



Sancta Maria International School, India

## Embedding a culture of transparency, feedback and respect



Sancta Maria International School in India offers the full range of Cambridge programmes including Cambridge Primary, Cambridge Lower Secondary, Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International AS & A Level, Cambridge ICE or AICE Diploma and Cambridge PDQ. Principal Ruchira Ghosh explains how Cambridge's School Self-Evaluation service has given the school great insights into the minds of stakeholders.

### Measuring school performance against standards

When I joined Sancta Maria two years ago as principal, it was important for me to understand where we were before setting my vision for the school. It was an excellent tool for me to establish a baseline for the school's performance against standards.

### Consultative and supportive

There is excellent support and professional advice from Cambridge right from initiating the process through to the report and recommendations, which makes the entire



*Ruchira Ghosh,  
Principal*



process seamless and enriching as a school leader. The process was very consultative, starting with discussions that looked at the context of our school and Cambridge responded to all our questions. It helped to have a clear direction but also flexibility to implement the surveys according to our school calendar. We also found the detailed post-survey discussions insightful and enriching.

### Learning from stakeholders

As a new principal, it was a rewarding experience to work closely with my leadership team on a significant initiative for the whole school.

The survey results gave me some great insights into the minds of our stakeholders. Each stakeholder perceives school quality through their unique lens. Younger students see quality in terms of where and how much they can play, and choices for lunch, etc, whereas older students evaluate quality through the relationships with teachers and the wider opportunities school provides.

We were pleasantly surprised and encouraged to find that parents expressed strong trust in the school vision and mission and believed in the leadership and management. They made some valuable suggestions for improving quality of teaching and learning and to create a better sense of safety and belongingness.

### Sharing outcomes and taking action

We shared the survey outcomes and proposed actions with all our stakeholders through separate presentations for staff and parents, reporting progress to parents through the school newsletter. Our new school vision – to unlock the potential of every learner for a better world – is a concrete outcome of our self-evaluation journey.



We identified goals based on what we learnt about our gaps and weaknesses and have initiated specific steps to improve quality in those areas. Differentiation and improving parent engagement were two specific action areas and I am working with my leadership team and faculty to close these gaps.

### Creating a momentum for change

The most significant change we made is the transformation in the relationships between the school and parent community. Our communication and engagement with parents has become more vibrant, solutions-oriented and learner focused. This has had a direct impact on student progress and motivation. We invite parents as guest speakers, judges and mentors, and we have focus groups on specific areas of teaching and learning.

We have continued to focus on the improvements we committed to and we have made deliberate efforts to align our language, behaviours and actions to our agreed goals. These changes required a mindset shift. Our early adopters helped us to create momentum for the changes we wanted to see and bring others on board. A culture of transparency, feedback and respect for each other's perspectives has been embedded now.

### Realigning priorities and listening to feedback

This kind of self-evaluation helps to check our assumptions and realign our priorities. It demonstrates a school's courage and commitment to take honest feedback from all stakeholders and act on it.

The real work for the school begins after the survey findings and recommendations are shared by Cambridge. My advice to schools is to factor in this time while planning to ensure any actions resulting from self-evaluation are implemented well and sustained.