

**St Helena's Catholic Primary School  
2019 Annual Community Meeting  
Held 28 November 2019**

**General**

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2019 Principal's Report to the St Helena's Catholic Primary School community.

In opening, I say, "Congratulations, St Helena's Catholic Primary School, on 20 very successful years of service within the Ellenbrook community!" We are a truly faith-filled learning community that seeks to explore and impact God's world by providing a foundation from which all can enjoy learning and enjoy life.

My appreciation of the St Helena's community continues to grow each year as we journey together striving for the best possible outcomes for our students. At this end of the year it is good to take a moment to look back and to celebrate all that has happened during the year... the successes, the challenges, the learning, the relationships, the questions, the quality conversations, the robust discussions, the decisions, the opportunities for growth and so much more.

**Catholic Identity**

The fact that we are Catholic remains a non-negotiable aspect of our existence. With the decline of formalised religion in this country, it is important that people realise that being a Catholic is more than just learning doctrine. It is about making our faith real in our interactions with the local and wider community. In so many ways, it is about doing and being "something beautiful for God".

At St Helena's, we have provided experiences and opportunities for staff, students and families in 2019 that have encouraged and supported us all on our faith journey. This has been achieved by:

- Providing experiences that enhanced teachers' knowledge of prayer and liturgy, which led to opportunities for enriched student experiences.
- Building on teachers' knowledge and skills by provision of relevant and contemporary professional development through the CEWA Accreditation program.
- Teachers commencing to work with the revised Religious Education program as new units became available.
- Continuing to strengthen of our Mini Vinnie's program and its outreach into the community.
- Celebrating key liturgical seasons and feasts including Holy Week, St Helena's patrons, Mary MacKillop, All Saints Day.
- Weekly Gospel reflection in each class.
- Highlighting the liturgical season of the Church through the sacred space in the school office and in each classroom.
- Singing our praise to God each week during Liturgical Singing and together with our guest, Andrew Chinn.
- \$2 217 raised as donations towards LifeLink, Caritas and Catholic Missions.
- Continuing to partner with Transform Cambodia to bring about justice, change and opportunity for the most vulnerable children and families of Cambodia.

Our school prides itself on reaching out to those in need. Our Mini Vinnies program has made a significant difference in how we carry this out. Through numerous fund-raising and collection initiatives throughout the year, we have helped to make those in need feel a little better. The St Vincent de Paul Society frequently acknowledge our contributions and our whole community are to be congratulated on their generosity. I would like to affirm our Mini Vinnies in 2019 for their outstanding work and I thank Peter Merry and Mark DiBlasi for coordinating this. I also thank in a very special way Mary Calverley from the Parish community for driving our connection to this program.

St Helena's continues to work hard to maintain a strong relationship with the parish. Throughout the year, students were prepared to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation in collaboration with the Parish. Each group was prepared by their class teachers and then attended a retreat with students from Holy Cross and the wider parish to help them understand the practical applications of their Sacrament. In collaborating with the parish, we recognise that we are part of a wider faith community. I would like to thank each of the class teachers involved in the 2019 Sacramental Program as well as the members of the Leadership Team for their work in this area.

Special thanks are extended to Fr Bona, our Parish Priest, and to Fr Marcello who was our Assistant Parish Priest until recently. Both have been great supporters of our school in 2019 and are very much valued for their faith leadership and ever-present encouragement.

## **Learning**

Quality early childhood and primary education is the foundation of a child's journey. Every stage of education that follows relies on its success. Teachers at St Helena's seek to equip students with a clear understanding of who they are as individuals and what they can contribute to the world by developing learning and teaching programs designed to develop children's cognitive, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Students are encouraged to become self-motivated learners who can work independently, cooperatively and happily to gain all they need to be their best possible self.

At the heart of teachers' everyday practice is a focus on building relationships with each other, their students and families. Teachers recognise the significant influence they have in creating safe and supportive learning environments to maximise the learning potential of all students and understand the importance of being explicit with their teaching and in developing students' creativity and achievement. Looking ahead, the challenge for our teachers and school community is to continue to develop a shared understanding of what excellent practice looks like.

At St Helena's, we have provided experiences and opportunities for staff, students and families in 2019 that have encouraged and supported us all on our learning journey. This has been achieved by:

- Continued focus on the effective and responsible use of ICT to enhance learning as well as the ongoing skilling of staff.
- Significant investment in understanding and implementing the guiding principles, quality areas, standards and elements of the National Quality Standard, which capture aspects critical to the provision of quality early childhood education.
- Deeper embedding in the early years of play-based, student-led learning as well as focus on the indoor/outdoor curriculum.
- Ongoing structuring and embedding of an inquiry approach to learning that supports students to be resourceful and self-directed learners.

- Expansion and strengthening of our Learning Support and Extension through Applied Creative/Critical Thinking (ExACT) programs.
- Focus on establishing and embedding a shared understanding of student wellbeing and positive relationships.
- Introducing of 'Friendly Schools Plus' across all year levels plus trialling of 'Aussie Optimism' in Yrs 2 and 4.
- Hosting a parent workshop on Cyber Safety.
- Providing many extra-curricula programs and activities – One Big Voice, Gardening Club, Chess Club, Mindfulness, Liturgical Dance, St Helena's Got Talent, Mini Vinnies, Minecraft.
- Celebrating cultural awareness, allowing our students to learn about the importance of cultural diversity.
- Significant investment in staff attending Professional Learning across a wide range of areas.
- All Year 5 students having the opportunity to go through the process of nomination and election for student leadership positions in 2020.

Again in 2019, students in Years 3 and 5 participated in the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in May. NAPLAN assessment results provide valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. An analysis of these results assists school planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs. The accompanying slide provides a brief summary of our students' performance. Our Yr 3s performed particularly well in 2019. As can be seen, numeracy remains an area of focus for teachers and students at St Helena's, although our 2019 results show growth from 2018. Our Maths team has been and will continue to work hard in this area to enhance student growth.

Learning Support is a key component of the curriculum program offered at St Helena's. I invite our Learning Support Co-ordinator, Paulette Lambert, to provide an overview of Learning Support in 2019.

St Helena's offers a diverse academic programme without losing sight of what the core business is – assisting students to be literate and numerate in a Catholic environment. Students only experience success in this when they are taught and assisted by highly dedicated and professional staff. I thank our exceptional staff team for their dedication and recognise how blessed we are to have them in our school, working to support our students. I am equally proud of our students who continually seek to be courageous in their learning, not afraid to make mistakes and learn powerfully from them.

### **Stewardship/Community**

St Helena's is a community. We believe staff, students, parents and the wider community form a valuable part of our total community. We believe in open communication and love for parents to play an active part in our school life. We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children. Therefore, we endeavour to create an environment where the school staff and parents are partners in the educational process. All parents are welcome to be active members within the school.

The St Helena's community places the highest priority on the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people. Founded in Christ and sustained by faith, St Helena's seeks to fulfil its mission of enabling each student to come into the fullness of their own humanity. This includes paying attention to the inherent dignity of children and young people, and their fundamental right to be respected, nurtured and safeguarded by all. We want children to be

safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. Because of this, we are committed to:

- The actioning of our Code of Conduct
- Professional learning & development for staff and parents in regard to child safety
- Ongoing review of the effectiveness of child safety practices within the school

At St Helena's, we have provided experiences and opportunities for staff, students and families in 2019 that have encouraged and supported us all to be stewards within our community. This has been achieved by:

- Increasing staff's knowledge of CEWA's Child Safe Framework and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Updating all staffs' training in mandatory reporting requirements and procedures.
- Enhancing communication with parents by streamlining the newsletter, creating the Parent Hub and new website, and rolling out SeeSaw to all classes.
- Celebrating key events, e.g. Mother's Day, Father's Day, Sorry Day, Remembrance Day
- Honouring our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, most significantly through our recent Fete.
- Joining with Ellenbrook Public School for various events including Harmony Day, ANZAC Day, Christmas Carols.
- Services provided by our wonderful Social Worker, Jemma Trimboli, as well as those provided through services such as onPsych, Helping Minds and Girls without Limits.

A sincere thank you to all St Helena's families for your ongoing support of children, staff and the Leadership Team throughout the year. Family life, as we all know, is busy and at times very demanding, however we hope St Helena's will continue to be a place where you can enjoy good support, quality relationships and multiple opportunities that support your children to thrive and flourish.

As a school Principal, the quality of my staff and the potential we have for making a profound difference in the lives and the learning of the children in our care has always been and continues to be of paramount importance to me. Our school relies on staff who are not only very good at what they do but understand that students learn best when they are working in a safe, respectful, supportive and creative learning environment. I feel very blessed indeed to work with the calibre of staff who serve the St Helena's community unstintingly and as each semester goes by, we are seeing the incredible fruits of all our planning, hard work and collaboration.

I sincerely thank each member of the St Helena's staff for their ongoing commitment and dedication to our school. I thank in a special way Sascha Saulsman, Victoria Rowland and Peter Merry for their expertise, advice and support in helping to lead our school. All three are outstanding educators and leaders who are a gift to this community. I also thank Heather MacDonald-Rudez, Lisa Jones and Caroline Hunneybun for the work they do in the administrative and financial areas of our school. The varying layers of compliance that are now part and parcel of school life make running a school a complex and complicated task and these three women are an invaluable part of our school team.

I extend my thanks and appreciation to the St Helena's P & F Executive for their outstanding efforts in 2019 to continue to build community and raise funds to resource our school. The generosity of our P & F never ceases to amaze me! Their work has often come at great expense to their own families and energy levels and yet they have remained committed to

their role with great stamina and focus. Thank you, Megan, Lindsay, Vanessa, Ben, Mitch and Amanda.

I acknowledge all those who help our school in whatever way they can. As I have already said, this is very much a community school and many people help to build our community. Your generosity in assisting in lots of different ways has not gone unnoticed nor is it not appreciated.

## **Accountability**

All Catholic schools in Western Australia are required to enter into a process of review and improvement known as Quality Catholic Schooling. The process consists of 14 components, which must be reviewed over a five-year cycle. The process provides a foundation for decision making at a school level and at a broader system level. They provide a blueprint for planned action and are a source of important information that will shape policy development and the setting of strategic directions.

In 2019, the components reviewed were: Analysis and Discussion of Data, Differentiated Teaching and Learning and Staff Wellbeing. Through a series of meetings, staff teams identified sources of evidence supporting initial perceptions of the school's performance in each area. From here, an overall assessment was made of the school's performance and areas for action were identified. A resulting Action Plan will guide future performance and growth against each area.

As the year ends, we come to the end of our current three-year strategic plan. Much of what you have heard in the three reports presented thus far tonight is a rounding out of strategies employed to meet the intentions of the plan. As heard previously tonight, 2020 will see us launch our new strategic plan and we look forward to the challenges of meeting this new plan. Staff and parents had input into the development of this plan and we are confident that it will help to guide us in the next three years or our growth.

I thank our School Board for the work they have done in assisting with the Financial and Capital work in our school. In these challenging financial times, the Board has worked hard to ensure that our facilities remain up to standard and that they are well maintained. I offer my sincere thanks to each member for their valuable contributions to the work of the Board and for their dedication and support. I especially acknowledge our Chair, Melinda Webb, who has given direction and focus to the work of the Board. She has also been a source of wise counsel for me on many occasions throughout the year and I thank her for that.

## **Closing**

Our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year can certainly be looked upon as a year during which the spirit and mission of St Helena's Catholic Primary School has continued to grow and flourish.

As a school, we will continue to strive for excellence, understanding that we are a Catholic school. As we draw close to the end of another school year, it pays to remind ourselves that amidst the joys and sorrows of our everyday lives, amidst the busyness and activity of school life here at St Helena's, God sits at the very centre of it all and if we can individually and collectively continue to learn to trust in God, then everything else has a way of falling into place and our path ahead becomes clear.

**Lina Bertolini**  
**Principal**