



SAINT HELENA'S
Catholic Primary School
Something Beautiful for God

Annual Community Meeting Principal's Report

Thursday 21 November 2024
6:00pm

Venue: St Helena's Catholic Primary School – Library
A: 55 Fortescue Place, Ellenbrook E: admin@sthelenas.wa.edu.au T: 92970 7500

Good evening to Fr Bona, the Catholic School Advisory Council members, P&F Executive and Committee members, Parents/Carergivers and Staff. I am pleased to present to you my Principal Report for St Helena's Catholic Primary School in 2024. Over 25 years ago, the vision to establish a Catholic school in Ellenbrook came to life to cater for families of our community wanting to choose a Catholic education for their child/ren. This year, we proudly celebrated that decision and the remarkable journey of St Helena's Catholic Primary School over the last 25 years. Together, we honoured the students, staff, and families who have contributed to making our school a vibrant and special place, filled with joy in discovery and learning each day.



Christ Centred Catholic Identity

At St Helena's, we value the visible expression of our Catholic identity and actively give witness to the values of the Gospel.

This year we have continued to celebrate liturgies and masses throughout the liturgical year each term. It has been wonderful to come together and celebrate as a school community. Thank you to all our staff who have been involved in planning and leading the liturgies and masses throughout the year and to Miss Melissa Myles and Mr Luke Vine for your efforts in supporting staff and planning liturgies and masses too.

Our value of Equality at St Helena's is clearly seen in the Christian service and social justice initiatives we have once again demonstrated and have been involved in throughout the year. We have continued to display our generosity as a school community in raising funds and supporting Project Compassion, Catholic Missions, LifeLink and Vinnies. The gift of charity is a wonderful way to make meaningful impact in the lives of those in need and provide them in hope for the future. A sense of responsibility in giving will undoubtedly contribute to the desire for our students to contribute to the betterment of society when our students become active citizens independently in the world that they will be living in after their school days. Thank you Miss Sinead McGovern for taking on leading the Mini Vinnies in our school with our students and bringing in your enthusiasm to support the students in their endeavours.

We continue to develop our understanding and knowledge of our spirituality and charism that will assist students, staff and families in our community in developing a greater understanding of our Catholic traditions at St Helena's. In 2025 we plan on continuing to spend time with our staff in embedding our knowledge of the charism of St Helena and the Patron Saints of our school in the Year of Jubilee - Pilgrims of Hope.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Sacrament teachers in Year 3, Year 4 and Year 6 this year, with the support of Miss Melissa Myles and Mr Luke Vine, for your time and commitment in supporting the Parish of St Helena of the Holy Cross in preparing the students for the Sacraments and your assistance with the Sacrament celebrations. Thank you to the Sacramental Coordinator, Hannah Wager again this year for your efforts in coordinating the Parish Sacramental Program and liaising with the schools in our Parish. This year we began church visits for all students in Year 4 and 6, allowing the students the opportunity to visit the parish and learn more about the church. We continued to celebrate Parish Family School Masses at St Helena of the Holy Cross Parish Church and we will continue in 2025 to focus on familiarising our students with the Parish in which they belong.

As a School community, I would like to once again thank Fr Bona for his ministry as our Parish Priest. We are always thankful to Fr. Bona for his unwavering support of our school community and for attending and celebrating with us at St Helena's. His visits are a highlight for both students and staff, and we are very appreciative of him leading us in liturgies and masses throughout the year. Thank you for your appreciation of the efforts of our Leadership Team, Sacrament Teachers and all our staff at St Helena's.



Collaboration

Community

At St Helena's, we value staff, students, parents, caregivers, parish and the wider community working together to support each person to become the person God intended them to be.

We have continued to prioritise student wellbeing across the school this year, no more evidently than engaging in the commitment for Professional Development of all staff in the Berry Street Education Model. At St Helena's, we believe in educating the whole child. To facilitate effective learning, students must be ready to engage. In 2024, we embraced the Berry Street Education Model, focusing on the domains of Body and Relationships during Day One and Two of the program. Our committed staff have introduced new wellbeing routines, including brain breaks, ready-to-learn scales, and morning circles. The positive impact of these changes is evident in the strengthened relationships between staff and students. Thank you to Ms Elise Johnson and Miss Rhiannon Watson for your contributions to our wellbeing initiatives. We look forward to continuing on our Berry Street implementation in 2025, as well as introducing new tools to assist us in developing emotional literacy amongst our students.

In 2025 we will continue to focus on our core values of Respect, Equality, Community and Care for the Earth and what they mean and how we can demonstrate them in real tangible ways across the school. We will also keep working on further developing our student leadership structures and responsibilities in 2025 as we expand on the ministries that the Year 6 students are directly involved in. We will also look at revisiting our Student Code of Conduct that was created last year, as well as continue to listen to student voice and ensure students feel safe in their learning environment and have an appreciation and respect for all in our school community.

We continue to highlight the importance of a positive home/school partnership and acknowledge the parents/caregivers who give of their time in supporting in classrooms and around the school. This is what we continued to strive for at St Helena's Catholic Primary School in 2024 and will do so again in 2025. Thank you to our parents and caregivers that have assisted around the School this year, whether in classrooms, the library or canteen, at school events or in other ways. It is very much appreciated! I would like to take this opportunity to thank our P&F Executive Committee of 2024. Thank you to the Chair of the P&F, Jessica Murphy, and to the rest of the P&F Executive Committee consisting of Netsai Mubonwa, Tania Laurengo, Jessica Nancarrow, Nadia Hoare and Aimee Miller for your time and efforts this year. We appreciate your commitment to organising events in 2024 to build on community and raise funds for resources that our students use and enjoy. Thanks again to all those involved in any events this year at the School. We have enjoyed so many celebrations and traditions that have continued over the years, and will do so hopefully for many more. I am optimistic that in the new year we will encourage new parents/caregivers to get involved, engaging them in building school community at St Helena's.



Voice & Engagement

Education

At St Helena's, we value evidence-based teaching and learning practices that are respectful and responsive to the diverse needs of all learners in an ever-changing world.

As a dedicated staff, we remain committed to providing the best possible learning opportunities for all our students, addressing their individual needs and interests. Our goal is to continue to ensure that every student has the chance to learn and flourish. Recognising our staff as our greatest asset, we have collaborated with various stakeholders to enhance our educators' skills through the latest educational research and teaching practices. We continually reflect on our data to better support all students at our school.

Our Early Years team has collaborated closely with the CEWA Early Years consultants to refine St Helena's Early Years Charter, ensuring it aligns with current research on child development. They have engaged in professional discussions and attended conferences and learning events featuring national and international experts, all aimed at enhancing our educational program and ensuring it is developmentally appropriate for our youngest learners. Our staff have analysed school data to create learning experiences centred on essential skills such as play, oral language, and emotional literacy. We also recognise families as the first educators and are actively exploring ways to involve them more in their child's learning journey.

Mathematics remains a key focus at St Helena's as we strive to equip all students with the skills to think critically and creatively. In collaboration with CEWA Numeracy Consultant Mrs Jenny Jongste, our staff have refined their teaching strategies to foster a strong understanding of mathematical principles. Jenny has worked closely with both staff and students in the classroom, as well as providing individual support to educators. Selected staff members have also participated in offsite Mathematical Network groups, where they have engaged with other educators to discuss effective mathematical instruction. Thank you Mrs Joanna Bukara for your efforts in facilitating professional learning sessions for our staff, as well as for your research and organisation of new mathematical resources for our students and staff to utilise.

In English, we have focused on consistency in our writing, grammar, spelling, and reading programs, ensuring we meet the diverse needs of all students. Our collaborative approach to curriculum moderation and support has strengthened our teaching practices. Thank you Mrs Mary Tierney Dusenbergh who continues to support and plan in this space, as well as facilitate professional learning sessions for staff. It has been great to see a love for literature grow at St Helena's and see the library, with Mrs Christine Rocca's passionate care and love of literature, continue to be a vibrant hub, with borrowing rates on the rise!

Our Learning Support and Diversity programs continue to provide essential support for students at various stages of their learning journey. Our dedicated team of teachers and education assistants strives to offer the best possible assistance, particularly for those needing extra help in Literacy, Numeracy, and English as an Additional Language. Thank you to all staff involved in supporting these students; your efforts are truly commendable! Thank you to Miss Grace Dwyer for your efforts as the Learning Diversity Coordinator over the last 3 years at St Helena's.

The ExACT program, led by Mrs Julia O'Meara, has once again enabled many students to shine. Our students have proudly represented St Helena's in various competitions, including the Berbas Computational Thinking Challenge, Minister's Spelling Bee, Premier's Reading Challenge, Minister's Running Club, CEWA Chess Club, Science Competition and more. It's inspiring to see our students confident in their abilities and showcasing their talents to the wider community.

In our specialist classes - Italian, Music, Physical Education, Science, and Visual Arts - the passion of our teachers is evident. The enthusiasm for Performing Arts and Sports is reflected in our students' participation and enjoyment. Thank you to Miss Claire Robinson and Mrs Joanna Bukara for your dedication to the choir and dance groups, and to Mr Aaron Clarke for coordinating numerous sporting events throughout the year. Your commitment to these events enriches our students' learning experiences. Care for the Earth is one of our core values at St Helena's, and our focus on sustainability is integral to our school culture. We extend our gratitude to Mrs Emma White for her initiative and the countless hours she dedicates to sustainability efforts.

As we look ahead to 2025, we will continue to embed St Helena's Vision for Learning as a guiding principle for enhancing teacher practice and student learning. We will also take the time to review our Vision for Learning to ensure it reflects best practices in education. Our commitment to developing a rich data culture will promote student learning and enhance teacher capacity, ultimately driving further school improvement.



Safety & Respect

Stewardship

At St Helena's, we value each individual and act with concern for the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all members of our community.

Our Catholic School Advisory Council has once again been very supportive of the School and myself this year. Sincere thanks to Tara Palm as Chair and to all the Advisory Council members - Tim Griffiths, Lual Garang, Kodie Adams, Mitch Lorentz, Barbara Stanley, Hanah Wager, Aimee Miller, Fr Bona, Christine Sheen, Melissa Myles and Luke Vine. I am appreciative to you all for your time and contribution to the CSAC. In 2024 we have seen the upgrade to the Kindergarten Playground, as well as the replacement of furniture in the Break Out spaces, Library and Year 1 classrooms. Our Year 2 classrooms will be refurbished for the start of 2025 and we will continue to look at replacing furniture in other classrooms to enhance our learning environments for all our students. With the support of the P&F who have committed to part funding, we also look forward to the addition of some new shade sails outside the Library, hopefully before the commencement of the new school year. As we continue to make future plans for the best interests of our students and staff, we plan for future improvements to our facilities and maintenance of our wonderful school both internally and externally. Thank you to Mitch Lorentz and Barbara Stanley for your time and commitment over the years on the School Advisory Council, as you both finish up this year.

Our staff have continued to have many opportunities for Professional Learning throughout the year and the variety of courses and workshops that they have had the opportunity to attend as a staff and individually have been varied and in line with supporting them and the students in their care. We look forward to continuing to provide further opportunities in 2025, supporting staff in their professional growth.

We continue our strong partnership with Discovery Kids, providing both Before and After School Care at St Helena's. We also continue with our canteen in 2025 and thank Eliana Brien for her efforts, along with those parents/caregivers who have given of their time throughout the year to volunteer. For the canteen to remain open and sustainable, we need to continue to stress the importance of parent/caregiver support.

In 2024 we continued with 2 classes of Pre-Kindergarten from Term 2. We also had 2 streams from Kindergarten to Year 6, with 494 students and 317 families in the School this year. We continue to have waitlists in many of our year levels and in 2025 we will welcome our new Kindergarten student cohort. Our Pre-Kindy to Year 6 enrolment numbers are estimated to be at 480 to commence 2025. In the new year we will welcome a new cohort of Pre-Kindy students as well, starting with 1 day, on a Wednesday, that we change to 2 days when enrolment demand increases, similar to this year. We are also keen and excited to look into commencing a Playgroup on one morning a week, and further research and preparation will occur in the new year.

I would like to acknowledge our Administration Staff of Mrs Bec Delauney and Mrs Tracy Detata for all that you continue to do in administration. You both work extremely hard, always busy and always balancing so much each day. Thank you! Thank you to our Finance Officer, Ms Christine Sheen, for managing our school finances and ensuring we follow protocols and procedures. You too work tirelessly in your role. I am very thankful and appreciative of our entire Administration Team!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Assistant Principals, Miss Melissa Myles and Mr Luke Vine for your support and leadership in 2024. I continue to be very appreciative of all that you do to support, students, staff, parents/caregivers and myself. Your commitment to our school community is impressive and you always have the best interests of our students at heart. You understand the complex role of leadership and have done your best in ensuring St Helena's students, staff and parents/caregivers are heard, supported and a part of the school community.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our Teaching Staff and Education Assistants at the School. We are very blessed as a School community to have such a committed and hard working staff who are always doing what is best for each and every one of our students. On behalf of the School community, I would like to thank each one of you for all that you do in your classrooms and around St Helena's Catholic Primary School. Your roles are busy ones, with lots of demands and expectations to ensure the best interests of each individual child are considered. Thank you for sharing your talents, kindness and compassion to your vocation. To those of you who have joined us along the way this year, thank you for choosing to join us at St Helena's Catholic Primary School.

At the end of this year we will be farewelling Ms Tamara Ellenbrook, Mr Lewis Diep, Miss Bianca Hearn, Mr Scott Whiteley, Miss Grace Dwyer (congratulations on your appointment as Assistant Principal at Holy Rosary, Doubleview), Miss Claire Robinson, Mrs Jade Martelletti, Miss Hannah Chomiak, Miss Megan Sleaf and Miss Gabriella Panaia and Mrs Kerry Krause who will not be returning from leave at the end of the year. I thank all of these staff members for their contribution to St Helena's Catholic Primary School over their time with us and wish them all the very best for their future endeavours both professionally and personally. Mrs Cat Russell will be on leave and Mrs Audrey Clancy will continue being on Parental Leave in 2025.

In 2025 we look forward to welcoming to the Staff Team of St Helena's Catholic Primary School the following new members - Ms Rebecca Mennie as our Learning Diversity Coordinator, Miss Sharna McKinlay, Miss Briana Alsop, Miss Alix Fitzgerald and Miss Kaylene Bederson as Classroom Teachers, Michaela Cove as Special Needs Education Assistant, Ms Sarah Spencer as one of our Art Teachers and Mr Hector Navarro as our Music Teacher. We welcome back Mrs Katie Bogdanich for one day a week as a Science Teacher and Mrs Tracy Turpin as Education Assistant.

The Staffing for 2025 will be shared with families before the end of the year.

When our school opened in 1999 with just 45 students and 5 foundation staff, I'm sure they could only dream of the vibrant community we have today, with close to 500 students enrolled this year. As we celebrate 25 years of our Catholic school, we draw inspiration from St Helena. Just as St Helena sought the cross with devotion and perseverance, we too strive to embody the values of faith, hope, and love in our educational mission. Our goal is to not only impart knowledge but to cultivate a spirit of discovery in our students. A discovery of their own potential, their responsibilities to others, and their relationship with Jesus, always striving to do Something Beautiful for God, being a Catholic school that is Christ-centred and child focused. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has been part of St Helena's journey over the last 25 years and to everyone who was a part of St Helena's in 2024. Let us continue to learn, pray, play, grow, and discover.

Wishing everyone a safe and Holy Christmas. May the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ this Christmas bring joy to everyone!

Peace & Happy Days!

Mr Santino Giancono
Principal