

## **2020 St Mary's Principal's report for AGM**

I am very proud to stand here this evening as Principal of St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Boyup Brook to present my report for the 2020 school year. Despite the many challenges we have faced this past 12 months we have so much to celebrate and be grateful for as we come to the end of the school year and this evenings meeting is an opportunity for us all to reflect and rejoice in all that has been achieved in 2020. My report revolves around the 4 Domains/Pillar's of Catholic Education WA: Catholic Identity, Education, Community and Stewardship.

### **CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

Catholic Identity refers to the "catholicity" of our school. Here at St Mary's we work hard to ensure our students "Grow Through Christ" each day.

This year our focus in this area revolved around continuing to assist our students in engaging more with our liturgical ceremonies (masses and liturgies). We had a long period this year where we were unable to attend any masses as a school due to COVID 19 and it wasn't until the end of Term 2 that this particular restriction was eased and we could return to mass. The celebration of both the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist were both postponed until 2021 and while this was unfortunate we are working to ensure that our Sacramental celebrations next year are even more special for everyone involved. At the beginning of Term 4 we were lucky enough to have 2 students receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This was a very special service with Fr Pierre Repuyan and Fr Roshan presiding. Next year we aim to encourage more of our school families (Catholic and Non Catholic) to come along and feel welcome to join in our Sacramental masses.

In our school masses and liturgies with the use of PowerPoint presentations during the mass with the hymns and parts of the mass displayed so students could better participate in the ceremony. We feel as though this is working well. Teachers prepared thoughtful and insightful liturgies that helped build on what the students had learned in RE lessons and helped them grow in their spirituality. This year we focused on teaching the children more hymns and in 2021 we look forward to another visit from renowned liturgical singer, Andrew Chinn. Our school masses and liturgies are wonderful events that the students participate in through singing, reading and responding to the parts of the mass. We are hoping to train some of our older students that have received the Sacrament of First Eucharist as altar servers for our masses next year. I would like to thank Fr Roshan, our spiritual leader here at St Mary's. Fr Roshan covers 4 parishes but has made a huge effort this year in being present at our school for masses liturgies as well as other events, Thanks Fr Roshan.

Unfortunately, the annual Bishop's Religious Literacy Assessment did not take place this year but will return in 2021. We operate in an increasingly secular society which places many challenges on a Catholic School with a small Catholic population but all parents are supportive of our ethos and we continue to educate our students with Christ at the centre of all we do.

### **EDUCATION**

The education of each and every child is the core work of our school and this year our dedicated and committed staff worked hard to ensure positive outcomes for all students. This section of my report

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deals with the gains we have made in educating the children this year as well as what our data is telling us we need to plan for in 2021.

This year our staff, teaching and non-teaching showed their adaptability during the various challenges presented by the COVID-19 disruptions. While all of the professional development days we had planned to work through this year through the Lyn Sharratt project had to be put on hold, our staff proved that they were willing and able to go to any lengths to successfully deliver the curriculum to our students. While our shutdown thankfully did not last as long as initially anticipated our staff adapted very quickly to deliver the curriculum remotely. Our school board's decision to spend almost \$20,000 on IT devices and equipment at the end of last year was justified and rewarded as any child that needed a device to take home was able to do so. Staff adapted quickly to using platforms such as SeeSaw and TEAMS to communicate with students and parents and comprehensive work packs were also sent home. Parents and family members must also be acknowledged for the efforts they went to in order to continue the learning at home. Thank God the shutdown did not last very long and we were back to normal learning by mid term 2. Many items that were planned on the calendar during Term 2 and 3 were pushed back to later in the year and this led to a very busy Term 4 for our school. Despite these many challenges we continued to focus on the learning of each individual student and we have seen lots of very pleasing growth across the board this year.

Throughout 2019 it was very obvious to us all from looking at our school data that the support structure within our school was not working for our students. This year Mrs Hester returned to her 2 day a week role within the school and together with Mrs Nield they worked to develop a tailor made targeted intervention program, aimed at supporting students at their point of need. This response to intervention program has seen a detailed support timetable drawn up and individual students as well as groups of students have worked with Mrs Hester and Mrs Nield in the areas they need support. The success of this program has been measure through a variety of assessment methods throughout the year and we are very pleased to announce that we have seen strong growth from all participants. Mrs Hester also ran an extension program with our six Year 6 students which was both enjoyable and challenging for the students. Each Wednesday afternoon the students worked with Mrs Hester to come up with a solution to a problem. This "genius hour" project will culminate in the opening of a 'recycling hub' at our school after this years graduation ceremony. I am very pleased that Mrs Nield and Mrs Hester will continue in this role next year, providing support and extension for those in our school that need it most.

Our Literacy focus for this year was to continue to implement guided writing across the school and continue to measure our student's growth in writing. While we haven't got NAPLAN data to look at for 2020 our own Brightpath writing data shows pleasing growth in these areas. As well as this we continued to monitor students reading growth across the school through use of the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment system purchased for us by the P&F last year. We worked with Liz Harper, Literacy consultant from Catholic Education to ensure consistency and accuracy in how we were measuring student growth in reading or writing. Working with our consultants helps 'fact check' what we are doing in these areas and reinforces (and sometimes re focusses) our practices. Nicole Reilly this year undertook professional development to become a Brightpath lead marker and this further enhanced our staff conversations around growth in writing. Spelling results across the school in Term 4 highlighted pleasing growth for our students. As a staff we are constantly looking for improvement and one of our focus goals for 2021 will be to improve cross curricular comprehension across the school next year.

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Our Numeracy focus this year once again revolved around problem solving across the school, particularly comprehension in problem solving, i.e. students being able to understand what a question was asking them to do. Staff worked on a range of strategies to address this issue such as explicitly teaching problem solving skills and problem solving/maths vocabulary. Towards the end of the year we engaged a Maths Consultant from Catholic Education to come and work with our staff to help us address this problem. This is the start of ongoing professional development in this area which will continue across 2021 for our teachers to help assist our students in improving in this area. In Term 4 we hosted a hands on maths incursion for our students which was both engaging and worthwhile. Our focus in Numeracy for 2021 will be to continue to engage our students in Maths as we engage in best teaching practice in this learning area across the school.

Specialist subjects this year smoothly and added a lot of variety to student learning. This year we ran specialist subjects in Science, French, Music, Art and Sport. Thanks to Mr T for running sport and science, Mrs Reilly for teaching French, Mrs Gear for teaching music and Mrs Wheeler and Mrs Harvey who taught a semester of Art each. We were also very fortunate to host a Science Alive incursion in term 3 and this was very well received by all of our students. We made the decision to move our faction athletics carnival to the hockey oval this year. Despite the extra work this entailed we still managed to run a very successful carnival and the facilities at the Hockey oval were ideally suited to our school. We were unfortunately unable to have our interschool swimming carnival, our triathlon or our full winter sports carnival this year but these will hopefully return next year. Mrs Harvey's work in second semester to put together some wonderful artwork and do a silent auction was a great success and raised almost \$2500 for the school. Thank you Mrs Harvey for working with the students on this.

To conclude in this section, Education, I would like to acknowledge our amazing and wonderful staff. I have been truly humbled by the hard work, dedication and commitment that our staff display towards our school and towards all students that attend each day. I commend our teachers for their handling of the added pressure 2020 brought in terms of COVID 19. Adaptability and resilience were to the fore. We are blessed with our staff here at St Mary's and while on this topic, I would like to announce our staffing and class structure for the 2021 school year.

Kindy/PP: Jane Wheeler and Carolyn Harvey

Year 1/2/3: Margaret Evans

Year 4/5: Barbara Marsh

Year 6: Nicole Reilly (Mon, Tue, Thu), Scott Tweedie (Wed, Fri)

Support: Sharon Nield (Mon, Tuesday) Gemma Hester (Wed, Thu),

EA: Deb Corp (Kindy and 2/3, Library admin), Hayley Cook (L&G, Support, Chaplaincy)

Specialist subject days for 2020 are as follows:

Science on a Monday taught by Scott Tweedie

Music on a Tuesday taught by Rochelle Gear

French on a Wednesday taught by Madame Reilly

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Sport on a Thursday taught by Mr Tweedie: please note all carnivals etc will be on Fridays.

Art on Fridays with Mrs Harvey.

Admin and Finance: Emma Fortune and Gemma Aird

Cleaning: Vicki Lawrence and Kerrie Parker

Groundsman: Ross Parker

### COMMUNITY

The next section of my report is community and this refers to how we build, maintain and sustain community within our school, how we engage with our local community and what we plan to do in this area moving forward.

Once again this year our Parents and Friends group went over and above what one would expect from a school our size, at St Mary's we may be small but we are strong. Our first P&F meeting this year was attended by 14 parents from 14 different families in our school and this attendance was consistent throughout the year. Despite the disappointment of not being able to go ahead with the auction due to COVID 19, our P&F, led brilliantly by Kirsten Skraha, continued to raise funds and build community to support our school in a variety of areas. Fundraisers such as clearing sale catering, tea towel and colour fun run and of course the movie night were all very successful due to the planning, hard work and teamwork that our P&F displays. The purchase of our library furniture finally came through mid-year, the faction shirts designed by Sarah Thompson and donated by the P&F are a wonderful addition to our sports events and the movie night surpassed all expectations this year by bringing over 300 people onto our school grounds for a wonderful evening under the stars watching a movie. Thank you to our P&F executive and everyone who gives their time to the P&F for all they do for our school.

Once again this year, we looked at ways to engage more with the local community. This is a very important area in terms of promoting our school and what we do to everyone in our community. 2020 presented a particular challenge in this area as we were unable to liaise with all groups as we normally would. We continued to market our school as best we could through the local gazette, no our website and Facebook page and through various different local news outlets such as the Manjump Bridgetown times. Thanks to Madame Reilly for her work with the monthly gazette article and for working with our Year 5/6 class as they had their letters from the pandemic shutdown published in the West Australian Newspaper. We are currently working on an ongoing marketing strategy to assist us in pushing our message out there with the aim of promoting the school to the wider community. Our yearbook last year was an outstanding publication for such a small school and will go out once again this year.

Next year we are hopefully going to embark on a community outreach program which would see our students adopt a small area of town and transform it into something for our local community. We have already had discussions with the Shire on what this will be, more information early next year.

We continued to provide an engaging and free preschool program from Term 2 onwards in the form of Learn & Grow. The commitment and planning that Mrs Cook puts into delivering this each week is just phenomenal. Mrs Cook was here almost every Sunday prior to Learn and Grow setting things up and each week was new, exciting and fun for the students and parents that attended. Thank you so much

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Hayley for the effort you have put into this in 2020. Mrs Cook will continue to run Learn & Grow in 2021 with the day still TBC.

All of this effort has really helped raise our profile in the community and this is an area I plan on working even harder in next year. We have seen the benefit of this work over the past two years as enrolment numbers increased from 64 in 2019 to 73 in 2020 and will remain approximately at that figure for 2021. We welcomed 9 new families to our school in 2020: the Graham family, Chapman family, Staniford Smith family, Hawkins family, Potter family, more of the Barnes kids, the MAsangu family, the Rose family, the Tripp family and the Porstmann family and what a blessing they have all been to our school. Unfortunately we also said goodbye to the Bocks (Ruby) and the Murphy's after a very long and positive association. We also wish the Connolly family well as they move back to Manjimup.

As always we thank our parents for their support of our school. One of the best marketing tools for any school is positive word of mouth and if our parents have good things to say to prospective families this has a strong knock on effect in terms of enrolments which in turn positively influences everything we can provide here at school. Parents we thank you in advance for your support.

### **STEWARDSHIP**

Stewardship is defined as the job of supervising or taking care of something, such as an organization or property, in our case the school, its buildings and facilities as well as its financial sustainability and all assets attached. In this section I will mainly talk about our school board and what we have done in 2020 to build on the great work of last year to sustain our school into the future. I am particularly excited to talk about our achievements in this area to date.

Our school board stayed the same this year with Ben Thompson as the chair once again. Our main focus this year was getting our CDP proposal across the line to ensure we can renovate our facilities and improve our learning areas for our students. Working with Sally Matthews our architect and Cathy Carr our consultant from Catholic Ed, we drew up a proposal to apply to the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia for funding to upgrade our original classroom block, our early childhood block and our playgrounds. I am delighted and proud that our submission was successful. Our application was strong as was our point of need. Each year CEWA has access to approximately \$40m to distribute between 163 schools across the state for capital works. This year alone they received applications totaling \$143 million. To say it is an outstanding achievement that we attained \$670,000 for our school would be an understatement. This money is made up of federal government grant funds, a low interest loan and a cash contribution from the school. Plans are well underway to get this work going and we should be looking at starting this project around the end of Term 1 next year and finishing it before the end of the year. This project will transform the look of our older buildings and give our students and teachers access to state of the art facilities moving forward. I look forward to getting this project underway and building a school to last well into the future. In 2022 we will celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school here in Boyup Brook and we will also hopefully be officially opening and blessing our new buildings.

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Our school board also supported us in investing heavily in IT devices. The investment of almost \$20,000 last year paid off handsomely and we now have an iPad for all students from Pre Primary to Year 3 and a laptop for all students from Years 4 to 6. We continue this investment this year and as we phase out more old devices around the school.

This year we also researched ways we could reduce uniform costs for our families and by merging our summer and winter dresses into one skirt to be worn with our current school shirt we have halved our costs for female students. This new skirt is now in stock. Old winter and summer dresses can still be worn over a 3 year phase in period beginning start 2021.

Our focus as a board over the next 12 months will be to successfully implement the Capital Development Plan, to develop a 3 year strategic plan for the school and to continue to manage school finances in a sustainable manner. Thank you to Emma Fortune and Gemma Aird for working extremely hard to roll our school over to a new financial management system and for their work with managing the many demands that are placed on finance staff in schools these days.

I would like to thank the St Mary's community for their support again this year. It has been a challenging year from a COVID point of view but also a very rewarding year where the school has gone from strength to strength.

To our staff: it is a privilege to come to work here every day with you all. Thank you for making this another great year and hopefully we can continue our good work uninterrupted next year.

To our parents: thanks for your support and for your involvement in our community, for your support and involvement in your child's education and for always being willing to help out around our school in any capacity.

To the 73 most important people associated with our school: the students. You are a wonderful group, you are the reason we are here and we will continue to work hard to serve you and help you continue to grow in your learning and Grow Through Christ each day. We will miss our 6 graduating students next year and we will pay tribute to them at their graduation mass and dinner.

This year has been another extremely busy one for me and my family. I would like to once again thank my wife Aishling for her unfailing support. This year we welcomed our 4<sup>th</sup> child into the world and it has been such a joyous few months for us. The support we've received from the community has been truly heart warming and we thank you all for that.

I look forward to 2021 with great hope and optimism. This year has demonstrated that we are ready for challenges and will meet them calmly and professionally if and when they arrive.

I wish everyone in our community a safe end to the year, a peaceful Christmas and a happy new year.