



## 2020 ANNUAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY MEETING

10 February 2021

### Principal's Report

Dear staff, parents, Executive members of the School Board and P&F,

While 2020 was a year defined by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am proud to say that at St Bernard's our staff, student and parent communities came together to support our community through the challenges that arose.

This report provides a summary of the 2020 school year at St Bernard's.

#### SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT 2020

School commenced for the children on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 where we welcomed six new Kindy students, comprising three new families to St Bernard's. Student numbers started at 79 and then increased by one during the year when we welcomed a new family, remaining at 80 for the rest of the year. At the end of the year we farewelled eight Year 6 students and welcomed five new Kindy students, and new students in Pre-Primary and Year 5. Sadly, we also farewelled the Saunders and Pearce families, both great supporters of our school. We wish them well in their new homes, schools and workplaces in Albany and Denmark. This brings our enrolments to 76 for 2021, plus four Jnr. Stars 3-year-olds and more 3-year-old enrolments to come during the year.

In 2020 we also welcomed five new staff members to St Bernard's, meaning we had new teachers in each of our classrooms. I would like to pay tribute to those teachers before I go any further for the wonderful job they did, in a challenging year. We are thrilled to have four of those teachers remaining with us in 2021 and thank them for the energy, enthusiasm, commitment and innovation they bring to our school.

#### DISCIPLESHIP

Fr Gerome Dalipe continued to serve the St Bernard's parish and school communities, and Religious Education was taught in all classrooms. St Bernard's was fortunate to be part of a trial of Multi-Age Group units of work organised through the CEWA RE Team, which greatly supported classroom teachers in their teaching. We celebrated the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, with two students taking part in all ceremonies.

Our school community once again participated in the Rosary Rally which was led by the St. Bernard's Parish.

While the school Evangelisation Plan was disrupted due to the impact of COVID-19, religious formation activities continued with MJR remaining a focal point of our discussions with students and parents. School masses and liturgies, and major celebrations such as Lent, Easter and Advent continued in adjusted format, as necessary. New staff were commissioned in March in front of the St Bernard's Parish community.

St Bernard's Feast Day celebrations were able to proceed as normal, with even the weather being kind to us after an early shower. The change of venue to the top oval worked well in providing a community fair atmosphere. Money raised once again supported the Flores community of Indonesia. We again supported Caritas during Lent with our Project Compassion boxes, and we supported Catholic Missions with the Socktober fun day and the Sock-It to Poverty soccer challenge. Former St Bernard's Principal, Deborah Robertson, also conducted a Myers-Briggs personality profile and prayer workshop for staff. Sr Christine Clarke from the Bunbury Office of CEWA provided staff with an in-depth look at our school's history, charism and Mercy Values at the end of the year.

As principal, I represented the school as a member of the Parish Council and I would like to thank Fr Jerome and the parish for their continued support of our school and the wider community.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

I have already mentioned the new staff at St Bernard's and I would now like to pay tribute to our entire team who, as always, put their heart and soul into their efforts to support our students and their families. This was never more apparent than during the COVID-19 shutdown period, when staff continued the learning, support, care and encouragement that epitomises St Bernard's. My thanks to all our staff. At the end of 2020 we farewelled Miss Tess Plakakis from our Kindy/Pre-Primary class and we welcome Miss Rachel Batten to that role in 2021.

At the start of 2020 all staff attended a Professional Development day in Perth with Dr Simon Breakspear of the Agile Schools and Teaching Sprints approach to teaching and learning. While our plans to more fully engage with this approach were curtailed by COVID-19, we plan to revisit Dr Breakspear's work again this year.

I would like to make special mention of our Administration Team: Mrs Jacinta Sibley, Mrs Nadine Bilney and Mrs Tracey Cant who keep our school running on a daily basis. In 2020 they also took on the rollover to CEWA's Administration of Schools (AoS) system, which was a huge undertaking. I am very grateful for their thorough and efficient approach which enabled this changeover to take place smoothly and with minimum fuss. Mrs Bilney continues to manage our budgeting and finance – a role which has greatly increased in complexity and workload over the past 18 months, as acknowledged by CEWA at a system-wide level during the year.

Our Grounds and maintenance person, Mr Rob Hanekamp, resigned during Term 2 due to ongoing health issues. We thank Rob for his service to our school and wish him well. Mr Rob Brown returned to his former role in a voluntary capacity for much of the year and we are extremely grateful to him and his wife Daniela for their help and support of our school community. In Term 4 we welcomed Mrs Fauna Cavanagh to the Grounds person role, but Fauna was forced to resign in the holidays due to health issues, and Mr Brown has once again stepped in on a voluntary basis, for which we are very grateful.

The School Board in 2020 consisted of James Eyres (Board Chair), Tim Mathwin (secretary), Peter Robertson (treasurer), Tamesha Gardner, Vincent Macri, Lachie Thorn, Kate Clayton and Peter Trethowan (P & F rep). The incorporation of CEWA in 2020 has flagged some changes to school board structure and operations, most notably in the Delegations of Authority governing how school projects and capital expenditure are undertaken, and in the change of name to 'School Advisory Council'. 2021 continues to be a transition year with a new School Advisory Council constitution expected by the end of the year. My thanks to the School Board members for their work on behalf of our school community in 2020.

Maintenance projects completed during the year included the refurbishment of the Snake Room to provide MiniLit and MaqLit classrooms; the limestone boundary around the eastern oval playground; replacing the grotto retaining walls and steps alongside the grotto; and the creation of steps across the width of our undercover area. Completed early in 2021 was the supply of hot water to the Rainbow Room and refurbished sink and storage space, as well as Kindy/Pre-Primary storage space.

There were major ICT upgrades in the shape of new BenQ flatscreen interactive panels in all our classrooms, including the Library and Rainbow Room. These panels have greatly enhanced the use of technology as a learning tool at St Bernard's and have also supported our ability to conduct staff professional development with both in-house and external providers. My thanks to the P&F and School Board which made this purchase possible through a donation of \$10 000 each.

In line with CEWA's directive, there was no fee increase raised for the 2021 school year. The school continues to provide financial assistance to families through CEWA's Health Care Card scheme, sibling discount system and an extensive selection of payment plans. Families experiencing financial difficulties with fees are always encouraged to seek assistance through the Principal.

As already mentioned, the P & F continued to be a great supporter of the school, providing Wish List items for classrooms, various subscriptions, bringing Dancesport to St Bernard's in Term 4, and supporting families by subsidising leaver's shirts and the Year 5/6 camp to Rottnest. The P&F was also active at our Cross Country and Athletics carnivals. On behalf of all our staff and families, I would like to thank the P&F for its hard work – in particular, executive team members Leonie Smith (chairperson), Ebony Macri (secretary) and Liz Robertson (treasurer).

I would like to also particularly note the efforts of Mrs Kerry Leusciatti who has ensured the uniform shop service continues at St Bernard's, by storing the uniform supply at home and filling and delivering orders to the school. This is a massive undertaking and I pay credit to Kerry for her time and commitment. Thank you, also, to Caroline Macri who is supporting the uniform shop in relation to new stock and design replacements.

Although once again de-railed by COVID-19, our work in reaching the National Quality Standards relating to our Early Years practice and pedagogy continued throughout the year with support provided by CEWA office staff, and regular meetings with Great Southern Network schools. A continued focus on improving child agency and engagement and enhancing indoor-outdoor learning opportunities remained throughout the year. I suggest we look no further than Miss P's transformed Year 1/2 classroom to see this work in action! Staff professional development was undertaken in assessment in the Walker learning approach, and in bush school and nature pedagogy. As well as visiting Great Southern Network schools, staff visited schools in Perth and Torbay to observe and bring back ideas and new learning.

As a staff we continued to engage with our School Code of Conduct document and maintained Mandatory Reporting training requirements. Also in 2020, Mrs Marinoni presented the Keeping Safe curriculum to all students throughout the year and will continue to do so in 2021.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

St Bernard's School and staff recognise and honour the important role parents play as the first educators of their children and seeks to work in partnership with families.

<https://cewaedu.sharepoint.com/sites/8395Administration/Shared Documents/General/AGM/2020 School Year AGM/2020 AGM Principal Report.docx>

As mentioned already, we are grateful to our parent bodies: the School Board and the P&F, for their support of our school, students and families. Thank you to the members of these two groups for the time they sacrifice from their own busy lives to support our school.

As a school, we continued to engage with other schools in our region, and with CEWA staff, from both the Bunbury and Perth offices.

Engagement with the local Kojonup community continued through the St Bernard's parish; our Little Stars playgroup which welcomes anyone to attend; our involvement in the NAIDOC breakfast, art competition and community dinner; the Kojonup Show and the St Bernard's Choir (thank you to Mrs Clayton for running the choir once again).

As a school we also celebrated:

- ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day
- Book Fair & Story night
- Open Night
- Father's and Mother's Day
- Sports Carnivals, including Swimming and Cross Country
- Class assemblies
- Oral language presentations each term
- Nativity Play and School Concert

Many of these activities took place in a significantly different format, due to COVID-19 restrictions and I commend the resilience and flexibility of our school community in accommodating these changes.

## **LEARNING**

While the onset of COVID-19 derailed teaching and learning plans early in the school year, St Bernard's staff stepped up to ensure learning continued during the school shutdown for our students and then worked to get learning back on track when students returned.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere thanks and admiration to our staff for the way they prepared home learning packages and, in particular, the home learning bags that were delivered to all our families during the shutdown. I would also like to acknowledge the support provided to children of essential workers who remained at school during the shutdown by staff who were manning the school.

Our key curriculum focus areas in 2020 were establishing and consolidating our Literacy Dedicated Time routines and practices and extending these routines and practices into a dedicated Numeracy block of learning each day. We continued to develop and embed our understanding of the PLD, whole school spelling approach, and we actively engaged with the Brightpath writing tool, conducting school-wide writing assignments and meeting regularly as a staff to moderate student work. A highlight of our work in writing was our Fairy Tea Party Day, which saw all students discover the fairy antics in our Bush School area and then write a narrative using the prompt 'Through the Door'.

As already mentioned, our Kindy to Year 2 teachers continued to work with CEWA staff and staff from schools in our region to explore and refine their practice in relation to play-based, inquiry learning in

the early years. In 2021 the network continues, working with Years 3-6 to explore learning opportunities for students in STEM.

Technologies became a specialist learning area at St Bernard's in 2021 and I thank Mrs Melissa Shepherd for taking this on board and for the fantastic job she did in upskilling our students in the two strands of this learning area: Design and Digital Technologies.

NAPLAN and the Bishops' Religious Literacy Assessment were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19. As a school, we continued to collect data on students' progress in reading, spelling and Mental Maths and to maintain electronic data walls of the information collected. My thanks to Mrs Sharon Venables and Mrs Sandy Jackson for working with staff in these areas and for ensuring our processes as a school for data collection and analysis are rigorous.

Support for student learning in Literacy continued with our MiniLit and MaqLit programs, run by Mrs Smart and Mrs Davies. Students and their teachers benefited greatly from the previously mentioned upgrade to the Snake Room, providing dedicated learning space for these important programs.

In 2020 we implemented Enrichment at St Bernard's with Mrs Matthews supporting our Enrichment class of eight students. The students worked towards the Optiminds Challenge, which was completed remotely due to COVID-19. The students were thrilled to complete their challenge of getting three successful shots from the trebuchet they had constructed! My thanks to Mrs Matthews for facilitating this foundation year, and to Miss Pavlovic, who has taken on Enrichment in 2021.

## **SCHOOL GOALS & PRIORITIES 2021**

In 2021, we continue to focus on Literacy and Numeracy instruction, with an emphasis on data collection and analysis. There are three major initiatives in the Early Years area, namely:

- Our Little Stars playgroup continues on Monday mornings and is open to the community
- On Tuesdays we have launched our Jnr. Stars 3-year-old Pre-Kindy program which will operate out of the K/PP room and started on Tuesday with four children and many more flagged to attend once they turn 3
- While Jnr. Stars uses the K/PP classroom, our Pre-Primary students are taking part in Bush School, using our wonderful bush area alongside our top oval

The logistics involved in making these initiatives possible is quite daunting and I would like to express my sincere thanks to our K/PP teacher, Miss Batten, and Little Stars and Jnr. Stars teacher, Mrs Matthews, for working together to share the room and to ensure none of our students are disadvantaged by these arrangements. With student numbers projected to decrease over the next few years due to smaller class sizes, it is imperative that we try to boost enrolments and to be flexible and innovative as we do so.

In closing, I wish the whole of the St. Bernard's School Community all the very best for a successful 2021 school year.

God bless,

Mrs Sharon Marino  
Principal

<https://cewaedu.sharepoint.com/sites/8395Administration/Shared Documents/General/AGM/2020 School Year AGM/2020 AGM Principal Report.docx>