

## PRINCIPAL REPORT – ACM 2024

Good evening everyone, it is with great pleasure that I present my Report to our school community for 2024.

In my Principal Report in 2020 I wrote:

*“In my address last year, I mentioned that I was to take some leave this year to participate in a course in Ireland and to visit my daughter in the UK. Well, that didn’t happen! I have been, however, privileged to be at the forefront of making a difference in the lives of many, something that I will treasure greatly for many years to come. This year, whilst frustrating, has been a gift. It has helped us to realise how fragile our lives are and brought us to an understanding of what we really value and hold close to our hearts. Hopefully we will all be better people for this experience and continue to embrace the valuable lessons that we have learnt.”*

Whilst that fateful year may seem like a lifetime away, with our lives now having returned to some form of normalcy, I hope we haven’t forgotten about what is really important and how easily this may be taken away from us. On a personal note, I did manage to attend the Mercy and Presentation Pilgrimages in Ireland earlier this year and over the three weeks walking in the footsteps of both Catherine McAuley and Nano Nagle, I was led to a deeper understanding and recognition of our purpose both as a school with Mercy and Presentation traditions and, more importantly, as a community that is far more than merely a place for children to be educated. Notre Dame has an integral role to play in the lives of many and it is a privilege for all of us to part of this journey.

At the commencement of this year, I challenged our staff to reflect upon “*Best Practice*” and what this looks like. Whilst many of the aspects that we explored were about the practicalities of teaching, when we distilled all of this down, we were constantly drawn back to the relationships and the interactions that underpinned our practices. Best practice is, therefore, not so much about *doing* but more so about *being*. I’m sure we can all remember the teacher who had great knowledge about their particular subject but certainly did not have the ability to inspire students to learn rather than just be taught.

It is often rightfully said that the greatest resource in a school is the staff and this is certainly the case at Notre Dame. Our staff go well above and beyond in their efforts to engage with all children, often placing the children's needs ahead of their own to achieve the best outcomes for them.

From our discussions at the beginning of the year two of the longer term outcomes that we strive to achieve for our students are that:

- They will achieve well in High School and beyond.
- They will become empathetic, productive members of society.

With the quality of staff that we have at our school, we are well on the way to achieving these and I thank them on behalf of all members of our community for their commitment and dedication to the NDCPS community.

Whilst I am not in a position to announce the staffing for 2025, I can reveal that there will be some changes to our team. To those who will be leaving us to take on new challenges I wish you great success in your future endeavours and hope that you will carry fond memories of your time at Notre Dame for many years to come.

In concluding about the staff, I would like to highlight the work of one staff member who often goes under the radar. Whilst not directly involved with the education of the children, Paul Caridi, our Maintenance and Grounds Person ensures all aspects of our school environment are always in top condition. Nothing is ever too much trouble or too daunting for Paul to take on board and we are blessed to have such a capable, dedicated, resourceful person to keep everything neat, tidy and fully operational. Thank you for all that you do, Paul.

Reflective of the high standard of teaching at our school, our NAPLAN results remain consistently strong. As I have stated on many occasions, the NAPLAN suite of assessments is limited in what it tells us about a child's progress however, it is the only assessment of all children Australia wide in both Literacy and Numeracy and is a longitudinal indicator of how we are tracking. Analysis of the data has improved over the past few years which

has assisted us in becoming more targeted in both our teaching and professional learning.

In the Bishops' Mandate to the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia it states:

*Catholic schools would not exist without the outstanding dedication and contribution of parents.*

This highlights the partnership that we enter into as parents enrol their children into our school. As I wrote in a recent newsletter, it is this partnership, along with the children's eagerness to learn, that will ensure the best outcomes for all.

We have been blessed at Notre Dame to have an active parent body that is so supportive of school initiatives. The School Advisory Council and the Parents' and Friends' Association complement each other to ensure our school remains financially viable with well maintained facilities within an active and engaging environment which is welcoming of all. I thank all members of both of these groups for their ongoing service and support with a special mention of those who are stepping down from their roles within these groups. Our role as educators would be so much more difficult without your support. It is unusual to single out individual members of these committees but I feel it would be remiss of me to not mention the dedication of Nicole Beresford and Bec Blomfield who have both been passionate about ensuring that our school is a place of excellence and great joy. Thank you Nicole and Bec for your wonderful efforts to ensure our community continues to thrive.

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. I also wish our Parish success with their plans to build a new presbytery and Parish office in the near future which will provide contemporary facilities for the operation of our busy Parish.

In my article in the 2024 Year Six Graduation magazine I have written about

The quote by the American author and humourist, Mark Twain:

*“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”*

For me, in a professional sense, the day I found out why was the day I commenced my teaching career. I think that may have been mainly because I showed up for work on my second day of teaching after the 43 Year Seven boys at CBC Fremantle, who bordered on being feral, had severely tested me on that first day. It has been a long journey from those early days and there have been many lessons along the way. The most significant of these has been to learn to trust because Principalship is not a job that you can do alone. I am ever grateful for the team that I have to support me in my role. From the children who offer me free advice in the playground such as, *we should build a swimming pool Mr Winza*, to the parents who tell me my job must be easy because I’m always happy (delusional is probably more apt than happy), to the staff who only ever *need a minute* as they walk into my office, I have, and still, enjoy every moment. This is only possible, however, because of the collegiality, advice and trust that I share with the other members of the Leadership Team. Daniela, Stefanie and Stephen are exceptional in all that they do. Nothing is too difficult or too unusual for them to take on board and work with, and I thank them for their commitment to making our school the best that it can be. Unfortunately, however, this dream team is about to be broken up as Stefanie has secured a new position at Liwara Catholic Primary in Greenwood. Whilst I am sad to see Stef moving on, I am so happy for Liwara as they will be receiving a talented, enthusiastic Leader with great ideas and a desire to improve the lives of children. We wish you happiness and success as you move on, Stef, and hope you experience, in your new school, the warmth and nurturing environment that has wrapped around you here for so many years.

....And finally, back to where I started, the *World’s Best* practice has to be somewhere, why not here, why not now, in this great school?

Darryl Winsor  
Principal