Principal’s Report for 2014

“The Catholic School participates in the evangelising mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out.” (Third Millennium 1997)

St. Joseph’s is blessed with a dedicated and caring staff who have created a loving Christian environment (‘Love in Everything’) that is the essence of all we do. Our school is a place where we encourage each other and the students in our care, to achieve excellence in order to make a difference in the world. This then forms the outward expression of our aim to provide quality teaching and learning and pastoral care to our students and their families. Underpinning these aims is the constant goal of helping children to be the best they can be through recognising and developing Gospel values.

Diverse curricula activities initiated by our dedicated and professional team of teaching and non-teaching staff, well-maintained grounds and facilities and parental involvement, combine to offer excellent learning opportunities at St. Joseph’s School Payneham.

In 2014, we continued to focus our energies again on making our school an excellent school. We have a rich history and tradition and all who attend our school understand our past and know that we are a Josephite school and guided by Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop and her vision to help others in need and in particular, to provide an excellent education for all students. We are a Catholic School with a conscientious Parish Priest, dedicated staff, supportive and involved parents and energetic children.

The School Board
2014 has been a busy period in the life of St. Joseph’s School and our School Board. I wish to thank the School Board for their commitment to our school. The support and collaboration of the School Board, along with their generosity of time, is very much appreciated. I wish to personally thank each member of the Board for their support and willingness to be involved in such a vital role within our school community. In particular, I would like to thank and acknowledge the work of Damian Farrell for all his help and support of our school.

Under Damien’s leadership over the past year as Chairperson, the School Board has helped me:

1. Successfully monitor and implement aspects of our School Development Plan,
2. Financially supported the school staff in advancing the educational opportunities of the children through the provision of improved resources and professional learning opportunities for the Staff, including new IT hardware, e.g. iPads, Mac Laptops, Smart TVs,
3. To make decisions throughout the year in the best interests of the whole school community.

We have a wonderful atmosphere and level of community spirit which has developed here at St. Joseph’s. Whilst we have further work to do, the efforts of parents and staff need to be acknowledged. I thank all the members of the School Board for their professionalism, support and advice over the course of the year. I particularly thank Damien once again for taking on the task of chairing the School Board in 2014 and for the extra responsibilities this role carries. We recognise the wonderful efforts of John as Vice Chairperson, Carlo as Board Treasurer, and Melissa as Board Secretary. Thank you John, Carlo and Melissa for all your efforts and the additional time you give to fulfil these roles. It has been tremendous for me to see the level of interest and commitment by various members of the parent community over the last 12 months. I am encouraged by the support shown throughout the year, on various occasions, with our many and varied school activities have gone a long way to building and developing our school’s community spirit.
On behalf of the current School Board, I wish to take this opportunity to thank Carlo for his willingness to remain on the Board as Treasurer for one more year in order to help someone else take on this role. Carlo has served for many years on the School Board as an elected member and parent representative and I thank him once again for doing a fantastic job as School Board Treasurer.

I also take this opportunity to thank Melissa for doing a wonderful job as Board Secretary. This entailed taking the minutes at each meeting, but also on numerous occasions, following up things which needed to be addressed. I can think of the local traffic problem around the school as one example which Melissa provided the Board with the information and data in order for us to make informed decisions. A very big ‘thank you’ Melissa for your help and support over the last few years in this role which has been very much appreciated.

A big ‘thank you’ also to Sonia Rechichi for her contribution on the Board as an elected Board Member and P&F representative. Sonia has decided not to continue on the Board this year and we thank her for her support over the last few years.

Thank you also to Bernardette Robinson, Staff Rep on the Board for the past two years. We thank Bernardette for being the voice of the Staff and for doing a great job passing on to the Board lots of information and news of what the children and staff are doing in their various learning areas. Thanks Bernardette. We welcome Vanessa Mercurio, newly appointed Staff Rep to the Board for 2015 and 2016.

Parents and Friends
I would like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the Parents and Friends Association. Once again they have continued to work together as a committed group throughout 2014. They have achieved their targets in both their fundraising capacity and in building community spirit.

The generous donations of funds from the P&F have targeted resources within the school. The contribution towards the education of our children in greatly appreciated. I wish to thank Anna Ruggiero and the Committee and their supportive parent helpers for their outstanding efforts throughout 2014. There is no doubt that the strength of the P&F is built upon their commitment to assist the children in our school.

Thank you to the many parents who tirelessly support our school in various ways, including in the classroom and also as parent volunteers for class excursions etc. It is good to know that we can call on our parent body for help and support for many occasions and school events. A big ‘thank you’ to our parent community.

On behalf of the school community, I wish to thank our out-going members of the Parents and Friends, including Sara Fantasia (Staff Rep), who have been very supportive throughout their terms. Special thanks to Anna, who has done a wonderful job as P&F President. She has worked tirelessly with our parent community to help provide our school with additional equipment and resources, as well as maintaining a strong, welcoming community spirit. Thanks Anna! I look forward to working with Anna and the new P&F Committee again this year.

It has been a pleasure working with both the School Board and the P&F Committee and the time that they give to our school is really valued. We look forward to working closely together again in 2015.

Parish/School
St. Joseph’s School and the Parish continue to maintain a very strong friendship and working relationship. Father Allan has many commitments, and we thank him for making our school a priority in his busy daily schedule. I would also like to thank Father Allan for his flexibility and willingness to work with the ever-changing school learning environment and our many needs. To Ingrid Douventzidis, thank you to the work she does in co-ordinating the many masses and the Sacramental Program. Together Father Allan, Ingrid and the Staff were able to provide an excellent Religious Education Program, one which supports and nurtures the faith development of the students in our care.

The generosity of the Parish, especially with financial support of our school, is also always very much appreciated. Special thanks to Sister Candida for her on-going support of the school and for continuing to build on the strong connection between our school and parish community, especially by her frequent visits
to classes and her support of our parent community with her pastoral care. Thank you Father Allan, Sister Candida and Ingrid.

Religious Education
At St. Joseph's Payneham, we continue to embrace opportunities to celebrate our Catholicity. Throughout 2014, we came together to celebrate and pray through participating in school masses, liturgies and feast day celebrations. This has enabled a strengthening of the relationship between the school and parish. We continue to develop as people of faith through Jesus’ teachings of love and compassion.

We continue to support students to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation and we share the preparation between the school and parish. Parent Information Sessions have been highly successful in strengthening the relationship between the parish, family and school communities.

Religious Education and Faith formation are the primary purpose of Catholic schools. There has been continued support from parents through the attendance of families at whole school masses and class masses. It is essential as ever that the children see the importance of these celebrations through the participation of their parents. It is together as a community, that we can further develop our faith and support each other in our faith journeys.

Congratulations to the students who participated in and celebrated the sacraments in 2014. Special thanks once again to Father Allan and Ingrid and those staff involved. A lot of time, effort and hard work go into preparing the children and providing adult education opportunities at the various parent meetings.

Throughout 2014, we also continued to reach out to others through our involvement and participation in the various charities, including Project Compassion, September Catholic Charities Appeal, SVDP Christmas Hamper Appeal, SRC fundraising activities, including ‘Shave For A Cure’ Appeal which helped to raise $1500 for Childhood Cancer, Year 7 RE Assignment fundraisers etc. We raised a lot of much need funds for many different needy groups which was very much appreciated.

“Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.” (Plato)

Staff
I would like to acknowledge the professionalism of all staff at St. Joseph's, Payneham. We are fortunate to have a committed staff who enjoy working together to ensure student needs are met – both educational and social/emotional and spiritual/faith needs. I thank the staff for their dedication and ability to get the best out of the children. Their support of our school’s teaching and learning programs has been very much appreciated.

As educators, we are continually challenged to change and improve the pedagogy delivered to our students. In education we often talk about the importance of seeing children as capable and competent. We have taken on different projects and learning experiences to improve the way we do things, including the Numeracy Project, commencing the Dyslexia Training for some staff, new initiatives in literacy (e.g. the Daily 5 and Program Cafe), Autism Spectrum Disorder Training, More Support for Students with Disabilities Training, Child Safe Curriculum and Information and Communication Technologies.

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all” (Aristotle)

Students at our school are given the opportunity to participate in many different domains of education including; our Sacramental Programs, Music, LOTE, Library and Sports Programs, Special School Celebrations, Incursions and Excursions – to name just a few. These opportunities only present themselves through the efforts of the staff and with the support of parents. In 2014, the Staff continued their professional learning in the new Australian Curriculum. The Commonwealth Government set the target to ensure that we were able to utilise the new National Curriculum in the areas of Mathematics, Science, History and English by the start of the 2014 school year. I congratulate the Staff for their time and input into these new areas of the curriculum and for the work that they do keeping abreast of curriculum changes.
On-going learning for our staff is a priority and we will continue to work with the Australian Curriculum documents this year as part of our professional learning to ensure a smooth transition to our new curriculum and reporting system.

Each year we say farewell to staff whom for personal or professional reasons, need to move on. Last year we farewelled several members of our Staff – Mrs Marcella St. Claire, Mrs Antoinette Caruana and Mr Anthony De Ieso and just recently, Dr Mark Smith, the Instrumental and Band Co-ordinator. They each made a positive contribution to the life of our School Community and they will be sadly missed. We wish Marcella, Antoinette, Anthony and Mark all the very best in their new roles for 2015. This year, we welcome back Mrs Rosanna Parrella (Reception Teacher) and Mrs Kirsty Cox (Replacement Music Teacher). Kirsty has been appointed for Term 1 while we advertise for a permanent Music Teacher who will commence in Term 2.

Our goals for 2014 included:

- Continuing to provide a strong Religious Education Program which promotes daily prayer, faith formation and supports the gospel values and teachings of the Church.
- To continue to promote Pastoral Care for staff and student health and well-being.
- Supporting the on-going sacramental life of staff and students.
- The implementation of the next stage of the new Australian Curriculum, in particular, supporting the on-going professional learning in the curriculum focus areas of History, Geography and the Arts.
- The introduction of a new literacy strategy (‘Daily 5 Reading Program and Program Cafe) to support our Literacy Program.
- The introduction of a new Student and Finance Management System Microsoft 365 /iScholaris (CEO initiative) and looking at how it can support our current programs, including assessment and reporting to parents.
- The continuation of the 3 Year Numeracy Project which has included other staff members.
- Continue to look at effective ways for implementation of continuous school improvement.
- The introduction of a new Reporting format.
- Up-dating our school website to make it more contemporary.
- The continuation of Year Level Co-ordinators.
- The commencement of a new phase of our Whole School Improvement Project to include the CESA initiative, ‘Re-Imagining Childhood’.
- To maintain sound financial planning and management.
- To continue meeting the needs of individual students, including the development of appropriately modified programs in Inclusive Education and the Gifted and Talented Program.
- The continuation of a Counselling Service to support children and their families.
- The continuation and consolidation of the School Band.

Our goals for 2015 will include:

- Continuing to provide a strong Religious Education Program which promotes daily prayer, faith formation and supports the gospel values and teachings of the Church.
- To continue to promote Pastoral Care for staff and student health and well-being.
- Supporting the on-going sacramental life of staff and students.
- The implementation of the next stage of the new Australian Curriculum.
- Implementation of a new Student and Finance Management System Microsoft 365 /iScholaris (CEO initiative) and looking at how it can support our current programs, including assessment and reporting to parents.
- The continuation of the 3 Year Numeracy Project which has included other staff members.
- The introduction of some new literacy initiatives, such as Read-2-Learn Project and the Oral Language Teaching Project.
- The commencement of the ‘Little Scientist’ Program in our Preschool.
- Continue to look at effective ways for implementation of continuous school improvement.
- The introduction of an on-line Professional Training Course for Staff on Dyslexia.
- The continuation of Year Level Co-ordinators.
- To maintain sound financial planning and management.
- To continue meeting the needs of individual students, including the development of appropriately modified programs in Inclusive Education and the Gifted and Talented Program.
- The continuation of a Counselling Service to support children and their families.
Special thanks once again to all our parents who have volunteered to assist within the school and with the various educational programs and services, such as Canteen, Maintenance Committee, Finance Committee, ICT Committee, Parent Education Committee, OSHC Committee, excursions, etc. Also special mention and thanks go to the Class Reps who have worked tirelessly during the year to support Class Teachers with various events and activities. Without parental assistance, we would not be able to achieve our goals.

PRINCIPAL REVIEW
Each year, as Principal of St. Joseph’s Payneham, I am required to undertake an annual Principal Review. This process only involved myself answering several questions and providing evidence of school improvement. This Review was undertaken by my Principal Consultant. Catholic Education SA has introduced a new way of collecting this data and in 2015, school leaders will be required to complete two parts of their Annual Review, one at the beginning of the year outlining our new goals for the year and one at the end of 2015 involving an outside assessor (probably a PC I haven’t worked with before) who will investigate how I am doing as School Leader.

PRINCIPAL RENEWAL PROGRAM
As many of you are aware, I will be taking Leave in Term 2 for the first three weeks to participate in a Pilgrimage to Israel and Italy as part of my Renewal Leave. Principals are expected to take Renewal Leave for one term every ten years. I have negotiated with CESA that I take this Leave in small increments in order to avoid too much disruption to the school. I thank Ingrid for stepping up as Acting Principal and Marie Polvere as Acting Deputy Principal during my absence. The Director of Catholic Education has approved these appointments which is great news.

In conclusion, whilst it is important to acknowledge the challenges, changes and new initiatives that have taken place in 2014, it is also important to talk about the daily interaction of the Leadership Team, Admin Staff, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff, students and their families, that is at the heart of the education process. It is the everyday work of all our Staff that makes our school a great learning environment. Thank you to the Staff, Parents and the Parish Community for the support given to me and for the on-going development of our students at St. Joseph’s School. It is my pleasure to be Principal of such a wonderful learning community.

I look forward to another great year ahead in 2015.

Laurie Sammut
Principal
11th February 2015