

Matthew Gibney Catholic Primary School

Principal's Report 2018

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all here this evening for our annual community meeting. It feels a little bizarre that we are reflecting on the 2018 school year when the new school year for 2019 has already begun. However, due to circumstances beyond our control, with budgetary information not fully available for us to present to the school community by the end of the school year, we were advised to delay our community meetings until this year. I now would like to present to you the Principal's report for 2018.

At the end of 2017 I stood before you and outlined what I believed were the challenges moving forward for Catholic education as a whole and by connection, how these challenges were going to affect our school. We begin 2019 with still more questions than answers on financial viability and security for our system.

It is a challenging time for Catholic Education in Western Australia. For the first time in many years, the system experienced a decline in enrolments across the state and the country. We were not immune from this in our own community. A major marketing campaign was run by Catholic Education WA in the second half of 2018, embracing all different types of media. Social media was used for the first time to let people know of the achievements of Catholic schools, both for primary and secondary. It became clear that we, as a system, could no longer take for granted that we would pick up our market share of students. Our school was no different. Under the leadership of Karen Keddie, our school embarked on a full marketing campaign to highlight the advantages of sending a child to a Catholic school. The school utilised social media along with roadside advertising, open afternoons and newspaper advertisements. It is important that we continue to remind our local community the benefits of sending their child to a Catholic school for a Catholic education. It is a responsibility of all our community to share this 'good news' with everyone.

The fact that we are Catholic remains a non-negotiable aspect of our existence. With the decline of formalised religion in this country, it is important that people realise that being a Catholic is more than just learning doctrine. It is about making our faith real in our interactions with the local and wider community. Our school prides itself on how it reaches out to those in need. Our *Minnie Vinnies* programme has made a significant difference in how we carry this out. Through numerous fund raising and collection initiatives throughout the year, we have helped to make those in need feel a little better. The St Vincent de Paul Society frequently acknowledge our contributions and our whole community are to be congratulated on their generosity. I would like to congratulate our Minnie Vinnies from 2018 for their outstanding work and thank Karen Keddie for coordinating this.

Our school continues to work hard to maintain a strong relationship with the parish. Throughout the year, students were prepared to receive the Sacraments in collaboration with the Parish. Students from Year 3 received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, students from Year 4 received their First Eucharist and students from Year 6 received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Each group were prepared by their classroom teachers and then attended a retreat to understand the practical applications of their Sacrament. By collaborating with the Parish, it helps us to recognise that we are part of a wider faith community and not the centre of it. I would like to thank each of the classroom teachers, Miss Zurzolo, Mrs Brescacin and Mr Donlon for their

work in this area. Thank you to Mrs Keddie for her overall coordination. At our end of year Thanksgiving Mass we farewelled Fr Francis, who had been our Parish Priest for the last 4 years. Fr Francis was a great supporter of our school. He regularly visited us for our Liturgies and for our Masses. He was always extremely welcoming when we visited the Parish Church. We wished him well with his new appointment as Parish Priest of the Embleton Parish. Father Joseph Ratharaj is our new Parish Priest. He has visited our school and each of the classes and we look forward to him making a significant difference to this Parish and, by extension, our school. We also appreciate the presence of Deacon Trevor. Although not as visible as he has been in previous years due to ill health, we thank him for doing what he can to link school and Parish.

The liturgical life of our school is integral in what we do. We are reminded of the Liturgical season whenever we enter the school office, the sacred space or any of the classrooms. As a school community we travel to the Church at least once a term to celebrate the Eucharist. Each class celebrates a Liturgy of the Word or a Mass once a semester. We gather as a whole school to recognise significant Feast Days. These have to remain important aspects of school life if we are to remain true to our Vision as a Catholic School.

Our academic focus for 2018 has been specific aspects of literacy and numeracy. These are core elements of education and have to have a strong emphasis in any school. Our whole school coordinated focus on the teaching and learning of reading and spelling has seen students' consistent improvement. Our school uses data to inform our teaching and learning and helps us to become more focussed on where students' needs are and what needs to be done in order to satisfy those needs. We have an excellent support programme and students are identified earlier so that areas of weakness can be addressed. Students who achieve higher academic results are being challenged through STEM programmes. Students are given opportunities to succeed in our Music and Drama programme and our Physical Education programme. Last year, our school and some of our students were recognised for their outstanding achievements in the Catholic Schools Performing Arts Festival. Our PE programme is becoming stronger each year with the students being exposed to a wider range of sports rather than just the more traditional ones. Our students learn Italian and are developing their skills in the area of digital technology. Our school offers a diverse academic programme without losing sight of what the core business is – assisting students to be literate and numerate in a Catholic environment. Students only experience success in this when they are taught and assisted by highly dedicated and professional staff members, which is what we have at this school. I thank them for their dedication and recognise how blessed we are to have them in our school working with our students in order to help them reach their potential.

This year sees us launch our new strategic plan. We were able to tick off many of the items that were on our most recent plan and we look forward to the challenges of meeting this new plan. Staff, students and a selection of parents had input into the development of this plan and we are confident that it will help to guide us into the next three years.

I would like to thank the School Board for the work they do in assisting with the Financial and Capital work in our school. In these challenging times, financially, the Board has worked hard to ensure that our facilities remain up to standard and that they are well maintained. The Board Chair and Treasurer have already outlined the capital expenditure for 2018. All these improvements help to keep our school attractive and welcoming to the students and well resourced for the staff.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Parents and Friends. George Caldwell became the new President in 2018 and he and the P&F committee continued to do all they could to build community and raise funds to resource our school. The generosity of this community never ceases to amaze me and all of the school's requests for finances have always been met with an affirming response. I would like to acknowledge Michelle Steward, Natasha Alleway and Joe Rickerby for their generosity in giving their time on the P&F Executive. I would also like to thank the class representatives for always being there at school Masses as well as organising P&F events for the whole school community. All of these help to make our school a better place.

I would like to acknowledge all those who help our school in whatever way they can. This is very much a community school and many people help to build our community. Your generosity in assisting in lots of different ways help to make our school a better place as well as providing students with opportunities that they might not otherwise experience. Your help has not gone unnoticed nor is it not appreciated.

I would like to thank Diane Scriven and Karen Keddie for their expertise, advice and support in helping to lead our school. Both ladies are outstanding educators who are a gift to this community. I am very lucky to have them as part of our leadership team. I would also like to thank Sue St Jorre and Tania Kays for the work they do in the administrative and financial areas of our school. The varying layers of compliance that are now part and parcel of school life make running a school a complex and complicated task. Both do a great job in untangling the bureaucratic mess that we often find ourselves in and they are an invaluable part of our school. They are also great helpers to our families and they always do this with a smile.

As a school, we will continue to strive for excellence, understanding that we are a Catholic school. As a staff, we are committed to assisting each child to achieve their potential and also learn how to make a positive contribution to the wider community. We are fully aware that we don't always get this right and we apologise for the mistakes that we invariably make, but there is a strong commitment that we will always try to be better at getting better. We will continue to work hard to ensure that our school reflects the teachings of Jesus and, at the same time, assist students to be the best that they can.

Mark Powell
Principal