any successful venture. He was not embarrassed about claiming the fact that he had a clear vision, which was not dampened by committee deliberations (Senior Minister, p. 3), nor derailed by vocal parents of the day (Council Chairman, p. 9).

The Senior Minister was single-minded, fiercely independent (Business Manager I, p. 4), yet tempered by being widely consultative (Business Manager II, p. 6). He was also realistic as he seriously considered the speculation he heard as to whether, in the future, the increasing number of churches being served by the College might not demand a greater say in the College’s future directions (Senior Minister, p. 8). This would generate a very different dynamic because until the time of this study, the whole leadership of the College had been contained within the Sandford Christian Fellowship. Further, the Senior Minister as a visionary leader was very astute in that he recognised that the vision for the College had to be big enough for visionary people. He has continued to stretch the community; he has encouraged them to think the unthinkable (Chait et al., 1996: 1).
The Principal, and the Senior Minister had an excellent relationship, forged over many years in the leadership of their church. It seemed that the Principal applied the Senior Minister’s vision for the College very naturally, and at times it was hard to distinguish who was the greater visionary between the two of them. The Principal’s vision was optimistic, as illustrated by his views concerning the new Christian schooling movement’s prospects into the future, believing that the passion for the Christian distinctive was still very strong across the nation’s Christian schools (Principal II, p. 5), despite the voices of fear that the passion might decline (Riding, 1997: 58-61). This optimism reflected Walner’s confidence in Christian schooling’s ability to maintain their mission because, like Walner, the Principal actively based Sandford’s education on Biblical principles (2000: 3).

These two leaders were described as risk-taking visionaries, both intent on building strong teams that maximised delegation, thus giving themselves time to reflect on the broader issues more than the day to day operations of their communities (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992: 49; Gardner, 1995: 36, 286; Gurr, 1996: 12, 116). From the researcher’s perspective, immersed in the community, it is highly likely that these visionary characteristics have positively influenced the rapid growth and success of both the church and the College.

Long (1996a) believed that big schools, by definition, can’t be successful. He challenged the notion that big is better, believing that the Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, well known for their support of a big is good theology, have tended to produce unsuccessful schools with authoritarian leadership (1996a: 391). He believed that these church schools had adopted an American 1970s model of church growth that generated big visions for their church schools as well as their churches. Sandford Christian College appears to fit Long’s description, namely, a Charismatic church sponsored school with a vision for 1000 students by 2006. However, there was no evidence of a trend towards on authoritarian leadership and many indicators to suggest that it would remain a very successful school in spite of the intended growth.

The College community certainly had concerns about the size of the individual classes; however, there were very few that really wanted to hold the school at 300 or 600
students, because their vision was to impact as many students as possible in order to fulfil their dreams (Council Chairman, p. 7). The Principal sincerely wanted to offer as many new places to students as possible, for two reasons. Firstly, to minimise those students on waiting lists that were regularly lost to non-Christian schools (Principal II, p. 3) and secondly, to finance and equip an ever-improving College, in which greater numbers enhanced its financial viability (Principal I, p. 2).

The College was recognised as a dynamic community that had, and would, see significant growth as a result of its clearly articulated vision.

6.3.2 The Principal’s Leadership

A further dimension of the essence of Sandford Christian College was the Principal’s role. The Senior Minister saw him as indispensable to the College’s success (Senior Minister, p. 1, 9). He was the visionary for the College in the same way as the Senior Minister was for the church (Council Chairman, p. 11). The Principal was seen by the staff as God driven, God’s man and God anointed; all very emotive, vision-minded terms that naturally positioned him in as their leader (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 7). Perhaps these accolades explain why the staff dared not walk all over him (Infants Teacher, p. 6)?

The Principal was both a successful spiritual leader (English & Drama Teacher, p. 8; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 5, 9) as well as being an educational leader, a dual role frequently described in the literature (Bolman & Deal, 1993: 54; Starratt, 1993: 47). Davies (1957: 9) went further, saying that the principal of a school was responsible for bringing the pupils to a faith in God through Jesus Christ. The Principal did not claim such a pivotal role for himself though he did acknowledge that Christian parents were attracted to Sandford for the spiritual values permeating the whole curriculum (Principal II, p. 10). Nevertheless, many acknowledged their belief that the Principal’s appointment was most certainly to perform a spiritual role as well as one of educational leadership (Council Chairman, p. 11; Diary, p. 109; Personal Communication, 2002: 41; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 7). His style embodied
elements of both the good spiritual practice of taking time to pray before major decisions and sound educational approach of seeking advice before taking decisions (Council Member, p. 4; English & Drama Teacher, p. 8; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 7-8).

The Principal displayed, what most recognised, as a collaborative and visionary leadership style (Primary Curriculum Co-ordinator, p. 1) that effectively led the community to become increasingly connected with each other and to develop a bond between himself, the leader, and his followers (Abbott, 1999: 14; Sergiovanni, 1996: 33). As if in acknowledgement of his effective team building, the Assistant Principal Secondary, admitted to adopting the Principal’s leadership style himself, as he so admired the Principal’s consultative, approachable ways that left people with a genuine sense of being heard (AP Secondary, p. 3-4). The staff universally appreciated their Principal; one telling line being that they never felt that the boss was going to chop their head off for daring to raise a question in a staff meeting (Staff FG II, p. 15). The Assistant Principal Primary corroborated this perspective; illustrating the theme of collaborative leadership by reporting that in Sandford it was acceptable for staff to disagree with the leadership at times (AP Primary, p. 7).

It would be hard to imagine these comments from the staff about their vibrant relationship with their Principal, if in fact the dominant culture was one of a controlling, authoritarian leadership. The theme of authoritarian leadership has been widely reported in the new Christian schools’ literature, with accusations that such leadership stifles individuality (Parsons, 1987: 135), promotes fear and confusion (Long, 1996a: 88), while perpetuating the classic bureaucratic, hierarchical model of administration (Andersen, 1990: 32; Davies, 1993: 1). There have been no fearful accusations about the leadership style here, but rather a recognition that the school’s leadership had developed collaborative structures that were clearly appreciated by most staff (Twelves, 2001: 72; Wallace, 1995: 16).

There were however a minority of staff who expressed displeasure at not being included in the decision-making processes (Staff FG I, p. 2) which agreed with the Principal’s own admission that he sometimes played his cards close to his chest.

Chapter 6 Discussion – The Nature of Success 282
Chapter 6 Discussion – The Nature of Success

(Council Member, p. 5). He indicated that he was already aware of the situation and was thinking about ways to include some of his staff more than had been done in the past (Principal I, p. 14). This scenario illustrates the staff’s freedom to express their concerns and also the Principal’s responsive, collaborative style that showed he was willing to seek advice widely before taking decisions.

The Principal’s 15 years in the leadership of the College at the time of the study demonstrates success in itself and implies a sense of stability that pervades the essence of Sandford Christian College (Diary, p. 111). Further, the Senior Minister commented on the consistency in the Council Chairman, who had served even longer than the Principal (Senior Minister, p. 8). This ethos contrasted markedly with the reported average term of a new Christian school principal of less than three years. According to Parsons’ research, this high turnover was due to Senior Ministers of the oversight churches running their schools with the same authoritarian manner used in their churches, a style the more educated school leaders were unaccustomed to dealing with (1987: 132).

Subsequent to Parsons’ work in the United States in the mid 1980s, Long (1996a) has confirmed that a similar pattern was still prevalent in Australia in the mid 1990s. Laffin (1995) also commented on the Australian new Christian schools observing that, there was frequent tension between principals and their boards, to the extent that some were seriously dysfunctional (Laffin, 1995, cited in Beavis, 1997: 290). Therefore, the Principal’s long service and excellent relationships with his College council were all the more significant and can be used to argue that Sandford Christian College’s leadership had been successful in breaking this pattern of dysfunctionality, apparently common in other schools. Arguably, the excellent relationships here (Twelves, 2000: 83) have perpetuated the principalship and that, in itself, has led to further elements of success as the staff and wider community have not had to adjust to frequent changes in style.
6.3.3 The Teachers’ Christian Ministry

The staff reported their respect for their principal’s decisions even when they did not agree with them (Infants Teacher, p. 6) and one staff member felt that the College was the most *positive place* they had ever taught in (Staff FG II, p. 8). These sentiments relating to the high quality of the relationship between the teachers and their leadership correlated with Barth’s (1990: 15-18) study that found this aspect of community life frequently reflected school success. For the most part the teachers felt that working in Sandford Christian College was more than a job; it was their Christian ministry (Infants Teacher, p. 1). This was the third attribute of the essence of the College that gave it its distinctive feel.

Just as the Principal was seen to be God’s appointment, the teachers felt that each of them had a calling from God to the school. There was an emphasis on employing teachers (Staff FG I, p. 1) who could make their contribution to Sandford Christian College, their Christian ministry (Council Member, p. 16, 17). In other words they would see their role in the College as part of their vocation that, along with their church commitments, consumed their whole lives. They did not believe it would generate a conflict of interest with their Christian ministry in their church but rather a natural complement to it (Business Manager I, p. 6). This approach resonated with John Calvin’s 1559 ideals that education should be a ministry of the church (Gangel, 1984: 103).

The level of teacher stress in Sandford Christian College, as evidenced in the staff survey, was lower than the government school benchmarks. Any stress shown was attributed more to the phenomenal growth of the school, rather than to the nature of the dual roles as teachers and Christian ministers. This was evidenced by teachers apparently volunteering the dual role rather than being coerced into it (Staff FG I, p. 4). There was no evidence of the *intolerable internal conflict* with its consequential stress reported by Long (1996a: 432), however some stress was generated because of the teachers’ desire to be able to do even more for their students than time permitted (Secondary Sport Teacher p. 10).
The teachers, who spoke of their sense of calling to the school as their Christian ministry, supported the view that their role was far from onerous but rather fulfilling. They spoke of being able to speak openly of their faith in God, which they had longed to do in government schools but had been prevented from doing so by the school authorities (Staff FG I, p. 8). The teachers were seen as exhibiting a genuine love for the children as shown in their *exuberance and enthusiasm* for their work (Senior Minister, p. 10). The parents really appreciated them, seeing them as *wonderful, approachable* people, in whom they had utmost confidence, knowing that their children were safe (Parents FG II, p. 2) and the leadership referred to the teachers as the students’ *mentors and heroes* (Business Manager I, p. 6; Principal II, p. 13).

The teachers’ Christian ministry was evidently a distinctive feature of the essence of Sandford Christian College. The teachers’ dual role of spiritual and educational leadership was seen as highly effective for achieving the College’s stated goals (Senior Secondary FG, p. 10).

### 6.3.4 Christian Objectives above the Academic

The fourth core attribute of the essence of the College was their desire to offer *something distinctly Christian* (Business Manager I, p. 5). In reference to this, the Business Manager described, in marketing terms, the College’s central attraction to new families; it was the fibre of the place, not just a façade (Business Manager I, p. 5; Business Manager II, p. 3). This approach was certainly an effective marketing strategy, as one of the council members described how he became a new parent after his search for a school with a Christian distinctive that placed its spiritual values before academic results (Council Member, p. 2).

The philosophy of putting the Christian objectives above the academic engendered a healthy tension within the College (Riding, 1997: 58-61). There were sections that bemoaned the fact that the school had to make up lost ground in terms of the academic outcomes of the students (Parent FG II, p. 9; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 1-4), yet others had been attracted by their understanding that Sandford’s academic standards...
exceeded the top private schools of the city (Parent FG II, 12). Perhaps the reality was that the College was set in a compromise state, neither purely spiritually focused nor academically rigorous (Bollar Wagner, 1990: 20). This was Bollar Wagners’ thesis that the American Christian schools she studied were in a transition and not able to meet their students’ expectations because of the demands of society for certain levels of conformity. The compromise she described had to do with the values associated with competition and materialism and the degree to which the schools she studied were conforming to accepted norms as opposed to maintaining the total institution or isolation from society.

If this thesis of compromise were true in Sandford, there would be a sense of failure and disappointment at the level of compromise they had had to settle for. This was not detected within Sandford Christian College, but rather that they were very open to what God wanted, and excited about their part in putting them in the hands of God. In other words they firmly believed that they were impacting their society with the Christian faith (Infants Teacher, p. 7-8). It was the researcher’s perception; from his immersion in the community, that there was no sense of failure engendered by their accommodation of some societal norms, but rather that they had been successful towards their College aims and objectives (College Handbook, 2000: 2).

Within the community there were those who were fighting for some degree of the total institution concept. These people feared that as the school grew, they would no longer know everyone with whom their children might be mixing. One of these parents expressed their concern that families coming in from non-Sandford Christian Fellowship churches would be diluting the College community, demonstrating the high value they placed on the Christian objectives of the College (Council Member, p. 8-9). The students also appreciated the spiritual priorities held by the school, deploring the fact that some of their secondary school teachers had not prayed with them as much as they had been used to in the primary grades (Junior Secondary FG, p. 2).

Overall, the College could be described in a positive light as offering a Bible-based, Christ-centred curriculum along the lines described by Gangel, (1984: 89, 90), Magill (1986: 58) and Riding (1997: 6).
6.3.5 The Creation of a Distinctive Community Culture

The final characteristic of the essence of Sandford considers the community’s desire and ability to create their own specific community culture. This echoed a similar sentiment from the literature, where school’s consciously generated the ethos they wanted (Tucker, 1990: 20-21; Twelves, 2000: 74). In this research there were more than 50 references to creating community culture from across the thirteen interviews and seven focus groups. For example, the Senior Minister’s reference to setting up the environment and culture that they wanted (Senior Minister, p. 6) was in tune with Andersen’s belief that the principal should be proactive in this regard (1990: 43-37). Much of the literature focused on the link between home, church and school in this community building process (Kew, 1993: 76; Rohrer, 2000: 1; Starratt, 1994: 10) which echoed with the College Council Chair’s analogy of the strength of the threefold cord that symbolised mutual partnership across home, church and school in espousing commonly held beliefs and values (Council Chairman, p. 5-6).

The caring Christian community that had been created attracted parents (Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 6) who described it as heaven on earth (Parents FG I, p. 16), but some were afraid they might lose this special quality with increased growth (Infants Teacher, p. 3; Parents FG I, p. 1; Principal II, p. 6; Staff FG I, p. 8; Staff FG II, p. 13). They were certainly conscious of their very distinctive characteristics that were jealously guarded. According to Deal and Peterson these could be maintained so long as the community continued to focus on people rather than profits (1999: 1-63).

Sandford’s closed enrolment policy that only took children from Christian homes was one of the ways that they guarded their culture. The Principal believed in the power of their community culture to such an extent that if a family were to reject their Christian faith, they would voluntarily take their children out of the school despite the resultant disruption to their child’s education (Principal I, p. 2).

The parents were grateful that their College culture reinforced family values (Parent FG II, p. 11), encouraged the students to critically evaluate their own standards (Junior Secondary FG, p. 9) and positively impacted the children to the extent that their self-
confidence was greatly improved (Senior Secondary FG, p. 1, 3, 12, 13). Their culture also moved with the times as the school began with an extremely insular image that alienated some parents but as time went by, the longer standing parents could measure the changes for the better. This largely had to do with key staff changes and the goal to actively prepare students for secular tertiary education (Parent FG I, p. 2). The strong sense of unity amongst the teachers and between teachers and parents was also a recurrent theme throughout the study, building a distinctive element of their community culture (AP Primary, p. 5-6) that resonated with the work of Cox (1998: 5) and Vanderhoek (1993: 13).

There were some detractors of their distinctive Christian culture. Some felt that individuality was stifled (Junior Secondary FG, p. 9), tying in with Parsons’ thesis of the new Christian schools in the United States (1987: 135), while others reported that there were some poor staff student relationships (Primary Student FG, p. 11). There were also some intangible negative feelings in parts of the community, for example, that there were no meaningful relationships, despite all the talk to the contrary, between the covering church and the school community (Primary Curriculum Coordinator, p. 4). These negative observations were reported by very few and did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the majority of stakeholders who believed that they had succeeded very well in developing a culture to be proud of, and that was attractive to potential parents (Principal II, p. 5).

6.4 The Impact on Past-Students

This final section addresses the third research objective; namely to illustrate the impact of the College on the lives of their graduates. Here in Sandford Christian College, the Senior Minister of the sponsoring church felt strongly that he did not want the College’s graduates going out into little Christian ghettos, destined for mere survival. His vision was for the College graduates to engage their culture (Senior Minister, p. 7). In other words he wanted the young people he helped to mould to change their world with their Christian example.
Christian schooling in the United States propounded similar goals. For example, the graduates from the school studied by Peshkin were, by and large, what they expected, namely, *patriotic people of good character* (1986: 4). A further study reported the aspiration to produce graduates that will be *fine upstanding citizens* (Rose, 1988: 143). Parsons uncovered a more strident objective that the new Christian schools would ultimately *change the state and health of the nation* (1987: 6). On a similar theme, but in Hong Kong, Ho reported that graduates from the Christian schools studied *were holding key positions in all sectors of society* (1996: 32).

The past-student survey of Sandford Christian College was ambivalent on the subject of their roles in adult life. The majority of the respondents from the early years students were engaged in *home duties* and the more recent graduates were largely still in *secondary or tertiary educational instructions*. Though the school had come of age at the time of the study, having turned 21 years of age, the graduates were still very few in number and only in early adulthood, suggesting that repeating the research exercise in the future would be more beneficial.

Consequently, this study’s past-student survey could not measure such lofty ideals as reported by Peshkin and Parsons and dreamed of by Sandford’s Senior Minister, but it has begun a process of critical evaluation of student outcomes essential for the continuing development of the movement. The key measure of how Christian the past-students remain into adulthood is one that will attract further study as it is the avowed aim of most Christian schools (Nordin & Turner, 1980; Rose, 1988). Until these studies are published, research will have to focus more on reports of the impact on current students. For example, the Assistant Principal Primary at Sandford was very concerned that her students should have *the tools to go into the world and to evangelise*, implying that the majority would be *born again* Christians in order to do this. She measured this *by checking up* on them on the Monday mornings to see how many they had impacted with the gospel on the weekend (AP Primary, p. 11).

The literature does not appear to have examined the potential link between the statistics of *born again* Christians on the one hand and their success in *changing the state and health of a nation* on the other. The literature is silent, but there is a clear...
implication that those graduates who are claiming to be born again Christians, will be of good character (Peshkin, 1986: 4), and be in a position to change the state and health of their nations (Parsons, 1987: 6). Therefore, unless the new Christian schools do produce graduates who literally change their societies for good, results of future past-student surveys may be disappointing if they reveal a lesser community impact than at first envisioned, thereby showing that their goals had been too idealistic.

In contrast to this dilemma, the most consistent finding from the past-student survey was the belief that the school had been successful in its aim to nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics in its students. Thus, it would appear to have answered one parent’s expressed need for harmony in the life of their children by championing both the nurturing environment of the home and school (Coleman, 1987: 5; Kew, 1993: 76; De Ruyter, 1999: 223). In Sandford’s case this harmony has been extended to include the sponsoring church as well (Bollar Wagner, 1999: 106; Rose, 1988: 26).

This evident coherence between the school, home and the church aligned with the observations of Nordin and Turner (1980) who saw the Christian schooling movement as communities that were listening to a different drummer and that marched resolutely towards the values of their past. However, in stark contrast Astill (1998) concluded the school had had no direct effect; the student’s home environment being paramount in the instilling of personal value systems (Astill, 1998: 43). Therefore the success should be seen in the parents’ satisfaction that their children’s school is supporting their personal values systems, rather than hoping to establish a causal relationship at this stage, between the school and their graduate’s value systems. It would be very hard to tease out the relative impacts of home, church and school, but it would be a very worthwhile study.

Wherever the truth lies, the past-students overwhelmingly believed that their old school had been consistently successful in nurturing the Christian values and standards of morality and ethics in its students. The question remains, and is habitually asked in the new Christian schooling movement circles, for how long will this be the case, especially in the light of the growing size of these schools (Deal & Peterson, 1999: 1-
Riding’s (1997) study considered this question in his case studies in similar schools in South Australia, concluding that the schools he studied were close to living up to their ideals (Riding, 1997: 76). Only time will tell, but so far the impact on Sandford’s past-students seems to be clearly positive in the minds of the students.

In this discussion of the positive impact of Sandford Christian College on its past-students, a recurring theme, reported particularly by the older graduates was the feeling that the discipline system had been too heavy-handed and that there was insufficient sensitivity afforded to individuals’ needs. The literature clearly supported the parents’ desire for well-disciplined schools (Lankshear, 1992: 60, Long, 1996c: 24, Rose, 1988: 199). Therefore, was this finding from the impact survey a negative or a positive? The past-students’ did not like the perceived heavy-handed discipline, but perhaps their parents did. Here again a repeat survey at say five and then ten-year intervals, would provide a much clearer picture. Nevertheless, the written responses to this survey did demonstrate that the negative images do last a very long time in the minds of the past-students, serving as a salutary reminder to the current leadership that what they do today will be impacting them for many years to come.

A further cause for concern from the past-students’ survey stated that the curriculum was perceived to be inadequate, not having been broad enough for all types of students. These sentiments carried a remarkable resemblance to those of the church based tertiary Colleges in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. In this case, the church leaders confessed distrust in their academic staff, and as a consequence they gave little tangible support for academic initiatives with predictable consequences (Cunningham, 1994: 27-28). There was no evidence of any distrust in Sandford’s academic leadership, especially as the Senior Minister of the church had such a long and excellent relationship with the Principal (Senior Minister, p.1-3). Nevertheless, Sandford past-students’ criticism of their school’s curriculum correlated with discussions earlier in this chapter that in the past, academic rigour had been given less prominence than the spiritual aspects of the students’ learning (Parent FG II, p. 9; Secondary Sport Teacher, p. 1-4).
Hill (1991: 1-4) offered a rationale for this in his observation that learning which emphasised the gaining of marks for higher education entry and subsequently better jobs, encouraged students to develop self-centred, consumer orientated value systems. He felt this illustrated tensions within the movement that pit the striving for academic excellence against the goal of modelling the Christian lifestyle. This theme had been developed by Bollar Wagner (1990: xi-8, 20) in her contention that the new Christian schools in the United States represented a *compromise* with popular culture and as such their schools existed merely as a *transition culture* taking young people towards their *goal of no competition, forbearance, forgiveness and the fruits of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23). She felt that though the schools had lofty ideals, her overriding thesis about the movement was a negative one of *compromise*. If this were true then the tension between the striving for academic excellence on the one hand, and the Christian ideals on the other would result in neither being effectively achieved.

There was no evidence that the past-students of Sandford were concerned about *compromise*. The teachers in Sandford Christian College certainly stressed their lack of resources, particularly in the early days of the College, and some felt that they were stretched so thinly that they could not adequately meet the students’ needs (Infants Teacher, p. 4; Staff II FG, p. 13). However, overall there was no evidence that Sandford had adopted Bollar Wagner’s *compromise* position, but simply there was recognition that whilst on the one hand the school had had very real resource concerns in the early years; on the other hand, there was overwhelming appreciation for the fact that the school had been achieving its aim to nurture Christian values. The wide variation in the survey data’s values, merely reflected the perception of some of the past-students’ disappointment with their curriculum options, which would hardly be surprising in a small growing school in the process of extending to year 12.

The school was still young at 21 years old, with the result that many of the past-students surveyed had barely reached adulthood when they responded. Further, the sample size was small (although the selection process was the best that could be conducted with the limited database), and the response rate of 38 per cent (similar to the Chinese Christian schooling survey of 41 per cent [Chen, 1972: 12]), whilst acceptable, still left many opinions unknown. Despite these drawbacks, the findings
bore significant resonance with other aspects of this study and therefore added significance to the overall findings.

6.5 Summary of Discussion - The Nature of Success

This study has sought to accomplish three research objectives; firstly to quantify the degree of success of the College’s education, secondly to describe an ‘exemplary’ Christian school and lastly to examine the impact of the College on the lives of their graduates.

In answer to the first objective, to quantify the degree of success of the College’s education, Sandford Christian College has achieved excellent academic results. These results were accomplished by leaders who were described as approachable and outstanding and people who had inspired unity across the College community. The staff exhibited high morale and in their survey three criteria scores exceeded the state benchmarks 75th percentile. While the students had enjoyed great academic success there had been a demonstrable promotion of the Christian faith, illustrating a further measure of their success, namely, the achievement of their aims and objectives.

The second objective to describe an ‘exemplary’ Christian school, was realised by the search for and description of the central meaning or essence of the College. The College owed much to its original foundations, the significant role of their principal of over 15 years, and the calling of its staff into Christian, as opposed to secular, ministry. The championing of their Christian objectives while still achieving excellent academic outcomes and the active creation of a distinctive community culture described the essence of Sandford Christian College.

The discussion concluded with a deliberation on the third objective, illustrated here by the Senior Minister’s vision for their graduates; namely that he did not want them going out into little Christian ghettos, destined for mere survival. His vision was for the College graduates to engage their culture that is to change their world for good. The past student survey found that they were achieving very gratifying results, but at
21 years old the College was still too young to be able to generate sufficient data to adequately quantify their past students’ outcomes into adulthood.

6.6 Suggestions for Further Study

This study, confined by a single case study, was not designed for generlisability but rather to present an example of a school community that was deemed to be successful. Nevertheless, the research has suggested a number of study opportunities that would enhance the wider understanding of the new Christian schooling movement here in Australia:

1. A repeat study on Sandford Christian College, in order to ascertain a chronological perspective on key performance indicators. A range of measures undertaken from the School Development Review methodology could be considered over time alongside a further qualitative study revisiting some of the concerns raised.

2. A broader study, applying the School Development Review methodology to a sample of Christian schools from different streams, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the various different governance models being applied by the different schools. Such a study could be linked with the regular registration and accreditation audits currently established for the new Christian schooling movement. This could reduce the mistrust of the movement in some quarters and increase the accountability for federal and state funding.

3. A further Past Student Survey across a number of schools and over increased number of years could be administered. This study would go to the heart of the new Christian school’s reason d’etre. It should seek to identify to what degree the schools have been achieving their stated aims and objectives now that many of them have come of age.
4. How do Christian Schools prepare their graduates to engage their culture with their Christian faith? This study would be designed to address the objective of the Senior Minister of Sandford Christian College whose vision was to see his graduates engage their culture. A largely qualitative study could be undertaken of the adult lives of those who have graduated from the new Christian schools. This could be modelled on the work of Chen (1972) in China, but applied here in Australia.

5. The leadership role of principals in selected Australian Christian schools. Such a study could model Gurr’s (1996) study of ten principals and 30 teachers’ perceptions of the leadership role in Victorian state schools with a view to identify principal’s priorities that, in turn, could be used to measure the performance of Christian school principals.

6.7 Reflections on the Study

The employment in this study of the School Development Review methodology combined with the qualitative techniques worked extremely well. Each part balanced and complemented the other creating a synergy that multiplied their single effectiveness. The focus of the methodology was the researchers partial immersion in the College community. From this position of trust, he was able to focus on the detail that, much to his surprise, was of genuine benefit to the College leadership as they sought to improve their performance as an exemplary Christian school. The focus of the methodology looked forward and has helped to develop a deeper understanding of the new Christian Schooling movement.

During the data-gathering phase, the researcher was greatly encouraged by the honesty and openness of all the participants. Initially it was nearly impossible to assemble any parent focus groups by public invitations in the College newsletters but there was a very keen response to the subsequent targeted personal invitations. The parents came together with a great community spirit, delighted with their school but not afraid to air their concerns. The students’ focus groups were also characterised by a great team
spirit. The older ones were largely self-selected and the younger ones, who were targeted by their teachers for their ability to openly discuss issues both articulated their joys and disappointments so well that it was hard to draw their debates to a polite conclusion. The staff groups who were entirely self-selected and were similarly open and energised gatherings of team players that really enjoyed working together in the school but were not shy about expressing where they felt improvement were still required.

It was an exhilarating and humbling experience to conduct the in-depth interviews on account of the participants’ transparency illustrated with so many personal anecdotes. They all loved their school, appreciated their principal enormously and, adding triangulation, recognised similar areas of concern. The staff community was remarkably stable with most new appointments being predicated by their phenomenal growth in student numbers.

The majority of the analysis was conducted while the researcher was serving as a principal in another Australian Christian school. This provided frequent opportunities to test the findings of the research in a different environment. It has been gratifying to see the impact of some of these initiatives instituted in the researcher’s own school community and to witness their subsequent successful outcomes.

It has been an honour and a privilege to be a small part of the Sandford Christian College community and to have been given the opportunity to extend the understanding of the new Christian schooling movement here in Australia.
Chapter 7 Deeper Deliberations

7.1 Introduction

This study concludes with two sections that aim to set the research in a broader context than the confines of a single case study. The first part will consider how the distinctive culture that is Sandford Christian College operates in the day-to-day procedure of the school community. The second part, recognising the pivotal significance of the success of the Principal of Sandford Christian College, considers the anatomy of successful leadership in this school compared with the anatomy of successful leadership in non-Christian schools.

7.2 The Culture of the School in Action

During my time in the school I was privileged to witness a range of situations that vividly reflect the culture that the school believed they had created (Twelves, 2000: 74; Senior Minister, p. 6). The reflections that follow were inspired during my data gathering period on site which consisted of three days a week during the second semester 2000. I have drawn largely from my reflective diary, described earlier in Section 3.3.3.

The culture of the school in action has been divided into three parts. The first part centres around their vision, their synergy with their covering church and the building programme that was designed to accommodate their dreams for expansion. The central part addresses the question of how Christian was their culture and the final part considers some reflections on their educational operation.
7.2.1 Vision, Synergy and Buildings

Sandford Christian College shared a common property with their covering church. The site was flat with a series of car parks separating the church buildings from the school. The school buildings were single story brick veneer and built to create two rectangular courtyards. There was no gymnasium or assembly hall. The church at the other end of the plot had both of these facilities, which they shared with the school. At the time of the study, there was excited anticipation that one day they would be able to build their own gymnasium at the school end of the property, thus reducing their dependence on the synergy with the church. When I started my research they had just commenced using a large well-built two-story block, which housed the expansion of both primary and secondary classes. Also during my time there they began to build a new art facility, a timber structure built on piers on account of potential flooding in their adjoining creek reserve (Diary, p. 78, 80).

Sharing the property had many advantages to the school: the indoor facilities on site, the shared car park and a resident groundsman who lived on the property between the school and the church. The physical setting was similar to that described by Peshkin in Bethany Baptist Academy (1986: 32-3), there too the church and the school shared a gymnasium and were separated by a parking lot.

The shared property had generated numerous synergies between the church and the school. For example, the ease with which the school used the church for their weekly chapel service, which were attended by the whole school every three weeks and primary and secondary schools separately alternating on the remaining weeks (Diary, p. 59-60). Nevertheless, even though they had the use of the church facilities at the opposite end of the car park, open-air assemblies were also held during the week in the main school quadrangle, one for primary students and the other for the secondary students. The assistant principal of each sub school usually conducted these assemblies, which were primarily for administrative purposes, but there was also a prayer and devotion given each time. In conversation with the Assistant Principal, Secondary, he explained that he was working through the Psalms (Diary, p. 63, 66).
The building programme had already cost them dearly and the leadership had just embarked on revising their previous vision. It was now to be a school that would grow to over 1000 students.

In order to help finance the Sandford Christian College building plans, they held a Vision Dinner. A donor paid all expenses and the ticket sales, to over 400 guests, raised about $8000. There was a big queue to get in, as everyone had to greet the Principal and his wife, who commented that *it reminded her of a wedding reception*. The staff were keen to take the opportunity to meet other staff’s partners during their three course dinner, while being entertained by musical items. There was also a formal part to the evening when the future growth plans were unveiled (Diary, p. 13). In the past, the school had had a voluntary building fund, but they had decided to abandon that many years earlier and at the time of the research they used a proportion of their fee income to fund their building projects (Diary, p. 80).

This fund-raising dinner illustrated Sandford’s focus on vision and their own capacity to finance the buildings required to support their dreams. The dinner was not opulent; however, it would have seemed out of place in a less affluent suburb. The school community was very fortunate to have a building fund donor that could fund a three-course dinner for over 400 guests. Perhaps another indication of the school community’s socio-economic status was illustrated by the fact that all students came to and from school in private cars except for a handful that walked or rode bicycles from the immediate vicinity.

However, despite over fifty references in the qualitative study to unity and excellent relationships within the community, I did observe one illustration of tension between the school and their oversight church predicted by Long who believed that management unconsciously manipulate and exploit employees in similar schools to this one (Long, 1997: 25).

The situation in question related to students being used during the week on the church public address (PA) roster. This meant that from time to time during conferences that ran concurrently with school days, a team of students were required in the church
property to manage the sound systems for music teams and visiting preachers. One of the teachers raised the issue with the Assistant Principal, Secondary, commenting that there should be three teams on PA, to minimise the interruption to students’ schoolwork. The response was that it was hard to get anything done in the church because of the red tape, so the teacher was left feeling that nothing would change (Diary, p. 25).

This tension over the use of students by the church during the week seemed to me to be the result of a history of sharing resources, typical of many growing organisations, and countered by the need for the administration to keep pace with changing expectations. In my view, this incident did not detract from the countless mutual benefits to the church and the school resulting from their shared property and vision. The fact that the students were being fought over actually would teach them valuable lessons for their adult life even if they did miss out on a few lessons in their teens. They would certainly be learning about responsibility and professionalism in addition to being trained in high-level practical service skills.

7.2.2 How Christian was their Culture?

It is very hard to describe a Christian culture to an outsider. It is one of those things that you know when it is there and you know when it is not. One Friday morning in October, I sat in my car in the car park from 8.30 - 8.50 am. preparing for the day’s research. I noted the congestion in the car park and mused over the need of parents to park as close to the school as possible in order to walk their young children into school, in short, the hand-delivery process. I also noted that some drivers were clearly driving far too fast for the safety of pedestrian children.

On the one hand, there was the expression of tangible care for their families, although an unwillingness to model self-restraint and the healthy habit of walking from the non-congested other end of the car park. On the other hand, there was either selfishness or thoughtlessness behind some drivers’ need for speed or a blatant disregard for other’s safety.
All families in the school were described as churched homes as they could not get through the enrolment process unless they could deliver a current pastoral reference from their local church. However, would Sandford’s car park look any different from any other school car park? It is my contention that all staff and parents would desire a safe and courteous car park and I am sure that they would have mounted numerous education initiatives to moderate the behaviour of a minority of the community that put children at risk. The fact that some had not yet responded to the messages in my view does not invalidate the Christian core of their culture; it merely reflects their human nature. It in no way contradicts the parent who described the school as *heaven on earth* (Parent FG I, p. 16).

Early in my data-gathering phase, I attended the Primary School Concert (Appendix 3). The Principal opened the event in the church auditorium with a welcome and prayer and the first piece was the 1812 Overture by Tchaikovsky. Most of the items were Christian but there was a very wide range of material. We heard the William Tell Overture by Rossini, the theme music from the film Chariots of Fire, dances called, Let the Sun Shine In and I’ve Got the Real Thing and a kindergarten song called Practice Being Godly. The main event was a musical with a huge cast called More than Gold. This had been specially written as a parable on the theme of the Olympics. There were gold diggers on the one hand and athletes searching for God’s Kingdom on the other (Diary, p. 8-10).

This event was a highlight of my research as it so graphically depicted a community in action, working in unity and doing what they do best, namely preaching the Christian gospel through action. So many were involved with the result that the auditorium was packed to overflowing. Every student in Primary School would have been involved along with their family and extended family in many cases. No one would be able to mistake Sandford Christian College for anything other than a vibrant Christian community, excitedly and energetically living out their Christian faith.

One of the questions on the staff survey that prompted much debate was the one that asked if the staff believed that their work in the school was their Christian ministry (Diary, p. 15). This question was considered in some detail in Section 6.3.3 but here I
would like to reflect further on the Primary School Concert in the light of the staff’s involvement. Preparation and planning for this pivotal event in the school year would have taken several months. The staff must have been energised by their Christian faith to be part of this epic and to the degree that this was the case for every one of them, their work in the school was their Christian ministry. The level of commitment within and without the school day by the staff and countless parents testified to their commitment to the Sandford Christian College vision.

Finally, my reflective dairy recorded on the same page my most memorable comments from the Infant Teacher’s in-depth interview. I noted that the interview was excellent and that the teacher felt that the attribute that made the school successful was the presence of the Holy Spirit (Diary, p. 15). To attempt to describe the presence of the Holy Spirit in a specific place is fraught with subjectivity. However, under my aim to describe the culture of the school in action my notes suggested that the teacher held the belief in a higher power energising the place and equipping them for their works of service for the children. Therefore to the extent that they believed this, they were demonstrating their Christian faith in action. In the words of one of the Junior Secondary students, the religion is the best thing about Sandford and it’s also the worst thing that we can’t always apply it (Junior Secondary FG, p. 1). It was my perception that the community was genuinely Christian but composed of fallible human beings who made mistakes.

### 7.2.3 Some Reflections on their Educational Operation

During my time in the school community I observed the students in the school grounds in relaxed situations and during intense ball games at lunch times. I was struck by the language of the students and wrote that they did not use any loose language of the milder type (Diary, p. 57). It was very easy for me, a non-teaching guest, to pick up the general tone of the schoolyard. It was very impressive. Was this a reflection of the student’s church or home backgrounds or the education and modelling from the student’s teachers? It was impossible to determine, all I can do is report the facts as I saw them as faithfully as possible.
In my view this observation echoed the previous section’s conclusion, namely that the Sandford Christian College community was genuinely Christian as there was tangible evidence that the chief components of the community, the students, were different to their counterparts in other communities. One primary school student had told me that in his previous non-Christian school *everyone swore at each other and the teacher didn’t care. The teacher even swore at the kids* (Primary Student FG, p. 13).

The school had a public address system that was used by the administration department and staff alike to give global messages to the whole community. It surprised me that this very intrusive devise was used so frequently and, in my view, for purposes at times that could have been addressed in different ways. Examples included, one of the primary teachers interrupting classes for five seconds to announce, *excuse this interruption but would all students stay off the oval at lunchtime as it has been raining very hard and the ground is really wet.* Again, just a few minutes before the end of a day’s lessons, the receptionist announced, *please excuse this interruption, the basketball towers are still in place, would the teacher on duty please remove the towers, thank you* (Diary, p. 23). Finally, perhaps the most astonishing example was at 11.40 a.m. one day during the second session in the morning. An announcement came from reception that said. *To all classrooms, we are looking for 4H, we don’t know your whereabouts. We are particularly looking for (boys name) to attend your drum lesson* (Diary, p. 21).

Other interruptions, predominantly after classes, included requests for specific students to come to the office to be picked up or for staff to take a phone call on a particular line. The public address system was certainly a highly effective communication tool within the community to bring people together. However, the particular way it was used reflected an attitude towards the education of their students. It seemed evident that the system was not to be used too much during class time so that work would not be disrupted. Nevertheless, there was one announcement that broadcast to the whole school community, during class time that a teacher had failed to put the basketball hoops away and that they would be in the way of parents’ cars at pick up time. The system would certainly have been effective at bringing about the desired action before the end of the school day but at great personal cost to the guilty teacher. To my mind,
this announcement reflected not only the power of central control but also the growing pressure on the facilities to provide every conceivable car space. Perhaps the operations of their public address system demonstrated that administration and growth outweighed educational priorities.

In order to understand the College’s priorities a little deeper, their entrance scholarship application form for Year 7 in 2001 provided a further reflection. The scholarships were intended for those students who wished to attend but could not afford the fees. The form asked about the applicant’s church standing, their previous school’s behaviour records and their habits with regard to Bible reading and prayer (Diary, p. 22). The process reflected an emphasis on the Christian background of the prospective students rather than any potential for academic excellence. The scholarship process demonstrated that their enrolment practice was not selective on ability, thus making any excellent academic results all the more impressive while still supporting their primary goal to champion the Christian growth of their students.

Whichever way the students entered the Sandford Christian College they did appear to work hard. Chapter 4 presented some excellent results from hard work. One day in November 2000 I observed some secondary students outside learning for a test. I reflected that they, the boys, were quite keen to learn the work and I pondered their motivation. Was it the personality of their teacher or their principal? Was it their home background? There certainly seemed to be an intrinsic motivation at work within these boys (Diary, p. 65).

The school tone reflected a community that valued hard work and achieved good results, which in turn attracted new enrolments and led to continuing rapid growth pressures. The students’ language in public was inoffensive. There was an administration that would not let one boy miss his music lesson even at the expense of disrupting the whole school with the public address system and their scholarships were based on character above ability. The educational operation of Sandford Christian College was evidently impressive.
7.3 The Anatomy of Successful Leadership in this School compared with the
Anatomy of Successful Leadership in Non-Christian Schools

This section, recognising the pivotal significance of the success of the Principal of Sandford Christian College, seeks to compare and contrast his successful leadership with successful leadership in non-Christian schools.

7.3.1 Successful School Leadership Literature Review

As a benchmark for comparison nine studies have been reviewed. They include meta-analyses (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003) and the English (Day & Naylor, 2004) and Australian (Gurr et al., 2003) parts of an international study across eight countries. There are also three robust studies of geographically disparate school groups, 96 schools in Australia (Mulford & Johns, 2004), ten principals in the United Kingdom (Day, 2004) and 150 schools in Canada (Sackney, Walker & Mitchell, 2004). Some of these studies did include passing reference to a small number of Christian and Catholic schools (e.g. Gurr et al., 2003) but broadly they describe the anatomy of successful leadership in non-Christian schools.

This review of the research has identified seven features of the anatomy of successful leadership in non-Christian schools. Most of these features were described in the majority of the studies reviewed. Mutual corroboration was clear across widely diverse settings. The seven features:

1. Values, beliefs, ethics and moral integrity
2. Vision and a predilection for change
3. Care for and development of people
4. Distributed leadership
5. Building community
6. Contribution to student achievement
7. Reflective leaders who learn
Feature 1 Values, beliefs, ethics and moral integrity

Research, that never made claim to be anything other than secular, clearly acknowledged and offered respect to either the implied or explicit Christian foundations of successful school leadership. The studies suggest that these principles have underpinned successful education in the past and will continue to do so in the future, even in the modern secular world where there are increasingly fewer moral absolutes. Mulford and Johns (2004: 74) called for more work to be done on what Leithwood and Riehl (2003) called the ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of successful school leadership.

Mulford and Johns (2004: 48) described a prerequisite for successful leadership as a set of personal and organizational values that are mutually aligned. They stressed that the principal’s values and beliefs informed decisions and actions that affected support for the individual and, at the school level, the development of school culture and structure (Mulford & Johns, 2004: 73).

One setting claimed that their school’s starting point was their Christian belief that each child was utterly precious and loved into existence, irreplaceable and had to be and deserved to be continually forgiven (Day & Naylor, 2004: 19). Day and Naylor went on to argue that these underpinning values and beliefs were sufficiently significant to be described as one of their ten themes for success. They described how these values and beliefs became outworked in the schools’ locality and how the school community served the needs of the wider community (Day & Naylor, 2004: 20-21).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003: 24-25) applied these same principles for successful school leadership. Here they had in mind successful school communities that intentionally sought to meet the needs of students from backgrounds or with characteristics that fell outside the cultural mainstream, recent immigrants, children with handicaps or racially marginalised. Here the underpinning values and beliefs of successful leadership generated ethical action and a fight for social justice. Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003: 12) also recognised the principle that alignment of behaviours with ideals and beliefs generate change. An example was given of a child who had been excluded.
from three schools and was now making an improvement. Successful school leadership developed communities with moral purpose and the courage to apply their single-minded principles consistently (Day & Naylor, 2004: 16-17).

Feature 2 Vision and a predilection for change

Successful school leaders are visionary and apt to live on the edge – we do it our way (Day & Naylor, 2004: 13). This accords with Leithwood et al.’s (2004) first principle that the leadership must set the direction, Day’s (2004: 7) passion for commitment to a sustained sense of identify and purpose and Mulford and John’s (2004: 73) harmony between the core values and beliefs of the principal and the shared vision for the school. Further, Leithwood et al. (2004: 8) established the link between the school’s improvement agenda and the need for the school’s structures to be malleable in order to accommodate, redesign and change.

Everyone thrives on having compelling and challenging, but achievable, goals. Gurr noted successful school leaders were expert at redesigning their schools and this feature was central to their leadership (Gurr, 2003: 32). It has been recognised that educational leaders can help by identifying and articulating their school’s vision for school improvement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003: 17). Then they direct structural changes to establish positive conditions for teaching and learning through modification of the nature of tasks, the organisation of time and space, routine operations and the development of material resources to enhance the learning environment for students and teachers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003: 20).

Feature 3 Care for and development of people

Students of all ages agree that a characteristic of good teachers is their care for students in their charge. They have been described as encouraging as opposed to being indifferent to the individual, the hallmark of bad teachers. Therefore it is hard to imagine a successful school leader who does not similarly place a high priority on
connectedness with students, staff and parents. One head in Day’s (2004: 10) study was passionate about schools preparing young people to make a difference in the community that they work in. Thus exemplifying this head’s desire to see the school successful, not only in helping students gain enhanced academic outcomes, but also fully developed characters and personalities that would be catalysts for change in their adult environments. Care and compassion, built on shared vision, are key features of successful leadership (Day, 2004: 4).

Successful principals are only as successful as their staff. Therefore they build their staff’s optimism and enthusiasm, increase their intellectual stimulation, reduce their frustrations and transmit their own sense of mission with the result that the staff are able and willing to give more effectively and energetically into the vision of the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003: 19). From Gurr’s perspective, while the role of the principal was seen as important to the success of a school there was consistent acknowledgement of the significant contribution of staff. All staff could be empowered to exercise leadership that influenced both the classroom and the school community in general (Gurr, 2003: 32).

Expressed another way, successful principals placed great emphasis on building teaching and learning communities. Day and Naylor (2004: 33) called this building internal capital through collectivity. These communities endeavoured to champion teamwork, networking, risk-taking and continual professional development. Here the head teachers’ role was key to building a heightened sense of ownership, purpose and morale among their staff.

**Feature 4 Distributed leadership**

As staff are extended and encouraged in their work, some aspects of the leadership roles, previously the preserve of the principal alone, have been distributed across the wider school community. There has been widespread support for the idea that leadership should not be confined to those in formal managerial or leadership roles but there is little empirical evidence as yet (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003: 15-16).
Harris (2004) conceded that distributed leadership was beneficial to capacity building within a school community that in turn would lead to school improvement but she called for further research to confirm the connection between distributed leadership and improved student learning outcomes. In this context, she also asked questions relating to the forms of leadership that would lead to sustainable school improvement and what kinds of leadership would be most effectively distributed to others within the community. Mulford and Johns (2004) quote research demonstrating that distributed leadership across administrators and teachers that actively involved them in the core work of the school, did improve student outcomes (Mulford & Johns, 2004: 50-51).

Distributed leadership has been shown to further develop teacher’s professionalism, another aspect of developing people within the organisation. This is especially notable where teachers are empowered in areas that are important to them (Gurr et al., 2003: 21; Harris, 2004).

Feature 5 Building community

Features three and four naturally build community in and of themselves and the intentional building of an inclusive community with sustained involvement was one of Day and Naylor’s (2004) themes that made a difference in successful headships. Their research had identified *a true community spirit* as an outcome from a head teacher reinforcing to people how good they were and them eventually believing it. They reported that successful head teachers devoted ample time to parents and were aware of the cultural and religious needs of their families. In fact, they are treated as partners in the education of their children. Typically, a sense of teamwork would develop between the staff and the parents with a focus on the individual rather than the profession (Day & Naylor, 2004: 17, 30-32, 39).

Gurr et al.’s (2003) contemporary model of educational leadership comprises three levels. The first level of impact of successful leadership focuses on the teaching and learning environment. The second level of impact follows this. Here the *school capacity* is considered, that is the leader’s capacity to build personal, professional,
organisational and community capacity. The third and final level of impact recognised other influences. These could include internal or external aspects, school size, demographics and stakeholder interests and priorities (Gurr et al., 2003: 33-34). Gurr’s team established the building of community as a central feature of successful school leadership from their case studies in Victoria. Their model recognised the progressive impact of the school’s leadership and in the second and third levels recognised the importance of engagement with the wider community. This theme was also acknowledged by Day (2004) in his section on passion for commitment where he referred to the need for intellectual and emotional engagement with all stakeholders if success was to be assured (Day, 2004: 7).

Feature 6 Contribution to student achievement

There is a plethora of measurable variables that impact on student outcomes including family background, intellectual ability, high-quality pedagogy and many more. However, school leaders also play their part even though their effect is usually indirect through the processes and influences they control. Typical ways successful leadership has been seen to influence student outcomes have included vigorous selection of staff, defending the school from distractions to its learning focus and the frequent monitoring of activities (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003: 10).

Gurr et al.’s (2003) model, described under Feature 5, starts with a level one impact of a successful school leader who positively influences teacher pedagogy, curriculum design and assessment measures to bring about improvements in student outcomes (Gurr et al., 2003: 33). This position has been echoed by Day (2004) in his treatment of the leader’s passion for achievement. It seems incongruous to imagine a successful school leader who was not passionate to see their students attain their potential. Day argued that an effective measure of success was high student attendance and high teacher retention (Day, 2004: 3).
Feature 7 Reflective leaders who learn

Finally in this review of the anatomy of successful leadership in non-Christian schools, successful leaders have been understood to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their school’s practices and their leadership’s impact on student learning (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003: 12).

Mulford and Johns (2004) reported on a values-led contingency leadership model that concluded with an emphasis on continuing professional development, the leaders who learn, and a reflective stance that continually challenged self, adopting critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Mulford & Johns, 2004: 48). Day (2004) also highlighted that successful leaders need to be continually willing to reflect upon experience and the context in which practice occurs and to be adaptable (Day, 2004: 7).

The sevenfold anatomy of successful leadership in non-Christian schools was seen to be underpinned by the values, beliefs and ethics, held by the principal and shared by the community, which directly influenced their behaviours. The successful leadership articulated vision and precipitated change while fostering a focus on care for the individual and the development of staff and students alike. Leadership was shared or distributed across many empowered individuals who placed high importance on the building of community capacity. The product of successful leadership was always seen to be improved student outcomes in both academic as well as personality and character traits and the leadership was continually reflecting and learning in order to refine their school performance even further.

7.3.2 The Anatomy of Successful Leadership of Sandford Christian College

The research reviewed in the previous section has sought to reflect an international benchmark of current understanding of successful school leadership. The final section considers the single case study of the leadership of Sandford Christian College in the light of the sevenfold features of the anatomy of successful leadership in non-Christian schools.
Feature 1 Values, beliefs, ethics and moral integrity

The similarities between the Principal of Sandford Christian College and the benchmark studies are striking. The Principal has held overtly Christian values throughout his long career in Sandford. It was evident that his appointment depended on them and it is my contention that his close relationship with the Senior Minister of the covering church would not have developed had he not shared the same values and beliefs. His alignment with the church on these matters of the heart has underpinned his success as the leader of the school, certainly from the church people’s perspective.

The distinctively Christian values, beliefs and ethics have been the foundation on which the school was born. Church people were convinced that God had called them to found the school by partnership with Christian families in the nurture of the Christian faith in their children while providing a characteristically Christian education. Without the underpinning of these values, beliefs and ethics the school would not continue in its present form. In the same way as the literature has found these attributes to be essential in successful leaders in non-Christian schools per se, I would argue, they are even more important for the credibility of Sandford Christian College.

The Principal’s moral integrity has been recognised by most participants in this research. It was one of the first characteristics discussed in surveys, interviews and focus groups, without any prompting by the researcher. Moral integrity was frequently spoken about in the context of a defining reason for the school’s success and as a way of describing the community’s personal encounters with the Principal.

Feature 2 Vision and a predilection for change

The Principal of Sandford Christian College along with the Senior Minister of the overseeing church, were renowned for their passion for a progressive vision. During the Principal’s career as leader of the school he has navigated the community through their vision for a school of 300, then a school of 600 and finally their vision for 1000
students. Some have criticized him for being too focussed on growth and the task to hand, but many more have appreciated his attention to detail and the harmony he has shown between the Christian values that underpin the school and the practical needs of the rapidly growing community.

In addition to responding to the extensive demands for new buildings to accommodate growth, the Principal also made radical changes to the senior management team resulting in, at the time of the study, the smallest team for some time. The team comprised the two assistant principals over the secondary and junior grades respectively, together with the business manager and the principal.

Finally, in line with the literature, the Principal was effective at articulating the vision. During the study, he increasingly revealed elements of the vision in staff meetings both to remind the long serving staff of the rationale for changes to procedure and structure and also to paint the vision clearly for the increasing number of new staff who were taken on due to growth, yet did not have the benefit of experiencing some of the hard times early in the history of the school. The Principal also orchestrated Vision 2000, a sponsored dinner for staff and parents alike when the plans for the 1000 students where unveiled.

**Feature 3 Care for and development of people**

The Principal took a personal interest in the individual students. They spoke very warmly about his personal connection with each of them. They sensed a genuine concern on his part for them to reach their potential while at Sandford Christian College. A past student, now a teacher, who received corporal punishment at his hand, spoke warmly of the way the school had developed over the years and how it was now much better than it had been, despite being the best Christian school the teacher’s father could find on moving to Victoria from Tasmania. There was never any suggestion that the Principal’s care and desire to see people develop was not genuine.
The Assistant Principal Secondary spoke of modelling his leadership on his Principal’s style. The Assistant Principal Secondary was recognised as having brought great improvement, particularly in terms of academic rigour to the secondary department and in this sense, it can be seen that the Principal has developed his Assistant Principal Secondary to be a better leader.

The staff frequently spoke of the high morale in the school and their freedom to express themselves in the school community. Because all of the staff were Christians, they felt that their Christian ministry and their teaching were complementary to each other. Some held particular responsibilities within their local churches while others considered their work in the school to be their primary Christian ministry. One teacher described working in Sandford Christian College like teaching in heaven on earth. In comparison with the state benchmarks, the school’s morale was extremely high, especially considering the stresses and strains generated by their rapid growth. This statistic reflected a school community that felt cared for and who were being developed as students and teachers.

**Feature 4 Distributed leadership**

One of the overarching themes of the study has been the increasingly collaborative leadership style of the College. The rapid growth has necessitated the move from the more autocratic style of the first principal through to the more inclusive style observed at the time of the study. The current Principal himself recognised that he had undergone several changes in leadership style during his principalship and that he was still seeking to be more inclusive by finding ways for those currently not within the school’s decision-making group to participate if they so desired.

The senior management team was the most tangible expression of distributed leadership within the community but there were many other teams and layers of leadership that worked together to fulfil the common vision. Notably the co-ordinators of curriculum areas, the learning support unit, the wet-weather co-ordinator and the primary curriculum co-ordinator.
There was some criticism from a small number of staff that too much power was held within the senior management team, but my view is that the structure was justified by the complex needs of the building programme at the time. In response to this, the Principal did establish a new protocol in 2000 that released the head of each subject area due for a new building, to research other schools and to make recommendations for the design of their new facility. This was a very effective strategy as it increased the ownership of the various projects and enabled the staff to appreciate what were practical design features and what were too extravagant and could not be afforded.

**Feature 5 Building community**

The enrolment and recruitment processes were extremely thorough. The Principal himself directed both though each process was a team effort. The former process comprised the enrolments officer and the two assistant heads; the latter also consisted of the assistant heads and for secondary grades the subject co-ordinators. In this way, the Principal maintained a very keen interest in the growing community. He understood each family’s circumstances very well, as they operated a policy of not allowing school fees to deny enrolment to needy families who were convinced of the benefits of the school’s Christian education. The Principal also understood the socio-economic dynamics of the school’s demographic as he made annual adjustments to the fee level to stretch families but not to price Christian education beyond their means. He certainly understood his community very well and spent much time and placed great priority on addressing concerns even if the school did not always achieve their objectives immediately.

This was true for the parental concern to see the abolition of the personalised Christian education modules that children worked through at their own pace. This system was instituted in the early days of the school when they could not recruit sufficient qualified staff. It was phased out over many years in deference to those parents who continued to passionately believe in the system as it had worked for their children very
well. The phasing out of the system went through a number of consultation phases with all stakeholders being consulted. It was a very democratic process.

At the time of the study, the school had not had to consider marketing, on account of the excellent word-of-mouth testimonies from current parents. There was a positive community spirit built up over many years. The Principal’s positive encouragement of students, teachers and parents alike had been evident to all.

The covering church’s stake in the school was also a significant factor in the build up of the positive community spirit, but despite the continued growth of the church, there were an increasing number of children coming from other churches. This development caused the Senior Minister to ponder what the governance system for the school might look like in future years as up until then, the board of governance for the school was almost entirely made up of the covering church’s people and he wondered how long that would continue.

**Feature 6 Contribution to student achievement**

As the school has grown, so has the level of the student achievement. The past student survey revealed that the school in the early days was very different to the one studied in depth in 2000. In the early days, the restricted curriculum, the untrained staff and, in some people’s minds, an overly harsh discipline system had left some past students very disappointed with their school experience.

In contrast, the current students and parents both felt that the education was excellent. Some articulate students spoke with genuine disappointment about some of their friends who had left the school and were now no longer working as hard and their lives were no longer on track. They appreciated the hands on personal interest shown them by their teachers.

Maths was perceived to be weak by some but the increasing academic expectations of the secondary students in particular, along with the appointment of excellent staff,
were gradually dispelling these earlier impressions. The year 12 students’ Victorian Certificate of Education results in the year of the study, the first class to complete Year 12, outperformed all other comparable schools on the league tables. The Principal was understandably delighted, given that the initiative had been very costly to establish and was now justified by the students’ results!

**Feature 7 Reflective leaders who learn**

The Principal was continually reflecting on his own leadership and repeatedly making modifications to his style. From the first stages of this study, he was passionately interested in the findings. He made as much time available to me as I needed, both for the formal interviews, which always ran over, and the informal meetings when we discussed the rationale for a survey or we analysed the results together.

The College Board and the Principal were greatly appreciative of the interim results, presented as the Development Review and the Past Student Survey. The Principal has been using modified surveys in the years following the study in order to measure changing perceptions. He was always known as a principal who would never be afraid to ask questions. He networked widely, especially at each key growth phase in the life of the College.

The Principal’s leadership of Sandford Christian College was probably the most significant contributory factor in the success of the school. Further, it is my contention that the features that describe the anatomy of his successful leadership of a Christian school would also be regarded as very successful in the leadership of a non-Christian school.
References


References


References


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\(^7\) Personal Communication, 2002. An internally published book within the church. The identification of the author has been withheld for confidentiality guarantee purposes.


Appendix 1 - Formal Letter seeking Research Approval

29th May 2000

XXXX XXXX- Principal
Sandford Christian College
XXXX XXXXX XXXXX
XXXX XXXXX

Dear XXXX,

Re: PhD Research 2000

Thank you very much indeed for the opportunity you gave both David Gurr and myself to come and see you last week to discuss my proposed research in Sandford Christian College. Both David and I were delighted with your very positive and encouraging response to the idea.

I have taken on board your comments and suggestions and incorporated them into the revised proposal document enclosed with this letter. I trust that you will find this new document more suitable to submit to the college council for their meeting of 21st June. If however, you want to make some further changes feel free to contact me and I will be happy to oblige.

Assuming that all goes well with the college council and that you are still happy for me to come to Sandford, I would expect to be starting with you in Week 2 Term 3 - which according to my diary, would be from Monday 17th July. Last week I received details of my tutorial commitments here in the university, which leaves me available to come to Sandford on Tuesdays and Fridays in Semester 2. Following your suggestion at the end of our meeting, I would be delighted to come along for a brief appearance at a staff meeting during the previous week to introduce my research and to field any questions from staff. (I have no university commitments that week, so that I could come on any day or time convenient to you).

I am looking forward to hearing from you in due course. Meanwhile, may I wish you well for the remainder of this term and in particular, the successful completion of your reports.

Yours in Christ,

Jim Twelves
Appendix 2 - School Development Review - Survey System

Introduction

The material contained in the CASES Opinion Survey module is a step forward in a school's ability to collect and analyse information from parents, staff and students. The surveys monitor their perceptions of what is happening at the school.

The parent, the staff annual report and the specialist school curriculum surveys are all components of the school accountability framework. Prior to the development of this module in 1997, these surveys were collated and analysed in a Microsoft Works program. The CASES Opinion Survey module replaces the Works module.

Two additional surveys are included in the Opinion Survey module, the student and a full diagnostic staff survey. Both surveys have been included as options for schools and are not mandatory. However, schools are encouraged to conduct the staff full diagnostic survey when they are undertaking a triennial school review. The five measures in the staff annual report survey are a sub-set of measures from the staff full diagnostic survey.

The student survey measures the perception of students to ‘teaching and teachers’. Although there is a separate survey for both primary and secondary schools the reading level would not be appropriate for prep to year 3 and possibly year 4.

The staff full diagnostic survey contains fourteen scales that measures staff opinion of the organisational health of the school. This survey is intended to assist principals and staff in profiling school morale, stress and their determinants and assist with ideas for further action. For more information on the two staff surveys, you can refer to Monitoring Staff Opinion, an Office of Review Publication available on the Office of Review website http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ofreview. The Occupational Health and Safety unit also has support information about interpretation of the staff full diagnostic survey (contact Paul O’Halloran 03-9637 2394).

If you require technological support for the Survey Module, please call the CASES Response Centre on 1800 641 943 or the Office of Review on 9637 2933.

In order to report the results from the parent and the staff annual report survey in the school annual report it is possible to copy the data directly from the module across to other applications. Instructions to complete this function are contained in this Quick Guide.

This Quick Guide will assist in the production of the Opinion Surveys for Parents, Staff and Students of your school. After the questionnaires have been printed, circulated and returned, data will be recorded, analysed and produced in graph or table format.
Opinion Survey Log In

To log on to the Opinion Survey System, type in your User Name (which is your CASES sign-on code) and press tab to the Password box. Enter your CASES password. Press Enter, or click OK to move to the Opinion Survey menu.

If you have more than one school’s database on your computer, you will be required to select the school you wish to work with.

The Main Menu

Seven different Opinion Surveys are available.

- Parent Opinion Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey (Special Settings)
- School Curriculum Survey (Special Settings)
- Staff Annual Report Survey
- Staff Full Diagnostic Survey
- Student Survey (Primary)
- Student Survey (Secondary) (See Appendix B).

The basic operations are the same for each Survey with only a few exceptions which are noted in the appropriate places throughout the Quickguide.

On the main menu, there are 4 buttons in the top right corner of the screen. The left arrow takes you back one menu level, the right arrow takes you forward one menu level (according to which survey button is highlighted on the screen). The door button is a quick exit, and the question mark brings up the help screens.

The help screens are available throughout the Opinion Survey Module, and provide useful information about data entry and survey procedures.

To access the required survey, either double click on the menu item, or highlight it with the arrow key or mouse, and press <Enter>.

Each Survey has three buttons on the sub-menu:

- Survey Preparation
- Enter Responses
- Analysis & Reporting
Survey Preparation

The **Survey Preparation** Button has four buttons on the sub-menu:
- School Questions
- Survey Register
- Print Preview Questionnaire
- Random Sample

School Questions

Up to 5 school defined questions may be added to each survey, except **School Curriculum Survey (Special Settings)** where the facility to add school based questions is not available.

School questions are added **before** a survey is registered.

It is important that questions are carefully worded prior to adding them into the survey. Questions must be stated in a form which requires a response consistent with the questionnaire being used, for example:

*Teachers at this school motivate my child to learn.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Middly Disagree</th>
<th>Middly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The help menu provides further information on wording new questions.

Adding School Questions

To add a question to a survey, click on the ‘School Questions’ button.

Click on the **Add** button. The next question number will automatically be displayed. Type in the question. Click on the **Save** button. The new question will appear in the ‘Questions’ box.

Click on **Close** if you wish to exit, or to add further questions, follow the same procedure above by clicking on **Add** again.

When all questions have been added in select **Close**.

Note: in replacing school questions for a new survey, it is best to delete all the school’s optional questions before re-entering new questions.

To do this, highlight the question you wish to delete, click on the **Remove** button, and a ‘Confirm delete’ box will be displayed. Click on **Yes** to delete the question.
Survey Register

The term ‘survey’ refers to the process of issuing a specific questionnaire to a group of survey participants. An ‘Active’ survey is a survey into which you are currently entering data. When you have finished entering data into a survey it is recorded as ‘Completed’ and a new survey is then Activated. This process is described below.

Several surveys are conducted within a school each year. Therefore a process is needed to establish and keep track of the surveys. This is known as registering a survey and can be completed through the Survey Register. Each questionnaire or survey must be registered separately. For example, a school may conduct a Parent Opinion survey in March and another in November. Both these surveys would be registered individually, and responses entered separately. *Note: the administration of one Parent Opinion survey only is required each year for the Annual Report.*

To Register a New Survey

Click on the **Survey Register** button. Any previous surveys registered will be displayed in the top half of the screen.

Click on **Add**. The ‘survey date’ field will display the current date. You can identify the survey by date: either the date the survey was commenced, or the due date for responses. To change the date click on the down arrow next to the ‘survey date’ displayed. A calendar of the current month will be displayed. Use the mouse to point to the correct date and click once to select. If you wish to select a different month, click on the right and left arrows positioned next to the month and year at the top of the calendar. *Note: you cannot register more than one survey on the same date.*

Your school name will automatically display in the ‘School’ field.

If your school is multi-campus, clicking on the down arrow next to the ‘Campus/Site’ field can change the campus responsible for the survey.

If you wish to collate and analyse the data by campus a different survey for each campus will need to be registered.

Type in the number of questionnaires to be sent out in the ‘Questionnaires Sent Out’ field. This will enable the system to determine the percentage of surveys returned as the results are entered.

Click on **Save**, The survey and its date of registration will now appear in the **Survey Register Box**. Use the **Close** button to exit the screen.

If there is already an Active survey registered, and you are registering a new survey, the following message will be displayed:

‘A survey is currently active for this campus. Do you wish to close that survey and begin a new one?’
This means that no further data or responses can be added for this active survey and that a new survey will be registered. When you select Yes the active survey will be closed and recorded as Completed so that you are able to enter data into the new active survey.

The Remove button can remove only the active survey. If data has already been entered for the current survey a warning message will be displayed:

‘Questionnaires have already been returned for this Survey. Are you sure you want to delete the Survey and lose these responses?’

Select Yes or No as appropriate.

To remove a Completed survey, select File then Delete Summarised Responses. Select the survey/s and then select Remove. A warning message will be displayed: ‘If you proceed, all responses for the selected surveys will be deleted (question and variable scores will be kept in a summary format). Are you sure that you want to do this?’

Answer Yes or No as appropriate.

Print/Preview Questionnaire

The questionnaire can be previewed on screen, and then printed through this option. (Note that only the school questions can be changed.) Click on the ‘Print/Preview Questionnaire’ button. A screen will display information about the questionnaire, and the school name and campus. Click on OK to continue, otherwise Cancel.

The questionnaire will be displayed on the screen. The number of pages in the survey is displayed at the bottom of the screen. The Zoom facility allows the page to be magnified. Clicking on the right and left arrows next to Page Number will display the various pages of the survey. To print the survey click on the Print button. To exit the screen, click on Close.

This is the current survey only, previous surveys cannot be printed.

Random Sample

The Opinion Survey module can access the CASES student data files to generate a random sample of student families. This option enables a number sample to be randomly selected from the CASES student database. A list of names as well as mailing labels can be produced.

Note that the Random Sample is only applicable for the parent and student surveys.
With the student survey it is advised that you select classes rather than a sample of students. This will assist with the administration of the questionnaires to a whole class. In secondary schools, it is advised that you select students in classes from the same Key Learning Area (refer to Appendix B).

Remember the student survey is not appropriate below grade 4-5, depending on the reading ability of the students.

To produce a random sample of students or parents, click on the **Random Sample** button.

For multi-campus schools, select the required campus. Each campus will need to generate its own random sample; it is not possible to generate one sample for the whole school. Each random sample generated will produce a different selection.

In the **Sample Size** box enter the number of families to be sampled. A minimum of 30 families is recommended.

Click on **Generate List**. You will need to wait a few moments while the sample is generated.

A sample list will be displayed on the screen, showing Student name, Year, Parents/Guardian, Postal Address and Language spoken. Click on **Print List** to print a list of the selected sample, or **Print Labels** if required.

Once you have completed Survey Preparation, click on the left arrow key at the top of the menu. This will return you to the previous menus.

**Enter Responses**

The **Enter Responses** button is used to enter data from returned questionnaires for the current survey.

To begin entering responses, click on the **Enter Responses** button. The current survey register information will be displayed on the screen. The number of responses already entered (if any) will be displayed. Select **Add**.

On the lower half of the screen, two tabs will be displayed, Introductory and Main. These are the main areas for which data has to be entered. Every score based question on the questionnaire must be answered on the **Introductory** and **Main** tabs. Note: the staff surveys do not require information to be entered on the Introductory tab. This tab is not active for these surveys.

In the surveys where information must be entered into the Introductory tab, click on the **Introductory** tab, and enter the data for the first response using either the keyboard or the mouse. When the last field entry has been made, the screen will automatically move to the **Main** tab. For the staff surveys, commence data entry on the Main tab.
The numerical response to each question can be entered using the mouse or the keyboard. To use the mouse, click on the circle next to the correct number. To use the keyboard, press the number of each response. You do not need to press <Enter> to move to the next question, as this is done automatically.

If you are using the version of the survey module released with CASES v2.04 in March 1999 and parents have made comments at the end of the Parent Opinion surveys, you may enter these comments into a separate Microsoft Word document. If you are using an earlier version of the survey module, then when you have entered a response for all questions, the Comments tab will be automatically displayed. Type in the comments here if required.

Click on Save when all data has been entered. Note that if a question does not have a response, a warning message will be displayed:

‘A score hasn’t been entered for one of the questions on the Main tab. You must provide an answer to each score based question on the questionnaire’

You must enter the response before continuing. The cursor will be positioned on the question missing a response. If the survey respondent has not answered the question, you should enter the response as ‘9-No Data.’

To enter data for the next respondent click on Add. Note that the number of responses displayed at the top of the screen will increment as you enter them.

The Remove button allows you to remove all data for any one respondent. If you click on remove, you will be asked to confirm that you wish to ‘Delete the current survey response’. Click Yes to confirm. The response can be re-entered if necessary.

Once responses have been entered, you can click on the Check button, which allows viewing of all saved data for each respondent. This enables you to view quickly on screen the responses that have just been entered.

From this screen you may also select Export which will copy the data to a file which can be opened in Microsoft Excel. This is particularly useful if you wish to access any parents’ comments entered. To do this, click on Export. A box called Select Export File Name will be displayed. Type in the name of the file in the File Name box with the file extension .csv; and select the directory or folder you wish to store the file in. Then launch Microsoft Excel. At the File menu, select Open. In the Open box, change Files of Type to ‘Text Files’ and select the directory and file you saved. It will be named xxxxxx.csv. Open the file.

Click on Close to return to the Add Responses screen, and Close again to return to the Survey menu.
Analysis and Reporting

Once responses have been entered for one or more surveys, the Analysis and Reporting Menu becomes active.

The Analysis and Reporting button has three sub-menu buttons:

- Analysis by Questions
- Analysis by Variable
- Analysis by All Variables

In Staff Full Diagnostic Survey there is a fourth button, Further Analysis, which gives the relative contribution of the determinants of each variable and ideas for further action.

Analysis of Questions

This option can be used to analyse single questions for up to three different surveys. Up to three different surveys can be selected, and their results compared. Click on the Analysis by Questions button.

The screen will display a list of current and completed school surveys. The most recent survey will be at the top of the list. The percentage or responses returned will be at the right of each survey information.

Choose up to 3 surveys from this list. The check boxes at the left of each survey indicate which survey is selected. To select or deselect a survey click on it with the mouse.

The drop down list of questions displays all the core questions for the selected questionnaire. If only one survey has been selected the list will include any school defined questions. To select a different question from the list, click on the drop down arrow at the right of the question.

A graph will be displayed for the selected question. Select View as Number or View as % of Returns in the box at the bottom left of the graph.

Using the toolbar buttons at the top of the graph, you can print the graph, change its appearance, copy it as a bitmap file and paste it into a Microsoft Word document or copy the text as data. You cannot export the graph. You can also select whether to display the graph legend, by clicking on the right button.

If you position the mouse over a button, a bubble will be displayed, describing its function.

Select Print to print the graph, or Close to exit the screen.
Analysis by Variable

The Analysis by Variable option is used to analyse the individual variables according to a pre-defined group of questions.

The screen will display a drop down list of current and completed school surveys. The most recent survey will be at the top of the list. The percentage or responses returned will be at the right of each survey information.

The Variable drop down list allows selection of one outcome variable linked to the current questionnaire. Once a variable is selected, the questions linked to it are listed in the Questions drop down list. The Variable Score is calculated and displayed to the right of the Variable list.

A graph will be displayed for the selected variable, showing the results for each question. Different colours are used to identify each question. Select View as Number or View as % of Returns in the box at the bottom left of the graph.

Using the toolbar buttons at the top of the graph, you can print the graph, change its appearance, copy it as a bitmap file and paste it into a Microsoft Word document or copy the text as data. You cannot export the graph. You can also select whether to display the graph legend, by clicking on the right button.

If you position the mouse over a button, a bubble will be displayed, describing its function.

Select the Print button to print the graph.

Click on the Compare button to compare up to three different surveys for one defined variable.

The screen will display a list of current and completed school surveys. The most recent survey will be at the top of the list. The percentage or responses returned will be at the right of each survey information.

Choose up to three surveys from this list. The check boxes at the left of each survey indicate which survey is selected. To select or deselect a survey click on it with the mouse.

A graph will display the comparative scores for the selected variable, for up to three surveys, which are distinguished by colour. To change this information to tabular format, click on table.

Note
Parent Opinion Survey and Parent Opinion Survey (Special Settings) each have seven variables, eg academic rigour, customer responsiveness, with five to seven questions in each variable.

School Curriculum Survey (Special Settings) has eight variables based on key learning areas, with one question for each variable.

Appendices
Staff Annual Report Survey has five variables, with five questions for each.

Staff Full Diagnostic Survey has fourteen variables with three to seven questions each.

Student Survey (Primary) has eight variables with four to six questions each.

Student Survey (Secondary) has eight variables with three to six questions each.

Analysis by all Variables

The Analysis by All Variables button is used for analysing all the variables of the survey together. Questions are grouped into defined variables, for example, general satisfaction. Up to three surveys can be selected.

The screen will display a list of current and completed school surveys. The most recent survey will be at the top of the list. The percentage or responses returned will be at the right of each survey information.

Choose up to three surveys from this list. The check boxes at the left of each survey indicate which survey is selected. To select or deselect a survey click on it with the mouse.

The legend to the right of the graph identifies each variable within the graph. To include analysis of school defined questions in the graph, click in the School Questions check box. A cross will appear if school questions are being displayed.

If you double click on a data point in a graph, a dialog balloon will appear. The dialog box contains the variable name, and the score for the data point.

To change the data from graph to tabular format, click on Table.

In the Staff full diagnostic survey, the analysis by all variables table format includes an export function. This allows the raw survey data to be exported to a .csv file which can be analysed further with a statistical package such as Microsoft Excel. To do this, click on the Export button. A box called Select Export File Name will be displayed. Type in the name of the file in the File Name box with the file extension .csv, and select the directory or folder you wish to store the file in. Then launch Microsoft Excel. At the File menu, select Open. In the Open box, change Files of Type to ‘Text Files’ and select the directory and file you saved. It will be named xxxxxxx.csv. Open the file.

The raw data must be exported before the next full diagnostic survey is registered and entered because this new data will overwrite the old survey file.

Note: Select Benchmark to obtain graphical details for the statewide benchmarks. (Applies to Staff Annual Report). See also Appendix A.
Data Take On – Entering Past Years Performance

Results from previous years’ surveys can be entered into the survey module using the Data Take On procedure. The Data Take On function allows you to enter variable scores from previous surveys. Individual responses to questions cannot be entered using this process.

The Data Take On procedure should only be used for entering data from surveys conducted using the Microsoft Works module.

This function is important for the parent and the staff annual report survey in particular but is available for other surveys (except the Special School Curriculum Survey) if data is available.

Typically, your school would enter this information before conducting any new surveys using this new Opinion Survey module, although this is not compulsory. You should aim to supply the application with as much ‘old’ data from the Microsoft Works program as possible - this provides you with more information about how your school is performing.

Note: Prior to the development of this module, the Parent Opinion survey had a response scale from 0-6. The current response scale is from 1-7. When entering data from the Parent Survey from the old Microsoft Works module, you must add 1 point to each variable score.

If data for more than one year or survey is to be entered using this method, the Data Take On procedure would be completed for each survey separately.

WARNING: Read the dialogue box at the conclusion of the data take-on process carefully. Ensure you have entered data from ALL previous surveys before you answer YES to the question, ‘Has all data from previous surveys been entered?’ You will not be able to use the Data Take On function again if you answer YES.

Data Take On Procedure

At the main menu of the survey module, select File from the menu at the top left of the screen.

Select Data Take On from the drop down menu.

The top half of the screen displays Survey Details. The Survey type (Parent, Staff etc) can be selected from the Questionnaire drop down menu on the screen.

The School and Campus/Site will be displayed automatically. Multi-campus schools can change the campus by using the drop down menu, and selecting the correct campus for the survey data about to be entered.

In order to enter the data for a completed survey you need to enter a survey date. To change the displayed date, click on the date drop down arrow next to the ‘Survey Date’ box. A calendar will be displayed. Click on the left arrow to scroll backward through the months to the date of the survey that gave the results you wish to enter.
You need to select a specific date. Ensure you select the correct year.

Enter the number of Questionnaires Sent Out and Questionnaires Returned.

**Note:** If you cannot remember the exact date or the number of questionnaires returned, estimate or guess a number for both fields.

The next step is to enter into the table, the variable scores for your school for that past questionnaire. The variable score has also been called the scale score on some questionnaires. This can be obtained from the print out from the previous year (this is also recorded in the annual report for that year). Simply type in the numbers for each variable (or scale) in the spaces provided.

Click on Save, then Close.

Once data has been entered for a previous survey or surveys, a dialog box will be displayed.

> ‘CONFIRM COMPLETION

> *This function will become disabled when ‘data take on’ is complete.*

**Note:** Do not click on ‘Yes’ from this dialog box unless the past data for ALL survey types required (Parent, Staff etc.) have been entered. Once Yes is selected the function will be disabled automatically. If in doubt select No.

The data entered using this procedure will appear in the Analysis and Reporting section. Only variable scores are available. You cannot access individual question data for surveys entered using this procedure. Data for the Staff Annual Report survey will be automatically adjusted to correspond with the new benchmark system (see Appendix A in this Quick Guide).
Appendix A - Staff Annual Report Survey: Changes to the Benchmarks

The benchmarks contained in the CASES annual report survey module have a slightly modified benchmarking system for the staff annual report survey.

The CASES system will automatically scale a school’s past years benchmarks into the new system where appropriate when the past years data is entered using the ‘Data take on’ function, (see notes).

The benchmarks used for the annual report module in the 1995 Microsoft Works program were based on the work undertaken by the co-operative research team headed by Professor Peter Hill. At the time all school in the co-operative research project were using these benchmarks.

The new benchmarking system has been based on the work of Dr Peter Hart from the Department of Psychology at the University of Melbourne. The main difference is associated with the way each of the variable is scored. A simple mean score is now used rather than a weighted score. This has been changed for the following reasons:

- The full survey (all 14 variables) is now available and 1995 benchmarks were developed by Peter Hart, using the adjusted system for all variables.
- The Peter Hart system was being used by many schools involved with the OH&S Organisational Health programs.
- Data will be available for other Australian States over the next two years using the Hart system.
- It is possible that data will also be available from Britain using the Hart system in the next two years. Victoria schools will be able to compare their performance with both other states and with Britain.
Appendix B - Student Survey Secondary

The questions in the Secondary Student Survey are not linked to a curriculum area but to general ‘Teacher’ eg. ‘My teacher cares about me’. If the school wishes to consider one or more specific curriculum areas it will be necessary to:

(a) Print a questionnaire and make copies for each curriculum area eg. Maths, Science etc;

(b) Write the curriculum area clearly on the front cover prior to making additional copies;

(c) Administer the questionnaires giving clear instructions that questionnaire one relates to the Maths teacher and questionnaire two, the English teacher. The same student could complete both questionnaires or the Maths questionnaire could be administered to three or four form groups and the English to a different three or four forms; and

(d) When entering the data into the computer for analysis it is necessary to register separate surveys for each curriculum area. Separate dates would be used for each survey. You cannot register more than one survey for a particular date. Remember to keep a record of which date relates to each curriculum area.
Appendix 3 - Primary Concert - 3rd August 2000

First Impressions

I attended the concert after only a couple of weeks in the school at the start of my case study research into the college. I attended alone and sat in the back left section as you face the platform. During the event, I made notes after most of the items and have reflected on the event since. The following observations are drawn from these two sources.

- The programme brochure was clear and to the point – perhaps it could have had the date of the performance and perhaps there could have been some background, who wrote the musical for example?
- The students seating areas seemed to be very animated before the performance started, but their obvious excitement was good to see. They were obviously enthusiastic and happy with themselves.
- The parking was very tight, I was surprised not to see any attendants on duty, but because I know the church, I soon worked out where to park, in the front car park. Would there have been any ‘visitors’ who might have been more daunted by the crowds?
- Lights down, dead on time – very impressive. The Principal’s welcome and introduction, just brilliant – great respect from the children and the practicalities he spoke of very clear and inviting in tone. Length of intro. also just right.
- Attire of the dancers. I have seen some schools where the girls’ attire has seemed out of place. Here, it seemed very sensitively done to the occasion. I was very impressed with the obvious intention to include the boys in dance – the Russian dancers.
- Crèche Facilities. I was impressed by the advertisement of the facilities for parents to supervise their own children. Perhaps this could have been a little more pointedly, as there were some ‘babies’ that were being supervised noisily in the auditorium!
- Piano Solo. This was very impressive, but I was disappointed with the parents who took this opportunity to move around and to talk to each other. Perhaps the parents need to come back to school; they were showing up their children!
- Orchestra. The size of the orchestra was very impressive and the capacity to make music was great. All seemed to work well for them – volume and tunefulness very good.
- More than Gold – the Musical. This was an excellent piece for a primary group:
  - Brilliant to include such a large cast
  - Sets and costumes brilliant – particularly the ‘big’ faces etc. for the size of the auditorium. The big king images – perhaps more could have been done with them – I like the one that burst into applause!
  - Video coverage on the big screens a great help.
  - The intertwining of the stories – brilliant – really maintained the interest and brought home a great, great message to the adults and children alike.
  - The conclusion by the Principal – just right, there could have been an appeal, but that would have detracted from the parents’ own intelligence and the occasion – it was so effective in its own way.

General Remarks. This was the best Primary Concert in a Christian School I have seen, in England, NSW and Victoria even considering the size of the school, which is obviously an advantage. There was a wonderful blend of secular and sacred, demonstrating the unity of God’s creation; it was obviously Christian but naturally so. I was impressed that there was no self-congratulation on the part of the staff – a very much Christ like servant spirit came over in everything that was done. The biggest disappointment to me was the noise and the ‘fidgeting’ on the part of some of the parents. How does the college educate them – I don’t think a ‘heavy’ word at the start would be effective or appropriate but something more ‘sustained’ and low key, perhaps through the children. If the college is a community and the home is a community, perhaps their children can ‘teach’ the parents in some respect about ‘respect’ for others and due ‘credit’ for the service and work of others. I have no answers, just posing questions and ideas!

It was a tremendous opportunity for me to be there – thank you very much. Jim Twelves 9.8.00.
Appendix 4 - Sandford Christian College Past Student Survey

Please circle the correct answer or supply the requested information.

Gender: M/F

1. For how many years were you a student at SCC? ............years
2. When did you leave SCC? 19..... From which grade did you leave? ......
3. The following table lists the School’s Aims. To what extent do you believe that they have been achieved for you during your time in SCC?

Circle one number ONLY for each statement (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sandford Christian College is committed to:</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Mildly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Demonstrate the love of God and teach Biblical truths.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Develop in students the desire to serve God and society, and the skills to exercise leadership.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Nurture Christian values, standards of morality and ethics.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Promote excellence in all aspects of the school life.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e Assist students in discovering and developing, as fully as possible, their unique talents and capacities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f Provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of all students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g Offer experiences, which will motivate and challenge students intellectually, aesthetically, physically and spiritually.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h Provide a secure and supportive environment where responsible relationships may be developed amongst all members of the school community.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i Develop self-disciplined young people who are optimistic, confident, articulate and resourceful.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j Encourages students to possess a zest for learning and an understanding that learning is a life-long process.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

please turn over
4. By the time you left SCC, had you committed your life to Christ? Y/N

5. What is your current highest academic qualification? Y/N
   Year 10
   HSC/VCE
   Certificate/Diploma
   Bachelors Degree
   Masters or Higher

6. What is your current main occupation? ..............................................................

7. Are you currently actively involved with a Christian Church? Y/N
   If ‘yes’, which church? .........................(name)  .........................(location)

8. Do you recommend SCC to family and friends? Y/N

9. What are your most significant memories of your time at SCC? Include either positive or negative memories or both.
   ...................................................................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................

10. What, if any, do you believe has been the lasting impact of the College on your life?
    ...................................................................................................................
    ...................................................................................................................

11. Any other comments?
    ...................................................................................................................
    ...................................................................................................................
    ...................................................................................................................
    ...................................................................................................................
    ...................................................................................................................

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this survey, your contribution is very much appreciated.

Jim Twelves
Appendix 5 - Student Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted:

**Primary (Y5 and Y6)** 10 students – 5 female, 5 male
**Junior Secondary (Y8 – Y10)** 7 students (Y8 x 3, Y9 x 1, Y10 x 3)
6 female, 1 male
**Senior Secondary (Y11)** 10 students – 7 female, 3 male

Student Variable Scores and Focus Group Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Primary FG</th>
<th>Jn. Secondary FG</th>
<th>Sn. Secondary FG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy:</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>Teachers are nice and the Principal is OK. Teachers do care for everyone, even if they are difficult kids. The teachers really care, you would not get that in a state school. Some kids don’t open up because they are afraid. Social aspects of like are not encouraged. Some kids come from ‘non-Christian’ homes, i.e. now live with a divorced parent. They take on the values of their home.</td>
<td>There is less Bible in Secondary – we have secular textbooks. The amount of religion depends on the teacher – we have a new teacher and we don’t even pray! There is this one teacher, who will take time out to pray for you – and prayer really works! The minority of teachers do this. The students want the religion, but some teachers are afraid the kids don’t. The teachers are caring. Primary teachers are more caring. The school stops individuality.</td>
<td>More needs to be spent on the VCE facilities. There are not enough VCE choices, 5 left last year because of the small range. I feel restricted here, they try to put me into a box – they try to get us to understand their opinion, they are not bothered with ours. A small number don’t understand us. The Principal knows us – he takes time to see how the school is – he takes time to talk to you. People are accepted, no one is not accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy/Enthusiasm</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>Teachers don’t just work for pay, it’s because they love kids.</td>
<td>The teachers are not paid to love us, they just do. I get a letter from my teacher in the holidays!</td>
<td>Teachers that love their subject make it easy to get involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness/Firmness</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>Worst thing about SCC is the paddle. The paddle for swearing means there is nothing for more serious things. Sometimes too many demerits. Teachers don’t ridicule you. Some teachers do have favourites. There is favouritism with sport. Overall there is a fair balance between discipline and fairness.</td>
<td>Boys say that the hair rules are too strict. The rules make you think at this school.</td>
<td>If you follow the rules, the school makes your life easy – if you get an attitude problem they get on your back. Discipline is good. The school is geared for Primary, e.g. the toilets – what the primaries don’t get we get. There was one teacher here who has now left – everyone would walk around scared of her. Some teachers get frustrated with kids and pick on the difficult kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Primary FG</td>
<td>Jn. Secondary FG</td>
<td>Sn. Secondary FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpfulness/Responsiveness:</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations:</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>Teachers expect too much of us. Kids don’t like the high expectations.</td>
<td>Sometimes teachers forget we have not been to university yet!</td>
<td>When I first came here in Y10 I noticed that the expectations were a lot lower than what I had been used to – weeks would go by and no h/w – my work ethic declined. We do work in class unlike some schools, perhaps that’s why there’s less h/w. The PACE system is the reason for the low academic standard, PACES still go into Year 8. Maths and Science. AP (Secondary) having great impact on academic side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Instruction:</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>Some teachers are really good, new teachers are not so good. The education is excellent.</td>
<td>It’s hard to generalise. It’s hard to understand teachers from other countries sometimes.</td>
<td>Some teachers talk too much and don’t explain things. Humanities are great teachers. 50:50 good and bad teachers. Good teachers get the respect of the class and their attention. Teachers who don’t teach well don’t have people skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback:</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>Some teachers don’t always mark work. Our teacher trusts us to mark our own. Some tests take about a week to come back, some projects take over a term.</td>
<td>Often marking can take up to a term to come back, or even a year! You’re a teacher you should be up to it!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of Instruction:</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Some students from other schools find the work hard at first.</td>
<td>The work is not as high a level as other schools. If you compare our work in most areas with other schools, we are actually ahead of state schools.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>H/w is too often given for people who don’t finish in class because they are not concentrating.</td>
<td>Often those who run out of time in class are those who talk too much. It is so unjust when some get extensions for work – what about those who do it one time?</td>
<td>In Gen Maths Y11 the class is so disruptive, little work is done. In Chemistry Y11, not enough class time, therefore too much h/w.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 6 - Parent Focus Groups

16 parents, representing 14 families, attended one of two focus groups.

## Parent Opinion Survey and Focus Group Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENT OPINION SURVEY</th>
<th>PARENT FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Teaching:</strong> score (6.39) well above the 75(^{th}) percentile (5.65) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>Maths in lower secondary used to be and issue related to the PACES. There ought to be Drug Education in secondary. An implied criticism that there is no Sex Education in the College. Compared with other schools, they learn to read much quicker here. Its good that new teachers are bringing in new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Rigour:</strong> score (6.27) well above the 75(^{th}) percentile (5.72) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>Concern that emphasis on PACES reduces teacher teaching time. PACES not co-ordinated with class work. Attitude to PACES, generally negative. PACES have now gone in the Secondary, ‘thank goodness’! To extend students, give differential h/w, but everyone together in class. Academics is not everything, other aspects are vital such as coping skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Environment:</strong> score (6.64) equal to the maximum (6.64) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>The teachers are so approachable and wonderful. Concern over numbers increasing. Class size must hinder individual student care. The thought of my daughter going through the rest of her schooling with classes of 30, concerns me. Class sizes being big is not an issue to me. Praise for how bullying is handled. So many parents are opposed the corporal punishment system. Corporal Punishment. I used to hear about it all of the time, is there still any? Toilets, where are they? When you find them, they are very dirty. Can the College look into a Bus Service, that would help the Car Parking issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Responsiveness:</strong> score (6.52) well above the 75(^{th}) percentile (6.01) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>Concerns heard and changes have been made. Sometimes teachers are slow to accept problems because they have such high expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Reporting:</strong> score (6.54) well above the 75(^{th}) percentile (5.78) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>Discrepancies – sometimes h/w not included in grades. Lack of marks being reported back to students and parents. The 10 min p/t interviews are not enough. A parent’s forum would help. It takes too long before parents are informed of academic problems. It would be good if the College can give us a report, how are we doing compared with other schools, particularly at VCE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Satisfaction:</strong> score (6.54) well above the 75(^{th}) percentile (6.08) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>Having my children here is like having ‘heaven on earth’. School Fees. Since we have been here they have gone up on average 7% per year – unfortunately our salaries are not going up by that much. This raises the issue of both parents having to work. My concern, will the College be able to cope with the growth. Its great that growth will give more subject choice. I have complete confidence in Principal and the council – their very high moral values. Lateness of students in the morning. The College said it would act against this, but they haven’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Questions:</strong> agreement with College’s objectives (6.81), the College providing a distinctly Christian environment (6.92).</td>
<td>In the old days everyone was behind the vision of the College, today parents want a safe environment, but they are not always behind the vision. Today a very wide spectrum of parent’s values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7 - Staff Data Summary

Consolidation of All Staff Opinion Data:
The grid on the following pages has been constructed to assist in linking data from all sources to the main areas of the Full Diagnostic Survey. In this way some of the richness of the original data has been retained so that specific issues of concern are not lost.

Staff Survey, Interviews and Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FULL DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY</th>
<th>RELATED ISSUES FROM OTHER DATA GATHERING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided the following indicators of organisational health</td>
<td>Staff Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morale</strong> Score (4.18) well above the 75th percentile (3.80) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>Majority feel it is a calling not a job. Everyone sees it as beyond a job. School culture is warm and supportive. Care and prayer brings great unity to the College. The College’s focus is prayer. Open relationships with other staff. Great commitment from the staff – teamwork. Holy Spirit present within the school. Staff Retreat is really significant. We have a good name because of the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong> Score (4.08) well above the 75th percentile (3.55) for state schools (1999).</td>
<td>School prospered under Principal, he has a lot of integrity. Principal has done a fantastic job. Principal’s non compromising attitude, foundation in the Word and ability to command respect. Principal’s has God’s Anointing. Principal expects an awful lot of his staff and pushes himself. Principal is great at delegation to his Assistant Principals. Principal’s ability to keep to the ‘big picture’ and not get side lined by personalities. Principal’s love for the vision is contagious. I have hardly seen Principal this year. Strong relationships directors/council/college. Many staff would have problem telling you who was on the council. We don’t know what happens at council meetings, we trust Principal. Long length of service. AP Secondary very good man to launch VCE, because of previous experience he listens to staff. We don’t seem much of Principal now. She stayed so long because she respects the Principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided the following indicators of organisational health</td>
<td>Staff Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal Congruence</strong></td>
<td>Score (4.26) well above the 75th percentile (3.55) for state schools (1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Score (4.03) well above the 75th percentile (3.64) for state schools (1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Growth</strong></td>
<td>Score (3.56) above state mean by 0.10 (1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participative Decision-Making</strong></td>
<td>Score (3.52) below state mean by 0.11 (1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Clarity</strong></td>
<td>Score (4.07) above state mean by 0.24 (1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Score (3.40) above state mean by 0.54 (1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided the following indicators of organisational health</td>
<td>Staff Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Coordination</strong>&lt;br&gt;Score (3.56) below state mean by 0.17 (1998).</td>
<td>PACES have remained so long because 'some parents want them'. Y11&amp;12 doesn’t really have an academic culture yet. AP Secondary has been good at building the academic side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Orientation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Score (3.95) below state mean by 0.12 (1998).</td>
<td>Principal feels that the individual approach is key for the College, therefore the reluctance to see the PACE’S go. As a student, I appreciated the caring attitude of the teachers. I feel inadequately trained to be a school councillor – the students need a professional school councillor. Every term I ring home every student in my care. Love for the children is crucial – it sets the whole tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Discipline Policy</strong>&lt;br&gt;Score (4.31) above state mean by 0.43 (1998).</td>
<td>Perhaps the discipline in class has been too tough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Misbehaviour</strong>&lt;br&gt;Score (1.76) below state mean by 0.63 (1998).</td>
<td>Bullying issue with Y6 this year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excessive Work Demands</strong>&lt;br&gt;Score (2.99) below state mean by 0.58 (1998).</td>
<td>The pressure to constantly improve, and meeting after meeting. Primary reports, the number of hours they take to complete. Some teachers carrying three VCE subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Distress</strong>&lt;br&gt;Score (2.25) below state mean by 0.78 (1998).</td>
<td>As a new teacher I am much more relaxed than I thought I would be. We have higher expectations that we place on ourselves Parents expect a lot of you. I never have enough of anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scores below state mean are preferable for these criteria*
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Author/s:
Twelves, James Bertrand

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