

PRINCIPAL REPORT 22 NOVEMBER 2022

It gives me great pleasure to present this report to the Notre Dame Catholic School community.

2022 has, again, presented us with a number of challenges but these have been far greatly outweighed by our many successes. Our year commenced, once again, under the shadow of Covid 19 but the resilience of our community shone through with virtually no disruption for our students and families. Great schools don't just happen. They are based upon strong community supported by outstanding staff. Our staff at Notre Dame consistently go above and beyond to ensure the best possible outcomes for all. Over the past few years, but most particularly this year, we have had a focus on the wellbeing of all. To be effective in developing and maintaining this, the mental health of our staff is paramount. Our Wellness Committee has organized regular events throughout the year to provide opportunities for staff to slow down and just "be" for a period of time. I'm certainly thankful for these opportunities, as I'm sure the rest of the staff are as well. It is a long-held belief of mine that the children will only receive the best opportunities when the staff are in the best of places and these sessions, along with the care and compassion of our colleagues, provide the scope for this to occur. Thank you to the members of the Wellness Committee and all members of staff who constantly amaze me with your commitment to each other, the children, families and our school.

In the Gospel of Matthew 5:12 we are told:

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.

Let's hope we don't have to wait that long!

Early in Term 2 the Quality Catholic Education School Review (QCESR) was conducted. This is an extensive review of all of our school's processes and results across the past few years. Our school came through the process with flying colours with the Panel commenting:

Notre Dame Catholic Primary School is a thriving, engaged and pastoral community. There was evidence from all data sources that the school is highly valued and loved by all school community members. The school has demonstrated a high level of engagement with all areas of Quality Catholic Education (QCE) and exemplifies CEWA's vision of "a Christ-centred, child-focused community of engaged learning environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel". The school's Catholic Identity is exemplified by its strong focus on the dual Charisms, Presentation Sisters and Mercy Sisters, resulting from its

origin as an amalgamation of two schools. The Five Teacher Practices in CEWA's Vision for Learning were evidenced within the Education domain of the QCE, with staff engaging in a range of teaching and learning approaches, supported by reflection and collaboration with other staff. Community is evidently a strong focus of the school, with active engagement with and by parents, and cohesive student and staff groups. Strengths in stewardship are evident in the school's focus on supporting staff: spiritually, pastorally, and professionally, and its excellent financial management over many years. Overall, Notre Dame Catholic Primary School has demonstrated remarkably high levels of achievement across all domains of the QCE and is an authentically Catholic school.

Furthermore, the Panel, in reference to the role of Leadership in the process stated:

The Leadership Team of Notre Dame Catholic Primary School is an outstanding example of servant leadership. All of the members of the Leadership Team work cohesively, leveraging the strengths of each other to form a strong and supportive team. The entire Leadership Team is intimately involved in all aspects of school life with all of them providing authentic examples to staff, students and parents of how they treat others and hold themselves accountable for school improvement. They are highly visible, genuine, and pastoral in their approach. The Leadership Team members encourage teamwork and collaboration between staff by demonstrating these behaviours, thereby consistently presenting a united front to the community. The Leadership Team engages with data to assess the success of the school's teaching and learning approaches and is willing to adjust as needed in response to that data, after carefully considering the options. The current Leadership Team of Notre Dame Catholic Primary School is an invaluable and powerful asset to the school community, and each member within it is a standout in their own right.

.....and their Report just got better from there!

Whilst these are wonderful affirmations of the great things happening within our school, it is not in our nature to rest on our laurels and put our feet up for a while. As I've stated, above, great schools don't just happen, and we have significant plans for next year to enhance our already strong foundations.

Catholic Identity

The placement of our combined Charism cross on the wall on the northern end of the Mother Mary Piazza in the next few weeks will complete the physical

aspects of our Charism Journey project and we will be continuing to develop the intellectual aspect by making the stories on the plaques in the Piazza more accessible to all children across the year levels through development of the QR codes embedded in them.

Education

HASS – we will be enhancing our relationship with the City of Belmont by utilising the excellent facilities and resources available at the Belmont Hub.

Writing – we will continue to support the development of the children’s writing skills through the implementation of the *Talk for Writing* program.

Aboriginal Education – we will be enhancing our Charism Journey in the Mother Mary Piazza with an Aboriginal history overlay to complement the journeys of our founding Orders.

The *Our Land, Our Story* resource will be utilised to allow us to further develop our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture.

Early Childhood – we will be exploring methodology to enhance inquiry learning practices in the Early Years. The Year One classrooms will be outfitted with contemporary furniture designed to enhance this teaching approach with a view to outfitting the Year Two classrooms ready for the 2024 school year.

Community

Student wellbeing – In conjunction with CEWA we will be trialling the URSTRONG program to facilitate greater student empowerment.

We will also continue to unpack the Strategic Wellbeing Framework to determine how it can be effectively utilised within our school to enhance the wellbeing of all community members.

Stewardship

Playground – we will continue to work with the P&F to explore play equipment that will focus upon the development of upper body strength.

Ethical Practices – we will explore options to improve our current purchasing practices so as to ensure more ethical and environmentally friendly decision-making.

Whilst some of the areas outlined are specifically within the realm of the staff to implement, others require us to liaise with the School Advisory Council, the Parents' and Friends' and the wider community. We receive outstanding support from all of these areas, and I am very appreciative of the ability of the Advisory Council and P&F members to work with us to achieve the best results for our children and families. Thank you to all who have served on the committees; your time and expertise, as well as your sometimes tricky questions, are very much appreciated.

Our school continues to maintain a strong relationship with our Parish through regular Masses, Liturgies and the reception of Sacraments. I thank Fr Quynh for his tireless efforts to improve all aspects of the faith life of the Parish and our school.

Finally, I would like to reconfirm the comments made by the QCESR Panel during their visit in Term Two regarding our School and Leadership Team. I become quite frustrated when many of my contemporaries, often much younger than me with many fewer years of Principalship, are leaving this wonderful profession due to the pressures of the role. As of the end of this year, I will be the longest serving Principal still working within our CEWA system. Whilst some may see this as a badge of honour, I see it as an indictment on the pressures of the position from the many levels of bureaucracy above and the lack of support. Unlike what I hear from others, I am truly blessed to have amazing support from many talented people whose care and attention for my welfare is without peer. Thank you to all members of our community, most specifically my staff and the other members of our Leadership Team, Daniela, Stefanie and Stephen who, through their words and actions, lead me to the realisation that I am appreciated and working in the best job in the world.

Thank you all for your presence at this meeting tonight and for your continued support of all of our efforts to ensure the best for the children in our care.