

Principal's Report

AGM 2021

Good evening, and thank you for attending our St Jerome's AGM for 2021

I acknowledge ...

- Fr Vijay, Parish Priest from the Parish of St Jerome's,
- Melanie Freeman, Chair of the St Jerome's School Advisory Council.
- Nikki Harney, President of the P&F Association.
- Vanessa Alaniz and Carol Hoare, Assistant Principals.
- The amazing staff of St Jerome's.
- Parents and Caregivers.

Your attendance tonight is important, and I value your generosity by being here. This school is important to all of us, and your presence makes that very clear.

The **responsibility** we share as parents and teachers in the education of our young people is a complimentary one. It is a sacred trust, and we cannot afford to forget our collective responsibility. Our endeavours must always be focused on the care and development of every child at St Jerome's.

Our school should be a place of welcome. It should be filled with the **joy of learning** and students should be empowered to achieve their personal best. Jesus must be central to all that we do, and his presence should be a celebration amongst us. Prayer should be heard in our classrooms, and God should be spoken about.

Our education assistants and teachers should be active learners, engaged in the learning process and love coming to work. Their workplace should be creative, inspiring, supportive, challenging and fun. These people in their work have an influence on the future, they place an imprint on the children here, and they build on the work parents have already begun.

I believe, and I hope you share my reality that what **should be here, is**. That what I have just mentioned is lived here on a daily basis at St Jerome's. It is not just spoken about.

Let's begin our discussion about the 2021 School Year.

The Arts - Visual Art

St Jerome's offered a wide variety of extra curricular Arts experiences in 2021. The Creative Art team has now entered its third year running, with Mrs Cipriano using her weekly extension lesson to guide a team of talented artists to create their own work on top of what they are devising in class time. We entered multiple pieces in the Angelico Exhibition this year and had two winners. The **Fra Angelico Award** went to Sophia Camino in Year 5 and the **1st Place Primary Sculpture** went to Addison Scobie in Year 6. Marisa was the most awarded teacher on the night of the exhibition.

Marisa leaves us this year for a position at Mother Teresa Catholic College, and our loss is their gain. Marisa has lifted the skills of visual arts in our school to levels few attain, and that can be seen in the awards our students gain. Marisa, thank you for your selfless service to our school community. The extra hours you commit to our school community has not gone unnoticed. From all of us at St Jerome's, thank you.

Music

This year we offered three singing groups for students. Our Senior Choir was made up of 80 students this year. They participated in the One Big Voice festival at the RAC Arena along with 4000 other students. The Senior Choir learnt 12 songs for this occasion as well as choreography. They will also be joining the Emmanuel Catholic College Choir on December 8th for the Emmanuel Carols night.

This year the Chorale was formed, made up of 20 auditioned students. The Chorale lead the liturgical singing at our masses, performed in the Catholic Performing Arts Festival receiving high accolades from the adjudicator and sung again in the Massed Choir for the Spirit of the Arts concert at RAC Arena.

Another new group named **The Treble Makers** were also formed this year, made up of six students who took private voice lessons here at St Jerome's. They performed in the Contemporary Band section of the festival with live student accompaniment and again at the Perth Royal Show. These students are also performing at several Christmas Carols concerts in the Cockburn Community over the next three weeks.

The Rock Band continued to grow this year, with several new members. They performed in the Festival, at the St Jerome's Arts Alive concert and our school talent show.

The Ukulele Club, now in its first full year, took the Performing Arts Festival by storm and successfully were awarded the Primary Ensemble Shield. A unanimous decision by the judges, the Ukulele Club performed at the RAC Arena in the Spirit of the Arts celebrations. We now have many students who have performed at the Arena more times than Beyoncé. A special mention to Larissa Paratore for her work with these students.

This year we also introduced Junior Music Club after some very eager Year 2's approached Mrs Searle. They have extended their music knowledge by learning multiple songs this year for our Arts Alive and Christmas concerts.

Dance and Drama

Now in its third year, the Musical Theatre class is proving to be very popular. Rehearsing weekly, students have been exposed to a variety of different musical theatre songs and performed their 50s/60s/70s mega mix in Forrest Chase in the CBD for the Spirit of the Arts week.

The Drama Company was also formed this year, with 38 students from years 4-6. The Drama Company have been involved in activities and workshops that have extended their classroom learning as well as creating new plays to perform. Aside from the Easter Liturgy and forthcoming Nativity play, the Drama Company created their own production titled "Scene of the Rhyme" which was a hilarious fairy tale comedy.

My thanks must be noted for Jackson Bennett-Surtees as lead in the performing arts space. Jackson just gives, and then finds more to give. His inspiration and energy fuels so much activity and endeavour at St Jerome's. We stand tall in the performing arts space amongst many schools, due to Jackson's work and commitment.

We also raise words of appreciation for Larissa Paratore, Carmel Searle, Genny Deeble, Katelyn Correia, and Tasha Hartley.

Physical Education

All students in pre-primary to year 6 participate in Physical Education classes at St Jerome's. Our PP and year 1 students focus on developing their fundamental movement skills with Ms Pirozzi. The year 2s and 3s work to applying these skills to modified games, while developing their interpersonal skills and learning to work as a team. Our upper primary students then continue to develop all the skills they have acquired in their foundation years to be able to play a variety of sports.

School Carnivals

COVID threatened to get in the way of swimming in Term 1, but we got our trials done and the students in years 4-6 got to enjoy a great carnival at Fremantle Aquatic Centre. COVID and rain both threatened cross-country, but again we couldn't be stopped. The whole school, Kindy to year 6 participated, running the school course, although sadly without spectators. Finally, we had our Athletics carnival in Term 3 and we were grateful to have spectators back to create the atmosphere the students love.

Interschool

St Jerome's is a member of the Catholic Primary Schools Sporting Association (CPSSA). We compete in several carnivals throughout the year including swimming, cross-country and athletics. Across all three of these events, several of our students enjoyed individual success, winning championship medallions. For the first time since 2007, our athletics team were awarded the meritorious shield which is based on the points we accumulated divided by the total number of students enrolled at St Jerome's.

The CPSSA also holds seven team sport competitions, and we have had a great year! Our boys A division cricket team got us off to a great start winning their competition and then attending the regional finals in Term 4. Our boys' basketball team, both our A and B division netball teams and our football team all brought home shields this year for winning their competitions.

A very special thank you to Taryn Kalat for her work in this area. Taryn, not only manages the sport activities, lessons and competitions here at St Jerome's, she also coordinates the interschool association for our region. Taryn is organized, and passionate about what she does and it shows. Taryn, thank you for all your efforts to make St Jerome's shine this year. And remember we need to beat Mater Christi at every occasion.

Thank you too to Cassandra Pirozzi for your efforts in supporting Taryn, and teaching PE in our junior classes. That's hard work!!

Curriculum Planning

Evangelisation Plan – Unfortunately the planning days were postponed to 2022. All Catholic schools must have an Evangelisation Plan, and they must be updated when a new Principal is appointed. The 2022 Evangelisation workshop require Carol, Vanessa and myself to attend. We hope too, Fr Vijay is willing to join us again, and our Faith Advocate Fleur Coy as well.

In **Maths** with place value as our primary focus we have implemented an inquiry based approach to Mathematics. Our staff have been guided by CEWA Mathematics consultants, Ben Saulsman and Mistelle Moore, on how place value underpins all other mathematical concepts as well as the Launch, Explore, Summarise model to inquiry learning. Georgie Turco and Peta Nicolaou presented a Webinar to Catholic schools across our state, sharing our journey in implementing the Launch, Explore and Summarise model as well as how this further encouraged a positive change in the mindset of our children in Mathematics. My congratulations to Peta and Georgie for accepting the invite from CEWA to prepare and present this statewide broadcast. We all watched them, and we thought they were the best.

Early Years Focus

Inquiry-based learning is an education approach that focuses on investigation and problem-solving. Inquiry-based learning is different from traditional approaches because it reverses the order of learning. Instead of presenting information, or ‘the answer’, up-front, teachers start with a range of scenarios, questions and problems for students to navigate. Inquiry-based learning prioritises problems that require critical and creative thinking so students can develop their abilities to ask questions, design investigations, interpret evidence, form explanations and arguments, and communicate findings. At St Jerome’s, the staff have attended PDs presented by Kath Murdoch, writer of “The Power of Inquiry” and Rebecca Duncan, AISWA Early Childhood Consultant to help staff build a better understanding of the Inquiry-Based approach and to guide teachers when implementing this approach in the classroom. Most ECE teachers have begun their inquiry journey, implementing, at last, one aspect of the approach.

Our teachers continue to use **Brightpath** as a moderation tool in order to improve student’s Writing skills. *Brightpath* is a proven and robust web-based software solution with a range of assessment and reporting features. Brightpath assists

teachers to identify what learning is required to enable students to progress and help plan for individual student learning needs. It helps teachers validate their grading decisions.

Indigenous Perspectives

Towards the end of Term 2, all staff received comprehensive information about the theme for NAIDOC Week 2021, this theme being Heal Country.

The intention was to motivate staff, ahead of time, so they felt confident to provide a respectful, immersive, and empathetic NAIDOC Week at the commencement of Term Three. The lead up to our NAIDOC Week at St Jerome's gave teachers the opportunity to ask questions before it began, and this was a huge learning curve for all of us.

Term Three kicked off with energy and enthusiasm. Due to such extensive preparation, staff approached the week from a place of understanding. We all began to feel the connection that our Whadjuk Noongar Peoples have to this country. We opened our hearts and minds to embrace the theme of Heal Country. However, we had no idea just how powerful this would become.

Due to the experience of NAIDOC Week this year, classrooms now have yarnning circles and Acknowledgment of Country as part of daily routine. The activities we participated in, were the impetus for us to continue our journey of discovery and reconciliation.

Our children are learning that by Healing Country and Caring for Country, we pay respect to the identity and spirit of our Whadjuk Noongar Peoples. For those of you who attended our Performing Art's Night at Emmanuel College you would have seen, first hand, our children perform **Djinda Djinda** or **Twinkle Twinkle** Little Star in Noongar language.

By acknowledging and listening to the stories of our Aboriginal Peoples across Australia, and specifically focusing on Whadjuk Noongar Country, we have lit the fire of reconciliation, which we can now build on in 2022.

I must acknowledge the contribution Fleur Coy has made this year in assisting with Indigenous perspectives throughout our school. I've not seen this done as well as Fleur has achieved within this school community. Thank you Fleur.

Learning Diversity

Learning Diversity was graced with a new area in Term 2 this year. The larger Discovery Room provides a great space for students, teachers, therapists and volunteers to engage in a range of meaningful activities.

Learning Diversity caters for students who require the support of an Individual Education Plan to help them to achieve their learning goals. Learning Activities are diverse and include Language, Maths, Social Skills, Cooking and Sensory and Emotional regulation. Students work 1:1, in small groups and larger groups for activities like Yoga.

The Discovery Room can also be a quiet place for students to take a break and refresh before rejoining their peers.

We are proud of this special team who do wonders to support our children.

This year we say farewell to Jo Roper who has coordinated our Learning Diversity Discovery area for many years. Jo's work has been monumental in establishing this facility at St Jerome's. Jo's gentle and compassionate approach has been the gift she has brought, and so willingly shares with every child and staff member working in the Discovery Room. Jo, you will be fondly remembered, and sadly missed.

Extension Program

In 2021, the students participating in the Extension Programme have achieved success in the following programs:

- St Jerome's Team were awarded in the Top 10 schools the first time they entered the **Cluedunnit Kids** competition run by the UWA Law Society.
- 20 Year 6 students experienced the long term **Night of the Notables** project
- Students in our Year 4 Maths Extension sat the **Australian Maths Challenge Competition**, and the Year 5 and 6 Maths Extension students participated in the **Maths Games and Maths Olympiad Competitions**.
- A group of Year 5/6 students entered the **Tournament of the Minds** competition, which was held on a Saturday at ECU in Joondalup
- Many students entered the **ICAS Testing** facilitated by the UNSW, and we had numerous students achieve Distinctions and Credits
- Four teams from Year 5/6 entered the **Write a Book in a Day** competition. A team from Year 6 were awarded the **Best Illustrated Book in Western Australia**

in the primary division. This team went on to also win the NATIONAL **Best Illustrated Book** in the primary division. Of special note were the efforts of these students in raising \$4500 for Children’s Cancer Research.

All of this endeavour is crafted from the skilful hands of Nat Paatsch. Nat is passionate about providing a challenge to students to extend their thinking, to problem solve, and to research areas of interest with creativity as their focus. The extension programme at St Jerome’s continues to impress, and as such we have increased Nat’s time next year so more students can be involved.

Tech Club

Tech Club began with the idea that there were many students at St Jerome’s who loved technology and wished for an outlet at school. When tech club was advertised there were over 70 students from year 4 through to year 6.

Students worked on Minecraft education – building challenges and competitions with one another, Sphero and Dash robots – coding through obstacle courses, learning to control them with our iPads, and EV3 Lego robots. Students completed unplugged coding, and worked collaboratively on many different activities.

My sincere thanks to Jacob Tucker for leading this extra-curricular activity at St Jerome’s. Jacob’s generosity and commitment to provide something of this value to our students, in his own time, cannot be overstated. In Jacob’s own words, ‘it was an honour to work with these enthusiastic students for the past 3 Terms’. Jacob, we would suggest it is you who brings the honour, and our sincerest thanks for stepping forward to bring Tech Club to St Jerome’s.

Jacob was assisted at times by Sarah Connelly and Genny Deeble, and we acknowledge their support as well.

Four **Town Hall** sessions were presented this year to share what is happening at St Jerome’s. The topics presented were:

- Term 1** A day in the life of an iPad at St Jerome’s
- Term 2** How do you help a child navigate a path through anxiety?
- Term 3** Homework
- Term 4** Mindfulness, Growth Mindset & Neuroplasticity

My thanks to all our presenters. We will continue to offer Town Hall sessions in 2022.

The **P&F Association** must also be recognised for their building of community, it's not all about asking, sometimes giving back has as many rewards. A considerable amount of money is raised for our school from the efforts of this dedicated team of parents. This hard work demands our appreciation and we thank every member of the P&F for this outstanding effort.

Our thanks must be noted for the generosity shown over the past year. A special thank you must be heard for Nikki Harney, Alana Davis, Rita Alencar, Naomi O'Hara, and the P&F Rep for the School Council Samantha Otway.

These parents are an amazing example of what it means to be engaged in their child's school. From all of us at St Jerome's, our sincerest thank you.

For the **School Board** it has been an exciting time as we have planned for the next three stages of a building programme at St Jerome's. It would have been wonderful if I had correspondence tonight from the Catholic Education Office and be able to share with you a possible approval to build. Sadly, I don't have that correspondence so we will have to wait a bit longer, hopefully not too much longer.

My sincere thanks to every member of the School Advisory Council. We shared many good evenings together, lots of laughs, and covered some serious dream and wish material for St Jerome's.

A special mention to Mel Freeman, our Council Chairperson. Not only is Mel an astute judge of character, she is able to lead a well-disciplined Council meeting. Despite the hecklers, cynics and the two accountants, Mel is able to hold it all together, and make some sense of it. Mel, you are amazing, and thank you.

Tonight, sadly, we bid farewell to **Natina Morolla**, and **Mat Rolfe**.

Natina has run out of children, and Mat has been asked to leave the Council because he now works here. Our thanks to Natina and Mat for their generous service to our school community. A special note of thanks to Natina for her amazing minute taking

capacity. Good records keep us all on track, and Natina's work did exactly that. Mat will now be expected to demonstrate a higher level of respect for me.

It's always exciting to welcome new staff members to St Jerome's, and we thank God for calling them here. Carol, Vanessa and I are delighted to introduce:

- Ali White
- Mat Rolfe
- Breanna Spencer
- Hayley George
- Helene Tungate
- Sophie Hackett
- Sharon Hofmeester

Welcome to each of you, and we are so glad God called you here.

Farewell to Staff in 2021

Schools each year farewell staff members who have worked in the community, and who have shared in the responsibility of building a Faith inspired school.

Our thanks is to be noted for the following staff members who will be leaving, or have left St Jerome's in 2021.

- Kathryn Alp.
- Sandra Capelinha
- Marisa Cipriano
- Jo Roper
- Andrew Di Carlo
- Christine Mitchinson
- Grace Simich
- Shirley Brough
- Jinkx – the Therapy Dog

Leaving St Jerome's just for 2022

- Tess Lornie – returning in 2023
- Mel Crosby – returning in 2023

Leaving St Jerome's for 2022 -Parental Leave

- Sarah Connolly (Leaving Friday 12 November)
- Nicole Vasile – Science. (Leaving Friday 10 December)

All the 2022 staff positions can be found on the school web page.

New Leadership Model for St Jerome's in 2022

Schools change, and leadership too must be ready and agile to respond to these changes. The new model has a far wider reach, and it elevates areas of strength and success within our school, and assigns an Advocate Leader to guide the area. With the data gathered from members of staff, and members of the Advisory Council way back in November of 2020, six elements emerged. It is these six elements which now contribute to the new leadership structure.

Carol, Vanessa and myself are pleased to announce the following new leaders for St Jerome's in 2022

- **Learning Diversity** - Christine Celenza
- **Faith** - Fleur Coy
- **Early Years Learning** - Sarah Wohlsein
- **The Arts** - Jackson Bennett-Surtees
- **Digital Learning** - Manuela Benino
- **Wellness** - Peta Nicolaou

We congratulate these new leaders, and we ask that the Holy Spirit inspire them to lead with courage, wisdom and knowledge. Their gifts were meant for us, and we are glad God has called them forward to contribute to our school community.

The Admin Team of Vicky, Dee, Pasc, Angie and Robyn, and Kim deserve a special mention of thanks for their interest in caring for the parents, staff and students of our school.

Often known as the **Ministry of First Impressions**, these six staff members greet everyone with a smile and go above and beyond to attend to any question or issue which is asked of them.

Vanessa, Carol and I are so reliant on their support, advice and generosity to be able to effectively lead our school community. On behalf of Leadership, the School Advisory Council, the P&F Association, the Cluster Leaders, parents, staff and students we offer each of you our most sincere appreciation. Our work is made easier because of you.

My thanks too for Renate Martin, and her team of Luisa Direnzo, and Diana Bucat. **St Jerome's Canteen** is the most efficient, delicious and well organised food outlet in Australia, and probably the world. Renate and her team deserve our acknowledge for the amazing care and scrumptious food which they lovingly prepare. Thank you ladies.

The **Grounds staff** of John Williams, Paul Connop and Andrew DiCarlo keep an eye on the grounds, prune and mulch where needed, and fix anything which breaks or is broken. Thank you gentlemen for your attention to detail, and abiding good humour.

To my amazing colleagues in Leadership, **Vanessa and Carol**, my sincere thanks for your advice and support. These two ladies have had a lot on their plate this year, and as Carol has often said, 'the struggle is real'. I'm not sure what they were anticipating with Helen out, and Chris in, but as Vanessa has often said, 'you can't be serious'. To say that I'm working with the most dedicated and passionate leaders in any school setting I've ever worked in would be an understatement. Carol and Vanessa make this school work, they hold it together, and they are loved and respected by everyone. Even I like them.

We have shared the very best of times, and I have learnt so much from them both, and as Carol would often say 'work with me'.

Fr Vijay

Fr Vijay, gets his own paragraph, and deservedly so. Fr Vijay is extremely generous with his time, and he visits the school daily. It has been wonderful to see Fr Vijay join us for prayer every Monday morning. He will occasionally say a few words but for the most part he just shares in the moment with us.

Fr Vijay and I have shared many conversations, and he has a deep interest in making sure that the school and Parish work together in mutually supportive manner. If I call him he answers, or he runs across to see me, literally 'runs' across to see what I want.

The support we receive from the Parish under Fr Vijay's care is appreciated and honoured. Fr Vijay is an active member on the School Advisory Council, and he participates in staff appointments.

St Jerome's is a very special place and so many people contribute to maintaining this vibrant community. To everyone involved please accept my sincere thanks and I ask God to bless you abundantly for your generosity and commitment.

To the amazing, creative and dedicated staff of St Jerome's, as I have said many times before, your approach and commitment to your work exceeds all expectations. There is no doubt in my mind that your work provides a safe, supportive, pastoral, and educationally sound learning environment for every child here. You deserve to be acknowledged and thanked for all that you do.

And on behalf of Vanessa, Carol and myself, we wish you and your families all the very best for the celebration of Christmas. May the birth of the Christ child bring peace and happiness to you and all your loved ones. God Bless.