

## Mary MacKillop CCPS ACM Principal's Report 2023

It is with a great pleasure that I present the 2023 Principal's report to the Mary MacKillop CCPS community.

I have been very appreciative of the high level of support the staff, P&F and School Advisory Council members have shown towards one another throughout the challenges of this year. Once again, our community members have worked collaboratively in a supportive manner to help make this a better school for everyone.

Parish relations have continued to be very positive during the past 12 months and Fr John and Fr Mark have been most supportive. This year, Fr John has stepped back a bit and Fr Mark has become more involved with school Masses and his overall involvement with the school. Sadly, Fr Mark has moved to another parish which will be a big loss for our community. Fr Mark had a great relationship with our staff and students and he got many of us involved with his work helping homeless people. Our community is definitely better off for the legacy he has left us.

There have been a number of significant achievements this year in terms of improving the facilities at Mary MacKillop. In line with our School Improvement Plan, we replaced the vinyl flooring in the hall as well as recarpeting the Year 5 and 6 classrooms, along with the computer lab and the resource rooms near Year 3. The St Joseph Centre received their own playground equipment which was a significant improvement on what they had before, and it made life a lot easier for the staff when they were working with the students. In 2024, we will finally commence work on the first stage of the Kindergarten upgrade. This will see a new roof go over about three quarters of the existing roof as well as an upgrade to the verandahs near the Library. On the other side, the Kindergarten will get a magnificent new terraced verandah area with an outdoor lift for students in a wheelchair. It is going to be a significant redevelopment of the area and our students will benefit from greater accessibility to the learning space as well as an area which meets National Quality Standards. This project will take place over the summer holidays and hopefully will be completed by the time we start next year. Hopefully, the second stage of the redevelopment, which is the internal works, will hopefully take place at the end of next year. Stay tuned! This is a big and expensive project which will be fully self funded with no money being borrowed to cover costs.

On this year's improvement plan, was the goal of engaging students with their learning with contemporary evidence based pedagogies. We have continued to work closely with CEWA consultants as we improved our knowledge and understanding of Reading, Spelling and Mathematics practices which improve learning outcomes for students. We have also looked at planning methods which include Backward Design and the use of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria. On top of this, our school has been identified by CEWA as one of the top 10 schools for having the most families from non English speaking backgrounds. Therefore, we have done a considerable amount of work in the EALD space. This is a different type of support as these students often don't have learning difficulties. Their issues mainly arise from

not having English as their first language and the challenges involved in learning a whole new language whilst maintaining their first language as well as their culture.

In 2023, we entered into an agreement with Curtin University where they supplied us with a speech therapist for one day per week. This therapist (Katy Forest) had up to seven university students with her at a time who worked with our students. Over the course of the year, they supported around 30 students in our Kindergarten and Pre Primary, which was a significant improvement from what we had before. One feature of the programme is that there was no extra cost for our parents at Mary MacKillop. This programme will continue once again into 2024 as we have built an excellent working relationship with the team from Curtin University. As well as this, we have finally realised our dream and from the start of 2024, we will be employing our own Speech Therapist. Alana Portacio will be working in our school from Monday to Wednesday each week. Alice Storer has also been appointed as our own Occupational Therapist and she will work two days per week. We are the first Catholic school to go down this path and it will be a steep learning curve. The first thing both ladies will do in 2024 is to screen all of our Kindergarten students and then form a working relationship with these students, their families and our staff so we can offer support for the students who need help in this area. From there, they will then target the students with the greatest needs. This will be done in collaboration with the Assistant Principals and the teachers.

Another goal from our School Improvement Plan was to collect some data around the concept of student wellness. Three years ago, we created a wellness centre, which is run by our social worker, Lisa Mueller. It has become a space where Lisa can run workshops on friendship issues and mental health programmes as well as a place for meditation and mindfulness activities. It has been very rewarding to see the excellent programmes that Lisa has organised this year. It is very rewarding to know that many of our students now actively seek out Lisa's assistance when they are feeling anxious or stressed. Lisa has a wonderful way of working with our students and this program has been an excellent addition to our community. As this area has been deemed so important by CEWA, we received a grant which will cover all of our professional development over the next 18 months in this area. As a result, we will be teaming up with St Brigid's in Middle Swan next year to participate in an excellent programme known as Berry Street. A lot of this programme's strategies have already been implemented into our school in various ways, and the extra training we get will strengthen our restorative practices in this important area.

The educational focus for next year will continue to be the Western Australian curriculum, early intervention strategies, Co-operative Learning, inquiry based learning and the integration of technology into the classroom. We will also continue supplementing our Religious Education programme with the Making Jesus Real programme.

A few years ago, the P&F and the school went into a partnership of upgrading the playgrounds around the school. This programme was completed earlier this year, with the installation of the tree top walk, which was built near the flying fox in the senior playground. The project cost around \$70 000 and was shared by the P&F and the school.

I would like to thank the School Advisory Council members for their support this year. I appreciate the way in which everyone comes together in the best interests of our community. Sadly, Colin Schotte has finally completed his time here as a member of the Board/ SAC. Colin's financial guidance has been critical throughout the past ten years he has served on the Board/SAC. We also say farewell to Bryce Parry and Amy Lam who have also finished their terms on the SAC. Bryce has been instrumental with supporting the SAC in his role of Chair and Amy has done a great job as our Secretary. Both of you will be sadly missed and your contributions to our community are greatly appreciated. I also extend my gratitude to any SAC and P&F members who are finishing their terms, especially Anita Andrews, who has done a mighty job of running the second hand uniform shop, which has proven to be a valuable resource for our families experiencing financial difficulties.

The P&F have again provided valuable resources into all classrooms this year. They have done a great job of helping to build strong and positive relationships in our community as well as providing resources which are always greatly appreciated. The P&F have organised a range of fabulous activities once again this year, which went towards funding books for the Library. I would like to thank our team of Allison Fox, Sam Somers, Sam Parry and Anita Andrews who did a great job of running a small but successful committee. They managed to help build our community spirit by organising a range of great activities throughout this challenging year.

I would now like to acknowledge the fantastic staff members at Mary MacKillop. They are a joy to work with and I have certainly appreciated their support this year. To all of you, I say thank you for all of your hard work and dedication.

This year, we say farewell to Rose Connell who is heading north to live in Karratha. It surely will be a great opportunity for her. Rose will be greatly missed and I would like to thank her very sincerely for her contributions here at Mary Mac.

In 2024, we will be welcoming Jane Cullen to our community. Jane is a very experienced teacher who is currently working at St John Paul 11 Catholic Primary School in Banksia Grove and she will be a great addition to our team.

Whilst the whole staff has been outstanding this year, I would like to make special mention of Lisa Liebrechts, Tim Maxwell, Steve Tucker, Barb Burton and Jane Coniglio. They have done a huge amount of work behind the scenes to make sure this school runs as well as it does. I thank them also for their counsel and openness to implementing strategies to make Mary MacKillop the best place it possibly can be.

Laurie Bechelli