

## PRINCIPALS REPORT P&F MEETING. February 16, 2016.

Welcome all. Thank you very much for volunteering to support the community in this way. We are most grateful to you for that commitment and look forward to a good year.

The work of the P&F is seen front and centre at Holy Rosary. The extended Pre Primary playground, following straight on from the Kindy playground, is wonderful. All done over the holidays, all in time for the children to play on. And play they have! The Senior Playground needed a great deal of parent involvement to make it happen, and it did happen. It is as much a work of art as it is a playground. All these projects are testament to vision, commitment, community, patience, expertise, hard work. Our children are blessed.

Our term has started very smoothly, with children settling quickly in to their classes. We have many new families, and we trust that their association is both rewarding and enjoyable. Without Kerry, who I ask that you keep in your prayers as she is away this term - and perhaps longer - this year, we have managed to continue to upgrade our school calendars, and newsletter. No small feat! Continuing to improve communication to parents and guardians is important to us, and the feedback last year was great, which is a real motivation to continue. We have been really fortunate to secure the services of Michele Rowland to take over from Kerry in her absence. Michele knows the school and is held in high regard.

Our new staff – David Edwards in Year Four and Geordie Thuijs, Assistant Principal – have taken to Holy Rosary. I am pleased to report that they are genuinely enjoying the experience. Holy Rosary is a lovely school, and the supportive environment means that much good work gets done.

Visually many people would witness the improved look to the front of the school, with the removal of the screens and awnings, the re-bituminised Disabled car park and Kindy entry, and the repainted areas. All painted and varnished external areas, including the Veritas Garden and the Hall, were also repainted and revarnished. We have an ageing school, and maintenance and a maintenance plan is central to ensuring that expenditure is smoothed out over a period of time.

I am working from a school maintenance review document commissioned last year that our Board is familiar with. It has informed the maintenance schedule across the school, from the painting, to addressing critical issues, of which 51 were identified. This has not been cheap, but this has been essential. In terms of forward planning, much discussion has taken place about commencing an extensive renovation of the Administration block, which is long overdue. We are also exploring the feasibility of scheduling a cycle of improvement and refurbishment of our classes.

Educationally, Spiritually and Pastorally, the way forward is an exciting one. We continue with the rich and diverse education across all learning areas that our children are fortunate to experience, and we will be building on that.

We commenced this journey last year. Firstly, our staff were all asked to consider our moral purpose. Yes we are here to teach, but what? Our Dominican underpinnings - truth, love and knowledge - will be enhanced later this year when staff attend PD together which has as its core, Making Jesus Real. This initiative came to life in Tasmania many years ago, and its creator Peter Mitchell is in Perth in May. It has taken hold in many of our schools, and as a contemporary model of theology, as a lived faith, it is immensely powerful. MJR is adult to adult, adult to child, child to child. It is everywhere. In this, the Year of Mercy, as declared by the Pope, or the year of Big Heartedness, as stated by our Archbishop at a recent Principals' Meeting, these priorities fit beautifully.

Our student-centred approach in its many forms continues to underpin most of our priorities this year. The big push is to focus on Student Engagement – the E in LEAD if you will. If we want that to be high we will be reflecting on how staff are connected with our children. Happy children learn best, happy staff teach and support best.

Time will be invested in regularly reflecting on how much children get out of their lessons. To that end, we again worked last term and at the beginning of this term with Dr Sandy Helsing and we are adopting her model of teaching, learning and assessing of writing which is more finely grained than what most schools use. It is well-researched and results show a clear improvement in standards when implemented effectively. We are a trial school for our system, which I am pleased about, as it is a well-researched initiative.

At the end of last year, and again at the beginning of this year, we worked with CEO consultants, researching Critical and Creative Thinking in our classrooms and how best to further improve that. These skills traverse all learning areas, and will become more evident in our school over time.

This year members of the Leadership Team together with our Teacher Leaders for Numeracy are involved in the PANLS (Principals as Numeracy Leaders) project, again a well-researched initiative that targets improvement in mathematics. All of these have as their focus differentiation, the purpose of which is student engagement.

And this differentiation is the main focus in teacher appraisal this year. It seems to make the most sense to align this school focus with the AITSL standards that connect to that focus.

We are reconfiguring assessment and streamlining reporting, so for example instead of an open night this term, we will have parent interviews. Reporting next term will be only the report itself. The purpose of the change is to concentrate on teaching and learning, and to make a connection to all parents and guardians sooner.

Teachers now have the use of MacBook computers (laptops) to embed the technology in the classroom. Like the other commitments we are making, it is being backed up with professional development from our own staff. We have

increased the number of our team with the required skills, with more joining all the time, making the improvement path quite irresistible. We know that it is not the device used that makes the difference. It is about the teachers' ability to instruct children. This is what makes the difference, as it does across all learning areas. Much time is being devoted this year, through student free professional development (PD) days, and at our Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to improving skills in this area.

This is good and meaningful work, all aligned, and focused on our children getting the best out of their education. The work is solid and substantial, and will be on our agenda for years to come. Real, meaningful, sustainable improvement takes five to seven years, and I look forward very much to the journey.

Thank you.