

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Donnybrook



2024 Principal's Report

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Donnybrook is committed to empowering our school community to become compassionate, confident and capable individuals. Our inspiration and strength to achieve this, comes from our mutual support and the sharing of our faith in Jesus Christ.

"Let your light shine in 2024!"

Catholic Identity	Education	Community	Stewardship
-------------------	-----------	-----------	-------------

2024 has been another successful year at St Mary's. Whilst we have experienced our challenges, the collegiality of our staff and their willingness to show up each day and offer their best for the benefit of our students has been inspiring. Culturally, we have continued to build a working environment built on trust and psychological safety, and this has benefitted our students who have shown through various opportunities that they appreciate their teachers and have healthy and respectful relationships with them. St Mary's is an enjoyable place to work, and for me to lead, because of the people I am surrounded by each and every day.

I would also like to thank our parents for the support they have offered us throughout the year and the trust they have shown us in educating and caring for their children. It is an increasingly complex and challenging world that we are living in, and we know that the outcomes for our students are better when communication is respectful, learning responsibilities are shared, and the values of the school are supported at home.

Catholic Identity

In 2024, we have had 24 students move through our sacramental programs (Confirmation 7, First Holy Communion 8, Reconciliation 11) The school continues to be a beacon of hope for our parish, and I would like to offer my gratitude to Fr Joseph for his support and guidance throughout the year. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Mrs Wright, Mr Skehan, Miss Dorozenko, Mrs Grubisa and Mr Busher for their contributions in coordinating the sacramental programs this year.

We have continued to foster a culture that embodies the "Spirit of Jesus" in the world, celebrating those who think, speak, and act in His likeness. The Making Jesus Real (MJR) program remains our key initiative in helping students grasp these principles and ways of living. The eight Mercy values of **forgiveness, courage, respect, compassion, service, justice, excellence, and determination** are vibrant within our school. They are also the corner stone for the Christian outreach opportunities we have engaged in including Project Compassion, Catholic Missions, and Our Lady's Assumption Parish's hamper appeals.

On the 15th August, we celebrated the Assumption of Mary with a whole school Mass, followed by Mary activities in the classrooms, a shared hamburger lunch then a mission markets afternoon where the students led fundraising games and activities. The day was a huge success raising \$790 for the Parish Pastoral Council to support people in need in the Donnybrook community through their hamper appeals.

Thank you to Mr Skehan, Mrs Wright and the feast Day Committee for their efforts in preparing for this occasion.

Education

This year, we have continued our academic focus on enhancing our mathematics programs. Collaborating with numeracy consultants, we aimed to better understand and meet our students' needs. We further developed a Numeracy Position Statement to guide our teaching strategies. We also transitioned from "iMaths" to "Maths Trek," which better aligns with changes to the Australian Curriculum whilst also providing opportunities for explicit teaching and hands on investigative learning.

It has been pleasing to see our staff enhance their skills in delivering comprehensive literacy programs that include Talk for Writing, Letters and Sounds (K-Yr 2), and Soundwaves (Yr 3-6), along with innovative ideas, assessment practices and use of technology. It has also been admiring to see the efforts our staff have gone to in supporting new staff to upskill across these areas.

Miss Dorozenko took charge of the STEM program for Years 1-6 this year, and her efforts to make learning fun and engaging have been truly appreciated. STEM engages students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, helping them develop essential skills such as problem-solving, creativity, critical analysis, teamwork, independent thinking, initiative, communication, and digital literacy. This hands-on, investigative approach has become a favourite among our students.

We have continued to provide extension opportunities for our academically high-achieving students, who participated in two rounds of the BEBRAS Challenge and the Australian Mathematics Competition this year. Additionally, six students from Year 4, 5, and 6 combined competed in Tree Talks, a writing and speaking competition that evaluates their knowledge of writing structure, content, vocabulary and audience engagement. Students were selected for these opportunities through both standardised assessments and in class performance.

Early in Term One, our Year 3 and 5 students sat the NAPLAN Assessments. NAPLAN is a measure of a student's abilities in Literacy and Numeracy, supporting schools in decision making both at the individual and cohort level. This year, we have been really pleased with our results which show that we are above national average in reading, writing and numeracy with our areas for improvement being language conventions and spelling.

Once again, we have offered our students numerous opportunities to compete and develop their skills in various physical activities and sports. This year, they participated in multiple sporting clinics, swimming, winter sports, cross country and athletics. Thank you to Mr Skehan for his efforts in coordinating these opportunities across the school.

Mr Skehan also continued to provide opportunities for learning through the Arts program this year. His inspiring approach to the Arts has seen our students' continued improvement in playing the Loog Guitars, and other musical equipment. Most notably, the bucket drumming has been a hit, and it has been inspiring to hear the rhythmic sounds of drumming and see the engagement on our students faces.

Again, this year, we have continued to delve deeper into the RULER approach for teaching social and emotional learning. RULER is an acronym for Recognise, Understand, Label, Express, and Regulate emotions. This framework provides valuable tools to help our students develop emotional literacy and self-awareness. Since emotions influence our learning, decision-making, creativity, relationships, and health, it is crucial to equip our students with the skills and strategies to become more emotionally aware and to handle challenging situations effectively. Next steps include helping students to better see and understand the perspectives of others and to further develop their strategies to engage their best self.

Our staff have also commenced training in The Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) which uses trauma-informed strategies to enhance student engagement, self-regulation, and academic achievement. In exploring BSEM, we aim to enhance our efforts in implementing RULER and continue to create supportive learning environments that address students' emotional and educational needs, fostering resilience and improving overall well-being.

Community

As a community, we had the opportunity to come together earlier in the year for the P&F Sundowner at the Donnybrook Hotel. Whilst attendance was lower than usual, those in attendance seemed supportive of the school, the direction we are headed and keen to offer their support. Again, thank you to our P&F for coordinating this event.

Mid Term Two, we were afforded the opportunity for staff to visit Perth and learn from the creator of RULER himself Dr Marc Brackett. This professional development occasion also provided the opportunity for our staff to come together, reconnect, reset and continue to build upon the positive relationships we have developed over many years together.

Supporting our students to continue developing the skills, strategies and attitudes towards managing their mental health continued to be a focus throughout the year. In Term Two, our Year 4,5 and 6 students attended a workshop presented by Phil Britten. Phil is a Bali Bombing survivor who now uses his story to inspire people internationally to make positive changes in their lives. He visited the teachers last year and his message was so profound that we saw it important to share with our students. This visit also provided an opportunity to host, with the support of the Donnybrook-Balingup Shire, a Men's Mental Health night. The event was attended by many sons, fathers, uncles, and grandfathers across the community and provided a great opportunity to connect with others and share in stories of triumph and tribulation.

In addition, we have had numerous events throughout the year where our staff, families, and community have come together to celebrate our school. These included Mother's Day and Father's Day, the school disco, the Inside Out 2 excursion, book reading night, sporting events, and of course, the Bogan Bingo night hosted by our P&F at the Shire Hall.

In Term Three, we also hosted our first ever St Mary's Got Talent. This initiative provided our students with an opportunity to showcase their dancing, singing and performing skills. The competition was well received by our students, and it was great to see them shine and grow in confidence. Thanks to Mr Skehan for his efforts in organising this event.

Stewardship

This year, a new teachers enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) was accepted and registered with the Fair Work Commission. This agreement aimed to support teachers in better managing their workload and provide them with the right to disconnect – essentially supporting them in better managing their work life balance and mental wellbeing. The agreement also ensures that our teachers are paid the equivalent of our state counterparts for years to come. The support staff EBA is currently in negotiation and is expected to be accepted late this year / early 2025.

Additional to this, changes to the Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation have impacted system level responses to staff safety and management of concerns (or notifications). One of the biggest areas requiring mitigation across the system is that of Psychosocial Hazards. Psychosocial Hazards are those hazards that impact either or both the physical and/or psychological state of staff. I have always considered my role to

be one that supports our staff in turning up each day able to be their best self for their students. As a pastoral leader, I will always endeavour to work between staff and parents to ensure communication allows for the best outcomes for our students, your children; however, under the new WHS legislation, as a PCBU (Persons Conducting Businesses or Undertakings), I now have a legal responsibility to assess, manage risks and intervene when anything, or anyone, compromises the physical or psychological safety of our staff.

In managing the physical nature of the school in line with WHS legislation, St Mary's now has systems in place, that align with CEWA executive directives, for the notifying and managing of work health and safety concerns. Concerns raised through this process have allowed us to manage risks across the school and either mitigate or remove them. Works undertaken in this area include electrical upgrades, paving, and accessibility improvements. Thank you to Mr Manderson, Mrs Humphries and the School Advisory Council for their efforts and support in attending to WHS matters.

Last year I announced that St Mary's had won a grant with Talison to support us in the building of a roof over our basketball court. I am happy to announce that Talison has now provided and transferred \$135,000 to St Mary's to cover the cost of the project. The project is due to be completed for the commencement of 2025 – if all goes well. The design for the project has been a result of negotiations between the capital development team at CEWA, the Office of the Bishop of Bunbury, the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup, St Mary's administration and the School Advisory Council. A special thank you must go to Richard Hadley who visualised the plan and completed sun studies that supported us in achieving shire and CEWA approval.

This year, we employed Miss Moore into a middle leadership position driving health and wellbeing initiatives across the school. This appointment has been very much welcomed by our staff who have appreciated Chelsea's focus on staff wellbeing and ensuring people have what they need. She has provided an element of fun to our workplace and created a greater sense of engagement with our staff. Congratulations on a job well done Chelsea.

At the end of Term Two, we were invited to participate in the Assessment of Wellbeing in Education survey. The survey is a Catholic Education twice yearly trial assessment that aims to measure the wellbeing of the students from Years 3-6. Overwhelmingly, our students recognised the positive relationships they had with staff and that school is a place where they have strong friendships. The data also recognised the need to develop resilience amongst our students and to better support them in conflict management and/or friendship fires. Our students don't seem to be able to differentiate between bullying and having an argument with their friends. The survey also helped to identify students at risk which provided opportunities for discussions with teachers, students and parents. Overall, it was a worthwhile activity that our students will again sit in March next year.

Also in Term Two, we commenced our first ever Pre-Kindy program. The program was a huge success that continued to grow throughout the year as children turned three. This program has been coordinated by Mrs Fiumano and Mrs Dixon-Hotchkin who have done a fantastic job and supported the school in strong enrolments for Kindy in 2025. Thank you, ladies!

In Term Three both Mr Skehan and Mrs Wright participated in contractual performance reviews through an external 360 review process. All staff were engaged in the process and whilst feedback provided individual opportunities for growth, they are to be commended on their successful reviews and the efforts they have gone to in upskilling in their roles and supporting staff along the way. It is obvious that they are truly respected amongst our staff and contributing positively to our school community. Well done to both of them.

This year, we have continued to grow as a leadership team with the support of Catholic Education leadership consultants. A different model this year has provided for both collective professional development and individual growth coaching. Our approach to leadership development continues to be recognised by our

system with many school leadership teams approaching us for feedback on our journey and seeking similar opportunities for support from Catholic Education.

Last year we engaged with Catholic Education to create a marketing plan for the school. This plan has continued to support us in improving our social media presence across differing platforms as well as working with external agencies in the publishing of different media including photos and videos. Many new enrolments have been secured this year with feedback noting that the campaign really highlighted the strengths of our school and connected with them on a personal level.

This year, we say goodbye to Mr Mark Busher. Mr Busher completed his final teaching practicum with us in 2023 and has taught in Year Four this year. Mark has done an exceptional job in building relationships with the students and in upskilling to meet the demands of the job. Mark has plans to travel next year, and I wish him all the best in his adventures. We hope to see him back at St Mary's in the not-too-distant future.

Whilst we say goodbye to Mark, we do welcome another. Next year, Mrs Nicole O'Connor will join our team in a fulltime capacity. Nicole was the former Assistant Principal and Religious Education Coordinator at her previous school, St Francis Catholic School in Ayr, Queensland. Nicole has moved to town with her family. I am confident that with her experience, attitude towards learning and pastoral approach that she will be of great benefit to our students and community.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to our School Advisory Council for their advice and support this year, and to the Parents and Friends committee for their efforts in friend and fund raising. Thank you to our staff for continually showing up each and every day, putting our students first and working hard to create Christ centred and child focussed learning environments. Thank you to my leadership and administration team including Mr Skehan, Mrs Wright, Mrs Humphries and Miss Moore who have worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure school operations are in order and that we are continually striving to make St Mary's the best it can be for our students.

Lastly, at St Mary's we aim to graduate confident, compassionate and capable members of society. There will be ups and downs along the journey, but we believe we have the people and processes in place to support our students in becoming the next leaders of society who are prepared to go out into the world and lead with their heads, their hearts and their hands.

Thank you all for your support this year, and I wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas break with your family and friends.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Gammon
Principal