

Principal's Annual Report 2019

Tena Koutou Katoa, Talofa Lava, Kamusta, Malo e lelei, Mauri, Malo ni, Faka talofa atu, Greetings to all.

This year we have had a very settled staff with minimal changes. We welcomed Miss Claudia Farrell and Mrs Ashley Clarke onto our staff as beginning teachers; both of whom are ex-pupils of St Joseph's and it is lovely to see the younger dynamics they bring. Mrs Sarah Hughes also joined us in a shared teaching role in our Intermediate Team - Te Rōpū Ārahi.

This year we began with 15 classrooms. Before the school year started, work was completed on Te Rōpū Ārahi opening that block up into an open flexible learning space. This has proved to be very successful providing an environment for collaborative practice to thrive for our older students and their teachers. This work was funded by our school community and we continue to be very grateful for your ongoing financial support. By Term 2 our school hall had been officially returned for our use after the August 2017 fire. It is great to have it in full use again.

Staff continue to be involved in professional learning development opportunities to develop best practice in teaching and learning pedagogy for all of our students. Once again we have been able to secure Cognition/Jacque Allen as a PLD provider for 2019/2020. Our teachers have been well supported in our journey towards changing teaching and learning practice to best fit the flexible spaces we need to now work in. Teacher Only Days have also given our teachers the opportunity to observe collaborative practices beyond our school and develop their own inquiries into best practice.

We understand the importance of wellbeing for our children and teachers. With the introduction of a strength-based programme, Mana Potential, at the beginning of this year, students have been able to identify how they are feeling and what their needs are. The daily programme includes check-ins that can be addressed to support their resilience and emotional wellbeing on the day. We have had great success with this capability and it has had a positive influence on behaviour.

Our school's digital journey continues to thrive. The professional development this year has improved both teacher and student expertise. I can proudly say that St Joseph's School are leaders in the delivery of the new Digital technology curriculum. The establishment of our STEAM room and activities in coding and robotics has enhanced this progress and the school has been well resourced in its implementation. The students who bring their own chrome book in Years 5-8 certainly benefit by having that easy access at their fingertips.

As a member of our South Auckland Catholic Schools Community of Learning/Kahui Ako, St Joseph's continue to benefit from having three teachers on our staff in within-school roles. These teachers have an additional in-school curriculum focus in the core subjects of Reading, Writing and Mathematics. We continue to strive for an "Excellent Education befitting our Catholic Character" for all of our students.

2018 student achievement data showed that 83.7% of all students achieved At or Above their NZ Curriculum level in Reading, 80.7% in Writing and 82.3% in Mathematics. We were pleased with these results, and we will continue to focus on Writing and Mathematics in 2020. Reading Recovery for some 6 year olds continues to improve outcomes for individual student progress. One in four of our students continue to receive additional learning support for a variety of reasons.

The school continues to promote ways to support our cultural richness. This year we have 11% Maori and 23% Pasifika, the largest group being Tongan. Mrs Fleur de Farias liaises with our Maori whanau while Mrs Lori Mravicich works alongside our Pasifika fanau. We provide an opportunity for a hui/fono each term. Our cultural performance groups are growing from strength to strength with many children in both Kapa Haka and Pasifika groups. This is a wonderful opportunity for our children and the obvious pride in their own cultures shines through.

At the beginning of this year we welcomed new families and staff into our school with a powhiri. We have celebrated Maori Language Week and held a Mass with a Maori focus, and a highlight was our whole school visiting Nga Hau e Wha Marae, our local marae, where they raised the roof with waiata and before leaving, performed a powerful haka. Our knowledge of tikanga and te reo continues to grow.

There are so many children involved in Pasifika performance we have had to separate our boys and girls groups. Students have participated in the Franklin Cultural Festival and at the Franklin Pasifika Speech Competition. Once again, our school Pasifika Week recognised our children's island nations each day. It is a delight to see the joy and engagement of our children celebrating their Pasifika culture. A performance of our children and invited groups from Pukekohe High and Wesley College was a great accumulation of the week's activities. I wish to acknowledge our Pasifika fanau who contributed so much to the success of this week. Their help with costumes and in the kitchen was invaluable.

We are blessed to have a wonderful relationship with the St Patrick's Parish community who support us in so many ways. Fr Robert Steele visits us regularly, meeting with classes who are preparing the Friday's Mass. We liaise with the parish secretary, Nancy Fox, and she is always helpful and accommodating in our requests. More than that, we have a generous parish, CWL, and individual parishioners who may no longer have an association with our school but continue to support our students' needs through sponsorship. This year some attendance fees, stationery, trips and uniforms have been subsidised by them and this year every child had waterproof black shoes for the beginning of winter.

We continue to promote the charism of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (RNDM) and we continue to fundraise to support the Mission Sisters' projects, particularly in Vietnam and India, on our Mission Day. Mission Day is a much loved tradition looked forward to and enjoyed by all of our children each year. This year I had the pleasure of visiting Heritage House in Sturry, England. This is where Euphrasie Barbier spent her last years and is buried in the chapel. This was a pilgrimage for me as I grow in my understanding of our school's Mission charism. Euphrasie Barbier visited Pukekohe three times in the 1880's, bringing her Sisters to establish our first Catholic school. She is said to have planted the oak tree in Notre Dame Court (from which we have a small tree growing in our school grounds) and our green school house is named after her.

There has been great delight to hear our planned new building will be built during 2020. It is a two-storied six classroom block with open flexible learning spaces, and will be placed on our current court site close to the fence boundary. Although we foresee that our hardcourt area will be greatly reduced for next winter, once our older buildings are demolished, we will have a larger hard-area for our children to enjoy. Plans are available for you to view in our boardroom.

Our new Board of Trustees were elected this year and we are very grateful to have such a dedicated group. The Board consists of 5 proprietor's trustees (including Fr Robert) and 7 parent trustees, as well as a staff trustee and myself as principal. The school has a close working relationship with our board. I wish to acknowledge our retiring board members, in particular Raewyn Austen, who served on our board for 16 years and was integral in our property development and positive financial position. Thank you Raewyn for your contribution to our legacy.

I wish to acknowledge our PTA who support the school in so many ways. This year the PTA held their first fashion parade (you will read more about this further in the magazine) and they have subsidised the cost of trips for every child this year. Our parents are such an important part of our school community contributing to the life of the school. Our parent volunteers do so much for us: KickStart Breakfast, road patrol, supporting trips and sports events, covering playground duties, repairing and putting away resources, as well as running the second-hand uniform shop here at school. We are so grateful for their commitment to our school.

Although we cannot capture everything in these pages, this magazine reflects the many activities our children have been involved in over 2019. Their classroom pages reflect some of the wonderful learning opportunities they have experienced.

St Joseph's does have a community heart and in the spirit of Euphrase's zeal, our staff really do care for your children. I continue to be grateful to be working alongside such a capable management team. So much happens behind the scenes to support our families. Our dedicated teachers and support staff work tirelessly not only to provide an education for your children, but those many and varied experiences that enrich school life often are beyond their job descriptions. The voluntary component of a teacher or teacher aide's job cannot be measured as they become counsellors, nurses, and in your absence, parents, nurturing our children in our Catholic environment. We are a restorative justice school and as such "To be in right relationship with God, ourselves and each other, and creation" is a priority.

This year we farewell Mrs Fleur de Farias, our assistant principal and SENCO. Fleur has been at St Joseph's since 1985 and to say goodbye to someone who has had so much input into our school's life and holds so much knowledge of our school's history is indeed a big loss. We wish her well in her retirement.

To our 2019 graduating Year 8 students: we have been very proud of your achievements this year and your involvement and example of leadership within our school community. I know St Joseph's School has prepared you well for your move to highschool as assured, self-managing learners, as well as that, I know that you have been exposed to good Catholic values to use when making choices about your actions and the actions of others in the future. You have been loved here, and when you spread that and advocate for others you are Christ to others. Be faithful, be happy, and follow your dreams: *"To be successful in anything, you have to have a passion for it"* - Jeff Van Gundy.

Wishing you many blessings for this holy Christmas season.

"When charity and union of hearts reign in community, the Lord is there. Guard this precious treasure well."

- Euphrasie Barbier 1867

Stay safe, keep well, be happy, and God bless you all.

Ursula Hall
Principal