

PRINCIPAL REPORT 2020

MATTHEW GIBNEY
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



UNDER GOD'S PROTECTION



Good Evening. Thank you for making the time to support our school by coming along to tonight's Annual Community Meeting. Well, what an interesting year it has been. Who could have predicted in January, that in my first year as Principal at a new school, there would be such a tumultuous year ahead. The COVID pandemic grew throughout Term One, with a great deal of uncertainty and little time to plan for decisions that seemed to be made from one day to the next. Fortunately, we fared quite well, thanks to the support of our staff, parents and the wider community. However, we had to continue to be diligent, be ready for a change of plan that could occur at any day and learn to live with hand sanitiser, Glen 20 and antiseptic wet wipes, as part of our "new normal." Zoom got a work out in Term One and Term Two and I am proud to say that our staff were well and truly ready for the challenges of online learning. Whilst the staff rose to the challenge of providing effective home learning experiences for the students, the COVID learning at home period did reinforce to us why we came into the teaching profession in the first place. Teachers did their best to engage with every student but could see very quickly that absolutely nothing beats the face to face experiences that occur between teacher and student on a day to day basis. Children always learn best by being with their teacher and their peers. Social engagement is vital to effective academic, social and emotional learning. This is even more vital now than ever – mental health has been a significant issue that has been highlighted through the pandemic, and our children have borne the brunt. Effective strategies to promote positive mental health and resilience are essential as we provide for our students now and into the future. Schools, including Matthew Gibney Catholic Primary School, are getting better at this. There is a clear awareness. We look forward to working with our parents and students in 2021 as we highlight mental health initiatives as one of our annual focus areas for 2021. A small group of staff have volunteered to be on a committee to begin to explore strategies and programs to continue to find best practice solutions to positive mental health and resilience outcomes for our students in 2021.

COVID restrictions did have an effect on school events in the first half of the year. As restrictions eased we found ourselves playing "catch up" to make sure the children did not miss out on events that we deemed important to their development in 2020. I am most grateful to the teaching staff for their perseverance in enabling events to happen, all be it in modified ways and in a short period of time. The staff did enjoy the time we had with fewer events and fewer demands on our valuable teaching and learning time. We enjoyed seeing the resilience of our students in coming into school independently, carrying their own bags and sorting themselves out for the day, without parents or grandparents to assist. We saw definite growth in our students during this time. This is something we need to hold on to – one of the positives that came out of the pandemic restrictions. We will continue to look at how some of these changes can be applied more permanently to assist with the resilience and wellbeing of our students.

The academic program provided here at Matthew Gibney has continued to be of a high standard, once again, during 2020. On your behalf I thank our staff, teachers and Education Assistants for the value they offer our students to develop their gifts in a variety of ways.

The Religious Education program continues to be the first learning area for our students. The teaching of Religious Education is alive and well. We are proudly a Catholic school first and foremost and make no apologies about this.

I extend my thanks to Fr Joseph and the St Francis of Assisi Parish for their partnership with the school. We are a parish school and our involvement with the parish is essential in maintaining the Catholicity of our school. My thanks to the catechist teachers in the parish and to Fr Joseph for their interactions and support of all our students. The Sacramental programs were able to go ahead this year, although a little differently to previous years, due to some COVID restrictions. However, I can confidently say that each of the three sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation were reverent celebrations that were both enriching and spiritually nourishing for our students. A highlight during

the year has been a visit by Emeritus Bishop Barry Hickey. Bishop Hickey visited the Year Six class before celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation with the students.

Our students were able to continue involvement in sport and arts experiences. We were delighted that Matthew Gibney took out the shield in the annual interschool athletics carnival. Our school cross country and house athletics carnivals were enjoyable events for our students. Involvement in the Arts was slightly different this year, especially with the cancelling of live events for the Catholic Schools Performing Arts Festival. However, we were delighted that the Easter Play, re-named the Resurrection Play, as it was held closer to Christmas than Easter, could still go ahead.

The school community has witnessed faith in action as the Mini Vinnie's club have lead us in a number of fund raising opportunities, including a wonderful effort with Milo mornings in Term Two and Three. Weekly giving of food items continues to be successful and the annual drives for the St Vincent De Paul Association have been strong. Thank you for supporting our efforts to ensure a sense of service, Christ in action, continues to thrive at our school.

The Parents and Friends Association have continued to meet throughout the year. We trialed a day meeting this year and were please that it was well attended. We will continue with more regular day meetings in 2021. I am most grateful to the P&F executive in 2020, Jodie Capobianco, Natasha Alleyway, Esther Robinson and Sharna Zinella, who along with the parent representatives have worked hard to ensure successful social and friend raising activities throughout the year along with some significant fund-raising activities. Special thanks to Natasha Alleyway who is completing her term on the P&F, and as a Matthew Gibney parent at the end of tis year. Thank you, Natasha, on behalf of us all for the wonderful support you and your family have contributed to the school over the past number years. Your contribution as P&F Treasurer have been valued and you will be missed.

I am most grateful for the work of the Matthew Gibney Catholic Primary School Board for their support of the school during the year. The Board, under the chairmanship of Mr Gavin Hogg have worked hard during the year on a number of projects. We had restrictions imposed upon us to complete some capital works due to COVID, however we look forward to renewed vigour in improving the school in 2021. In particular, the School Board have embarked upon a Master Plan of improvements to the buildings and teaching environment of the school for the future. Planned improvements include additional teaching and learning spaces, connections to the outdoors, new toilet block facilities and upgrades of existing indoor structures. The Board, in collaboration with the staff look forward to showcasing the Master Plan with the wider community early in 2021. The Master Plan will drive our capital improvements into the future so we can continue to be a dynamic, future focused and contemporary school of choice for the families of High Wycombe and surrounding suburbs. The Board have been focused on marketing during the year. We have had some challenges with the cancellation of planned open days, but were able to go ahead with a successful open day in Term Three. The school has been marketed in a positive way with some new initiatives this year. I am pleased that Catholic Education as a whole has presented well during the COVID pandemic. We did not lose enrolments during this time and I am pleased that we have considerably improved enrolments for 2021. Kindy enrolments are vital to sustaining the school and we look as though we will be at full capacity for Kindy in 2021. Thank you to our parents for speaking highly of our school in the community. Your recommendations are always the most effective marketing we can have.

Thank you to Kylie Grey, who is completing her term on the Board at the end of this year. Kylie has been a valued member of the Board and we are most grateful to her for her contributions.

Staff have offered students a variety of opportunities to be involved in co-curricular activities to develop their gifts and talents during the year. The variety of opportunities available for our students this year have included:

- Year Six Busselton Camp
- Year Six leadership opportunities
- Robotics and Coding Lessons
- Interschool Athletics.
- Book week dress up parade
- Matthew Gibney Day Activities
- NAIDOC Week celebrations and activities
- A variety of incursion
- Class excursions
- House cross country and athletics carnivals.
- Edu Dance
- Mini Vinnies Club

I am grateful to the work of our staff in assisting the student to achieve to the best of their potential.

Finally, I acknowledge the work of all the staff, especially in this most challenging of years. Your professionalism, dedication and care for the students has been most commendable and I am extremely grateful to you all. In particular I acknowledge Assistant Principals, Karen Keddie and Diane Scriven, for their support and contributions to the smooth running of the school during this year. Thank you for your assistance to me, as new Principal and for your patience, professionalism and attention to the day to day running of the school. I could not manage this position without you both. Thank you as well to Tania Kays, Krista Gregory and Louell Renzullo for their support throughout the year. The financial and administrative running of the school is vital to effective management. I know I can rely on Tania and Louell to always present the face of the school in a positive, welcoming and encouraging manner. Tania's role, in particular, in knowing every child and the parents, in welcoming new families and always been ready to assist, is what encourages new families to our school. Thank you, Tania, for your patience with me and for reminding me, so tactfully and politely, about what needs to be done and what I may have overlooked. I am always most grateful to you, along with all the staff for their support of myself and our school.

Finally, it is with a sense of pride that together with the staff and parents we congratulate our students for ensuring the Matthew Gibney values and spirit continue to thrive across all aspects of the school community.

Best wishes for the remainder of the 2020 school year as we look forward together to an even more successful and less disruptive 2021 as we prepare to celebrate the wonderful achievement of our 30th year.

Therese Hussey
Principal