

School Principal Report 2025 Darryl Winsor

Good evening everyone, it is with great pleasure that I present my Report to our school community for the 2025 school year.

During Term two of this year, a panel was appointed by Catholic Education WA to conduct the Quality Catholic Education School Review which is, in effect, an independent assessment of our school's practices and policies. Conducted over 3 days, the process involved a range of staff members, parents, Fr Quynh and a selection of students from a range of Year levels across the school. The overall result of the Review was excellent suggesting that our school is operating at a very high level in all four Pillars considered: Catholic Identity, Education, Community and Stewardship with the following remarks by the panel in the Final Report indicative of this:

Despite a recent change in membership of the senior leadership team, there is evidence of cohesion within the team. Staff indicated that they receive a consistent response regardless of which member of the team they approach – in other words, 'they all seem to be on the same page'. Staff gave numerous examples of how they are pastorally cared for by the school leaders who consistently have an open-door policy.

Students noted they have a good mix of learning, can share their interests and creativity, and feel their voice is heard. Students shared that they feel empowered to make choices in their learning and appreciate the opportunity to direct their own learning paths when given the opportunity. This feedback highlights the school's commitment to fostering student agency and their journey with inquiry-based learning as a pedagogical practice. Inquiry-based learning and integration is a key focus in the Early Years, with leadership advocating for play-based approaches.

The leadership team, under the guidance of the Principal, has worked hard to define a culture that is Christ-centred and child-focused. Through the modelling and actioning of the school's Virtues, there has been a positive culture identified. Moreover, the presence of the leadership team at the school entrances before and after school is seen as a great support and has contributed to the establishment of positive relationships between all members of the school community.

The wellbeing of staff is a priority in the school e.g. open conversations are valued, and the leadership team is always available to staff, having an open-door policy. All stakeholder groups spoke of the positive morale within the school. The QCESR panel wishes to acknowledge the work undertaken by the school in creating a culture of collegial and system-based support, and in providing opportunities for ongoing professional development. The minimal turnover of teaching staff over the past three years is testament to this whole school approach to supporting and enriching staff capabilities. A long-serving stakeholder (20+yrs) commented that the school culture is more a family than a workplace.

This high praise is reflective of the wonderful community that we have developed here at Notre Dame and is a credit to the staff, the children and the families that continue to make this both a school of choice and a great place to work and learn.

At the commencement of this year, I challenged the staff with a review of the three 'Rs'. Not the traditional Reading Writing and Arithmetic, but Relationship, Responsibility and Risk. In short, Relationship is the key to all aspects of school, and it is only when we have formed effective relationships with children and their families that we will see them achieve their potential. It is our Responsibility to foster this relationship and to engage with the children; to find out what encourages them to want to learn and to have fun while they're doing it. And Risk. When you have a strong relationship and you know what engages children there is far greater capacity to take calculated risks which have the potential to make the learning process for both students and staff so much more meaningful and enjoyable. Whilst we refer to schools as an educational institution, we need to be prepared to keep our focus firmly upon what contemporary education requires of us rather than becoming bogged down in institutional ideology and "That's how we've always done things" attitudes.

Thank you to each and every member of our staff. You all make such a difference to the lives of our children, and your creativity, perception and openness of thought continue to ensure that we provide an excellent learning environment which caters for the diversity of needs of every child.

Whilst I am not in a position to announce the staffing for 2026, 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.

Conducted early in the year, the NAPLAN suite of assessments is one indicator of how we are tracking as a school compared to every other school across Australia. Again, our results have been very strong which is testament to the efforts of all staff and provides us with data to influence future planning to not only maintain but to enhance our results.

A very strong belief of mine has always been that education is a partnership. The analogy I like to use is that of the production of fire which requires fuel, oxygen and heat. If one is removed, the flame won't ignite. Education is the same, without the family, the child and the school all working together, we won't get the best result. We are fortunate, here at Notre Dame, to have such supportive parents who, not only trust us to educate their child, but actively take an interest in the process. I am ever thankful to all of our parents but especially to those who go above and beyond by voluntarily serving on the Parents' & Friends' committee and the School Advisory Council. Thank you, Jo and Julian, and the members of your committees for both the financial support and management and the wise council that assists us in providing for the needs of our community. To those finishing their term on each of these committees I thank you for your generosity of time and energy. I hope you are fully aware that your service has been significant and is greatly appreciated.

These are exciting times for our Parish with the demolition of the Presbytery and the building of a new facility that will better serve the needs of our community and the Church.

Fr Quynh's support of our Liturgies both in the Church and the school grounds and our Sacramental programs has been excellent, and we are grateful for this and his wise counsel on all matters of our faith and Catholic practices. Thank you, Father, for your positive attitude, understanding and vision in leading our community.

Principalship of a school has been a gift to me for many years and I am eternally thankful for the way that has enhanced my life. That said, there are days! However, school leadership is not a one-person job. Everyone in our community plays their part in contributing to the life of the school but none more so than the members of our Leadership Team. Daniela, Trish and Stephen are amazing. Their dedication, their passion and their perception is evident in all that they do. I can never thank them enough for the support that they provide me and our community and am ever grateful that I get to work alongside such talented people each and every day.

So, to conclude, I refer back to our School Review. We may believe that we are doing a good job in supporting our community but it's always a great feeling when your peers affirm this through their detailed analysis. I think the reviewers could have saved themselves a lot of time and energy by asking one question:

"Is Notre Dame Catholic Primary School a great school?"

....and the answer:

"Absolutely"

Darryl Winsor
Principal