



# Sacred Heart School

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## Annual Community Meeting – Principal's Report

Good evening parents, staff, volunteers, School Advisory Council, Parents and Friends, and all members of Sacred Heart School Community. It's hard to believe we are coming to the end of 2024. After an eventful year, we now look back the blessings and opportunities we have shared as a Catholic school community.

As we launched into Term 1, our staff completed our Positive Behaviour Support Framework. Beginning in 2023, the framework was developed in consultation with CEWA Behaviour Consultant, Leith Tarling, and significant staff input. The framework, borne from our Christ-focused, child-centred mantra, promotes a positive behaviour support philosophy in our classrooms and provides a variety of proactive strategies to build a classroom culture of high expectations centred on relationships. Underpinned by our Gospel values, the framework serves as a visual reminder in each classroom of our schools' strengths-based approach to behaviour support.

We said a sad farewell to Fr John Davies this year. In the short time I knew Fr John, he was a joyful and active presence in the school. He arrived during a turbulent time in our Parish's history, and gently guided our Church to reconciliation and healing. His homilies were always engaging and insightful and left the congregation with food for thought. It was fitting that Fr John's last Mass was confirming our Year 6 students in the Sacrament of Confirmation. While I will miss Fr John's quick wit, words of wisdom and banter, I'm sure Nicole and Cassandra will agree the office is much, much quieter.

In Fr John's place, we welcomed Fr Stephen Gorddard from St Mary's, Kalgoorlie, who made an immediate impact in our community. Within 5 minutes, he was kneeling with the Pre-Primary students showing flecks of gold from the open-pit mine and handing out Rosary beads collected to our Year 3 students. Using Kung Fu Panda, Hotel Transylvania and even soccer superstars, such as Messi and Ronaldo, Fr Stephen has remarkably engaged our students and lead our community in faith and virtue. We look forward to a continued strong relationship between our school and parish.

Our Year 6 students travelled to Kent St High School to participate in an inter-school Cricket Carnival. What I was most impressed with was, not just their cricketing ability, but the sportsmanship and comradery on display. For such a small class, they displayed a strong sense of unity and support for each other that carried through all their sporting events this year.

Our carnivals this year have been very successful. Starting with the icy waters of Bilgoman, our faction swimming carnival saw a beautiful day greet our students with Jacoby Faction triumphing as victors. Our X-Country took us to Mundaring Golf Course for our senior students, as our junior students ran their hearts out around our school oval to the cheers of older siblings. In Athletics, O'Connor Faction were too strong throughout the day, as our little oval turned into the Olympic Stadium. The introduction of Championship medals saw our top-performing students recognised for their achievements and again, these events are not possible without the significant assistance of our parent volunteers. On more than one occasion, Mr Ralph told me he was having to turn parents away as all volunteer positions were filled.

Our inter-school sporting accolades were limited this year, bearing in mind, that due to lower numbers in our older years, many of our younger students are asked to run and swim in higher year levels to fill spots. Charlie Elmore racing and winning against Year 5s in the inter-school swimming carnival, and Frankie Butcher against Year 6 competitors twice her height, were particular highlights. The Lightning Carnival did see our soccer team take out the overall shield for the first time in 12 years. A stunning 3-0 win over Mary's Mount laying the foundation for future success.

Our Year 3 and 5 students sat there NAPLAN assessments this year and all were completed successfully. While the media tends to take a dim view of NAPLAN, it does provide us with valuable student data as to what areas

of learning require greater focus or support. Our results this year were as expected, thereabouts the national average, and we have spent time in the second half of this year analysing our NAPLAN and PAT data, with the aim of whole-school academic improvement. One of our key goals next year will be to develop a range of teaching and learning practices that extend our middle group of learners. These in-class extension opportunities provide students with stimulus to stretch their capabilities and showcase their learning at a higher level.

We have worked closely with School Support Consultant, Jacki Tucker, this year, and, in 2025, we will be exploring how data informed teaching and learning impacts student academic growth at a classroom level. In 2025, we will also be collaborating closely with St Joseph's, Northam, and Sacred Heart, Goomalling, in reviewing assessments and SCSA's judging standards. We also look forward to early childhood road trips in a bid to expand our horizons and explore best practices within our system.

Our Excursions this year included trips to the Brownes Dairy Factory, the WA Aquarium, Outback Splash, the WA Museum, and more, all rich learning experiences for our students. Our students have participated in a variety of extension opportunities led by Assistant Principal, Mr Fyfe. The WA ClueDunnit competition, Maths Olympiad, HaveSumFun, the Australian Maths Competition, inter-school Chess, and numerous individual and group sessions have all pushed our students to excel in their academic abilities.

In terms of academic support, we welcomed Mrs Renae Mason earlier this year as our Year 1-3 Education Assistant and we look forward to her increased days with us next year. Renae is a fully qualified Special Needs teacher who will take on our Literacy Intervention Program in 2025. We were fortunate enough to be accepted into a MultiLit trial and receive training, testing, and resources, to the value of over \$15 000 for free. Renae will be conducting the program across our junior students next year and we look forward to expanding this initiative to students in need.

Our lunchtime clubs have provided an enriching and exciting learning experience this year. From sewing, craft, chess, Lego, and robotics, to drawing, ukelele, choir, running and book club, our students have been spoilt with opportunities to engage, to collaborate, to explore, to persist, to persevere, and thrive. I would particularly like to thank our staff for offering their time and talents in coordinating these experiences for our students. The smiles and excitement on our students faces have been evident.

Our relationship with our feeder high schools Mazenod College, St Brigid's College and La Salle College has been strengthened this year. The Year 4 La Sallian Experience Day gave our students a taste of what lies ahead for high school, and how little our Year 4 students looked compared to the domineering Year 12s. Our Year 6 students also visited La Salle to see their band perform and next year they will visit Mazenod to see their school Musical. Our 2025 Faction Swimming Carnival has run into some scheduling issues with Bilgoman, and will most likely be held at St Brigid's College, Lesmurdie, instead. While it is a little bit further to travel, I'm sure our students will enjoy the heated indoor pools available and parents will get to see the facilities on offer at St Brigid's. Our Learning Journey and Open Night saw principals of these Colleges visit Sacred Heart to meet with families and share their schools vision and mission, we look forward to further collaboration between our schools as our relationship grows.

In terms of finances, the schools position continues to be in deficit for 2025. The good news is that, thanks to growing numbers this year, we have managed to avoid combining year levels for next year, which was a real concern; however, further growth is needed to sustain the school long-term in a healthier financial position. The new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement for teachers brought in a much-deserved increase in salaries, but also coincided with a drop in student numbers in previous years. Thanks to the previous fiscal management of the school, we have been able to absorb losses for the short term.

After consultation with our School Advisory Council and CEWA budgeting personnel, we have decided to submit the 2025 budget with a 6% increase in fees. This represents approximately a \$3 per week increase per child and comes off the back of an approximate 25% decrease in fees in 2023. We are still, by far, the lowest fee-paying

school in the area. With Mundaring Christian charging between \$4-6 000 per year, Parkerville Steiner - \$7-8 000, Helena College \$9-10 000, we believe we are achieving the goal of being an affordable and accessible Catholic school. Despite not being able to match the resources and facilities that these larger schools have, we will continue to punch above our weight and offer a personalised and high-quality education, where every child is known by name and need.

As our numbers grow, I would like to reassure our parents that their children will still receive the same high-quality education and care that they do now. Larger classes, although initially daunting, do provide greater friendship options and social opportunities, better resourcing, programs and initiatives, and a diversity of thought and experiences that broaden our children's minds. From a teacher's perspective, smaller classes can actually be a lot more challenging; however, Sacred Heart will always be a small school with a big heart.

There are a number of volunteers I wish to acknowledge and thank tonight for their selfless dedication. I am passionate about creating spaces for imagination and creativity to thrive and for student learning to be nourished. Our resident wedding planner, Jess Butcher, also shared this vision. Her installation of the fairy garden was an instant hit and the delightful screams of joy from our students were evident. I then approached her and said: "I've got this idea for a STEM Lab", and she immediately turned her creativity dial up to 1000 and together, with her equally skilful husband Leon, they dedicated many holiday hours to create our amazing STEM Lab. Thank you Jess and Leon for your tireless assistance in making these spaces incredible for our students.

I next would like to thank Amy Lymbery. As teachers, we often get thrust a variety of baked goods from students on their birthdays. We are usually pretty wary of the ingredients and conditions they were cooked in; however, in Term 1, I was told pretty quickly that if it was a Lymbery birthday, to make sure I was nearby. When it came to our Sacramental celebrations the Confirmation, Communion, and Reconciliation cakes were simply divine and perfectly themed to celebrate the particular faith milestone of our students. Thank you, Amy, for the hours it would have taken to put these creations together and sharing your talents and cooking with our delighted students.

I would also like to thank Jess Morrison. Jess is a bright and bubbly member of our community who has coordinated our PlayGroup every Friday morning. If I was going to give someone a commission for bringing families into our school community, I think Jess Morrison would be a millionaire. Whether at dance or the shops, she is always advocating for the school, and the Playgroup she coordinates is a significant part of our Early Education journey experience. Thank you, Jess, for running our PlayGroup every Friday.

Michele Lange has also been very active in our school this year. Our resident paparazzi photographer has been available at events and carnivals capturing some special moments to share with the broader community. Michele has also jumped in to help in our canteen on many occasions and helped provide delicious lunches to the hordes of hungry children. Her role moves to Auntie

I would like to thank Wendy Hooper, who has become very much a cult icon here at Sacred Heart. She was nominated as volunteer of the year at the annual Catholic Parents and Friends Awards night and, although the top gong avoided her, her impact and presence on our school is immense. For many students, her kind and gentle, yet firm approach, allows the students extra reading, spelling and comprehension. Our students often argue as to who gets to go read with Wendy and, despite multiple home break-ins this year, her car being stolen and dumped, family situation changing where she welcomed her daughter and granddaughters back home, she turns up at Sacred Heart with a cheeky smile and a tireless work ethic. Thank you, Wendy, for your steadfast commitment to our students.

There are a few others who, despite being invited, declined the recognition due to them tonight. Michele Lange for her help with photography and canteen, Jackie Kendrick has run our canteen all year, with her faithful assistant Gina, Lynn Middleton who conducted high-quality speech assessments for our entire Kindy and Pre-Primary classes, and Kim Hunt, our ex-Kindy teacher, who has provided support for our younger classes. If you

are able to pass on your appreciation to see these special people over the coming weeks, it would be greatly appreciated.

I would also like to extend a sincere thank you to our P&F Committee who have dedicated countless hours in support of our school this year. Through wood raffles, Easter hampers, hot chocolates, fruit toast, sundowners, breakfasts, an amazing Quiz Night and more, the P&F have definitely made their mark this year in friend and fund-raising. The significant donations made to the school by the P&F have enhanced our ability to operate to the benefit of all students. Thank you to each member of the executive committee, Meegan, Patrick, Jacinta and Jess, and all our extra members who help support our students.

A special mention to Patrick Johnston who steps down from his role as deputy chair. I met with Patrick at the start of this year, and his passion and commitment for our school was clearly evident. He helped coordinate our first busy bee and has been an active presence in our school throughout the year. Thank you, Patrick, and we look forward to your continued contributions in the future.

Our School Advisory Council have also been an extremely sounding board as we have navigated this year. Their calm and calculated insight into our school community has helped me find my feet and understand the nuances of what makes Sacred Heart School tick. Because of them I know the difference Wundowie and Wutating, the exact route La Salle students take on the school bus, the minute fire regulations of our ECE water tanks, the context of other local primary schools, and much more. Thank you to Katie, Luke, Cameron and Fiona, and I look forward to another positive and productive year ahead.

The true heroes of this school are those that sit among you. The staff at Sacred Heart are what makes this place unique and special. I am in the privileged position to seeing first-hand the lengths they go in caring for our students. Early mornings, late nights, weekends and more. They have welcomed me, forgiven me as I've found my way as a first-year principal, allowed my many mistakes, and willingly jumped on board with our new initiatives this year. It is an honour to work among dedicated professionals and I look forward to the journey ahead.

I would like to thank Mrs Leree Gauci, Ms Anne Tran and Ms Madi Scott, who transition into the next chapter of their lives away from Sacred Heart. As a staff, we will give them a proper send off in Week 10, but all have played a key role in our community for the past years. We hope this is not goodbye forever and we pray God will continue to bless you in your new pathways.

I would like to finish with a short story that occurred in Term 3 of this year. The school Choir had just finished the WA Museum tour and began the 700-metre trek to RAC Arena for One Big Voice Concert. I lined the students up, reminded them of that they were representing the best school in Australia, and with Mrs Mason and Mrs Buller faithfully at the rear, we began our walk, only to be hit by a huge and sudden gale. Papers went flying, hats went awry, trolleys were upended.

As we tried to regroup, I turned around and saw our Sacred Heart School children had joined hands and had started singing. In the middle of Perth City, along St George's terrace, with members of the public getting blown past us, there were our kids singing together, holding hands and marching forward into the wind with RAC Arena in sight. It was truly a memorable moment. We arrived safely and had the night of nights celebrating unity, community and togetherness. I think that moment summed up our school perfectly. We are blessed to be in the position of nurturing, guiding, and growing our most precious resource, the children.

To conclude, I'll finish with some words we have said often this year, but are at the core of everything we are about:

Oh, Sacred Heart of Jesus  
We place our trust in you

Help us to love simply  
Travel lightly  
And open our hearts to all

Amen, and thank you

Yours sincerely

*Mark Tenney*

**Mark Tenney**  
**Principal**