

Live in Faith

Grow in Wisdom

Seek Peace

St. Columba's School Bayswater



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AGM 29th November 2017

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Good evening and welcome to our Annual General Meeting.

It is my privilege to present the 2017 Principal's report to the St Columba's School community.

We continue to be very blessed with wonderful and supportive partnerships between the school, the home and the community enabling St Columba's School to continue to grow and to achieve great things. The dedicated efforts of the School staff, Parish Priest and Community, the School Board, the Parents and Friends Association and the Pastoral Care Group all contribute significantly to this partnership, which enhances the learning environment for the students.

This report focuses on our school's achievements within the framework of the CEWA Strategic Initiative of LEAD – Learning, Engagement, Accountability and Discipleship.

LEARNING

We are committed to ensuring our staff keep abreast of sound teaching practice, current pedagogy and that they have a solid understanding of the curriculum. Professional Learning Community Meetings (PLCs), Professional Development days and Staff Briefings are some of the forums where this occurs. Within these settings, key teaching strategies are explored, discussed, refined and implemented and each staff member is well aware of their responsibility to be accountable to both the school and community.

Focus as always, remains on the core learning areas, with a high level of professional practice that caters for the needs of all students. In 2017 there has been significant development in two main areas of the school: the implementation of the Digital & Design Technologies Curriculum and the continued development of our ECE practices and pedagogies, in line with the National Quality Standards.

DIGITAL & DESIGN TECHNOLOGIES CURRICULUM

As educators, “we are preparing students for a future that we cannot yet imagine. Empowering students to become lifelong learners and providing them with the skills to face future challenges resourcefully and creatively is critical. It’s not about using digital tools to support outdated education strategies and models; it’s about tapping into technology’s potential to amplify human capacity for collaboration, creativity and communication.” (ISTE Standards, 2017)

The skills our students require for success and wellbeing in the twenty-first century do not revolve around the retention and regurgitation of content. Instead, students need to be fluent in the skills of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, connectivity/ICT literacy and cross-cultural understanding. Students learn these skills through deliberate opportunities for real life and hands-on experiences and growth, rather than teacher delivery of content.

Consequently, 2017 saw the implementation of the Digital and Design Technologies Curriculum at St Columba’s School, one year ahead of schedule. The Innovation and Technologies (IT) team worked with teachers and students to introduce technologies that enabled integration across subject areas and used as part of the teaching program. Dash robots, Spheros and electronic mice, were the devices used to introduce block coding as a way of developing problem solving and computational thinking skills. Students used the Engineering Design Process (EDP) to create solutions to problems through a Project Based Learning (PBL) approach.

In 2018, the Digital and Design Technologies Learning Area will be integrated across the curriculum with planning, delivery, assessment and reporting to be undertaken by classroom teachers. The IT team will work closely with teachers to provide support during this transition, assisting in the development of programs that incorporate technologies in ways that enhance learning across all areas of the curriculum.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CHANGES

One of the ongoing emphases of our school has been to develop a whole school approach that clearly articulates how learning happens at St Columba’s school. This involves transforming not only our physical learning environments, but also the teaching pedagogy to align with current research about how children learn best.

In 2017, this has involved professional development for teachers and assistants in theory and quality teaching practice. In early September, the Year One and Two teachers, and Chelsea De Luca, attended the Future Learning Conference in Perth. At the beginning of fourth term all teaching staff attended a school-based professional development seminar with facilitator Shona Bass, an expert in child development and neuroscience, and founder of Early Life Foundations. The challenge for staff involved a critical review of their current practice and a commitment to trialling new ideas in classrooms. The feedback from staff was excellent and they are intent on embracing these ideas.

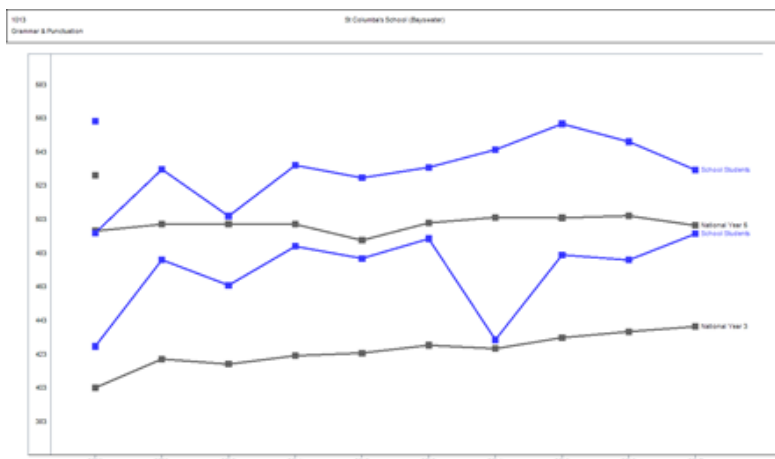
During the mid-year break, the Year One classroom environments were the subject of renovations aimed at enhancing student engagement and learning. With the generous support of the Parents and Friends group, who made a commitment to provide the funds, the Year One staff spent considerable time choosing new furniture and resources that would complement the planned pedagogical changes. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Parents and Friends group for this commitment which will see the Year Two (in 2018) and Year Three (in 2019) classrooms undergo a similar transformation. The Year One children were delighted with their 'new' classrooms and the teachers have been using the physical environment to enhance their teaching. The Year Two classroom furniture has been ordered, and will be installed in January 2018.

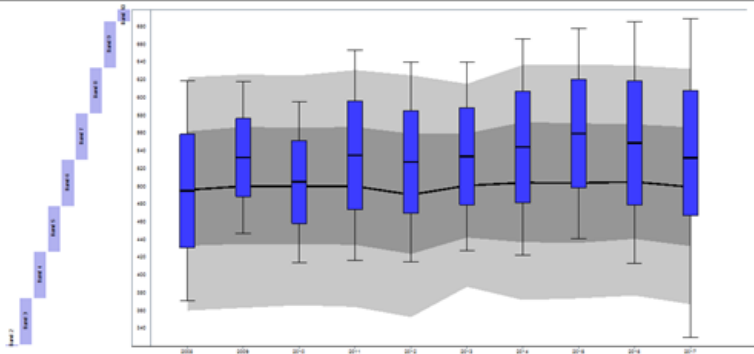
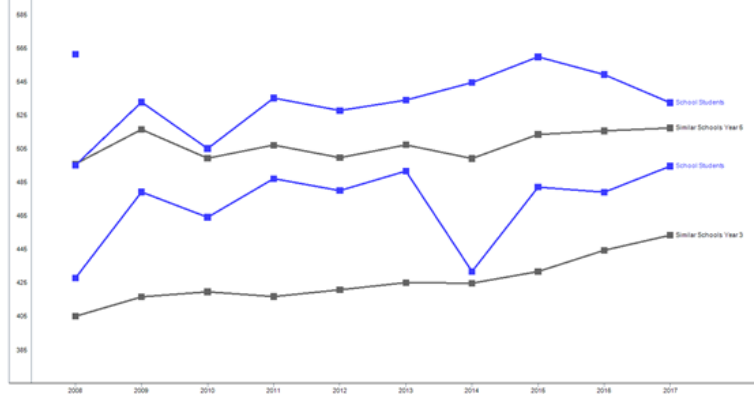
Recently, the Early Years Education Society (EYES) identified the St Columba's Early Childhood Centre as an example of a quality play-based service and conducted a tour of our facility accompanied by over sixty teachers from across Western Australia in the October school holidays. Our Kindergarten and Pre-Primary teaching staff were on hand to answer questions and the feedback was very positive and affirming for our staff who spent a considerable time during their holidays preparing for the event. Understandably, we are proud of our Early Childhood area and the great foundations it provides for our early years children.

In 2018, our school will undergo the National Quality Standards audit from Pre-Kindergarten to Year Two. A rigorous and reflective process, the outcome of the audit will ensure that our environment, policy, teaching and learning aligns with the standards set for early childhood across Australia. Mrs Chelsea De Luca has been involved in coordinating the preparation and professional development of staff in this area, and will continue this role in 2018.

NAPLAN: Grammar and Punctuation

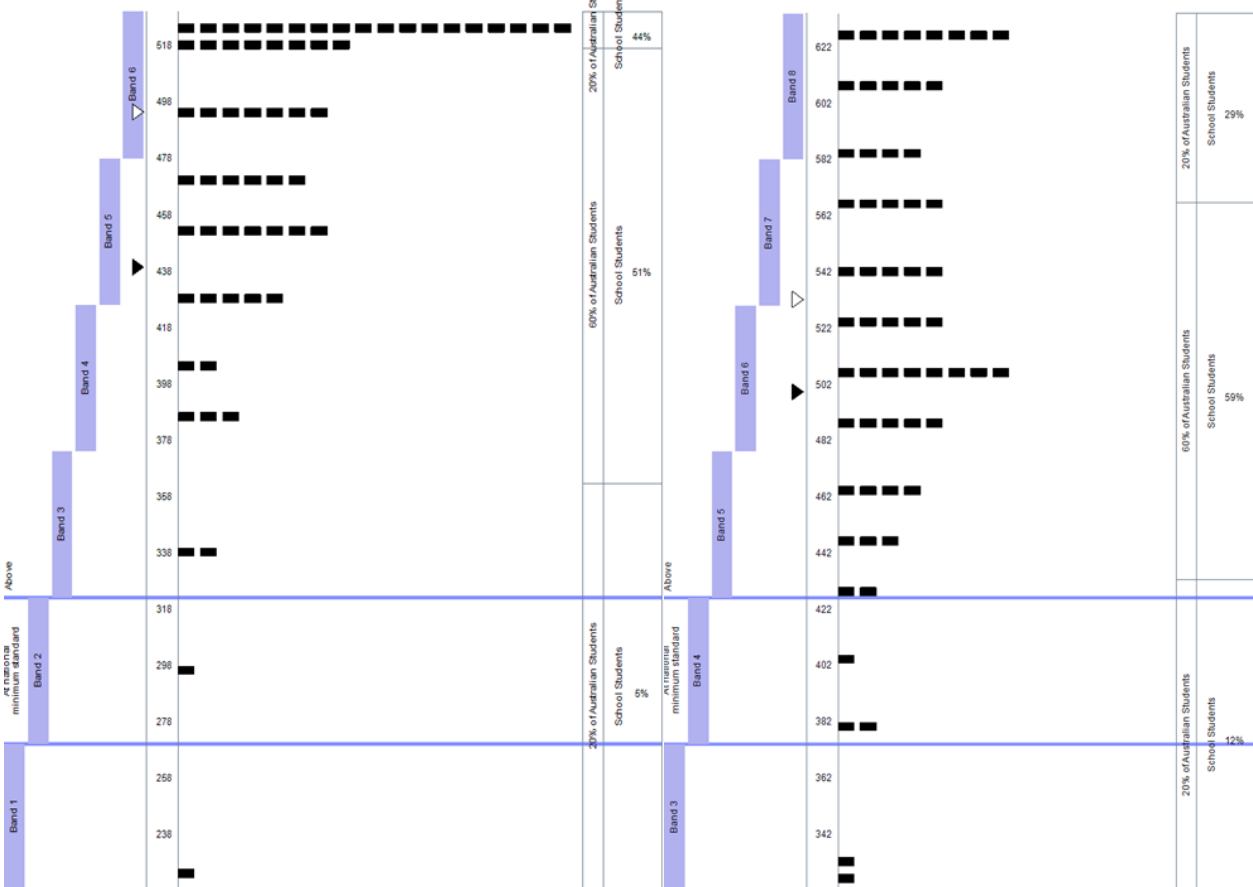
Analysis of our 2017 data has shown a downward trend in our Grammar and Punctuation with our Year 5 cohort as outlined in our Annual School Improvement Plan. Although we are still above the National average, the gap is much smaller when comparing our results to similar schools. Our 2017, Year 5 Grammar and Punctuation results show 30% of the Year 5 cohort are achieving below the national average, with 12% in Band 3 and Band 4.





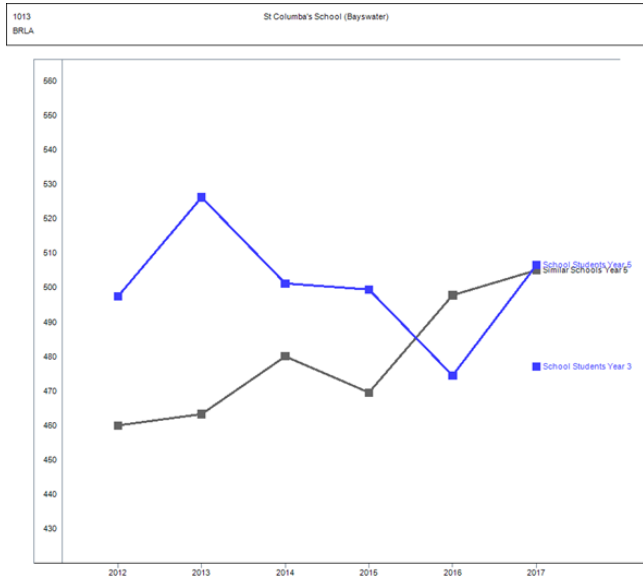
1013 St Columba's School (Bayswater)
2017 Grammar & Punctuation Year 3
NAPLAN
 Australian Mean: 439.3
 School Students Mean: 484.6

1013 St Columba's School (Bayswater)
2017 Grammar & Punctuation Year 5
NAPLAN
 Australian Mean: 499.3
 School Students Mean: 532.2



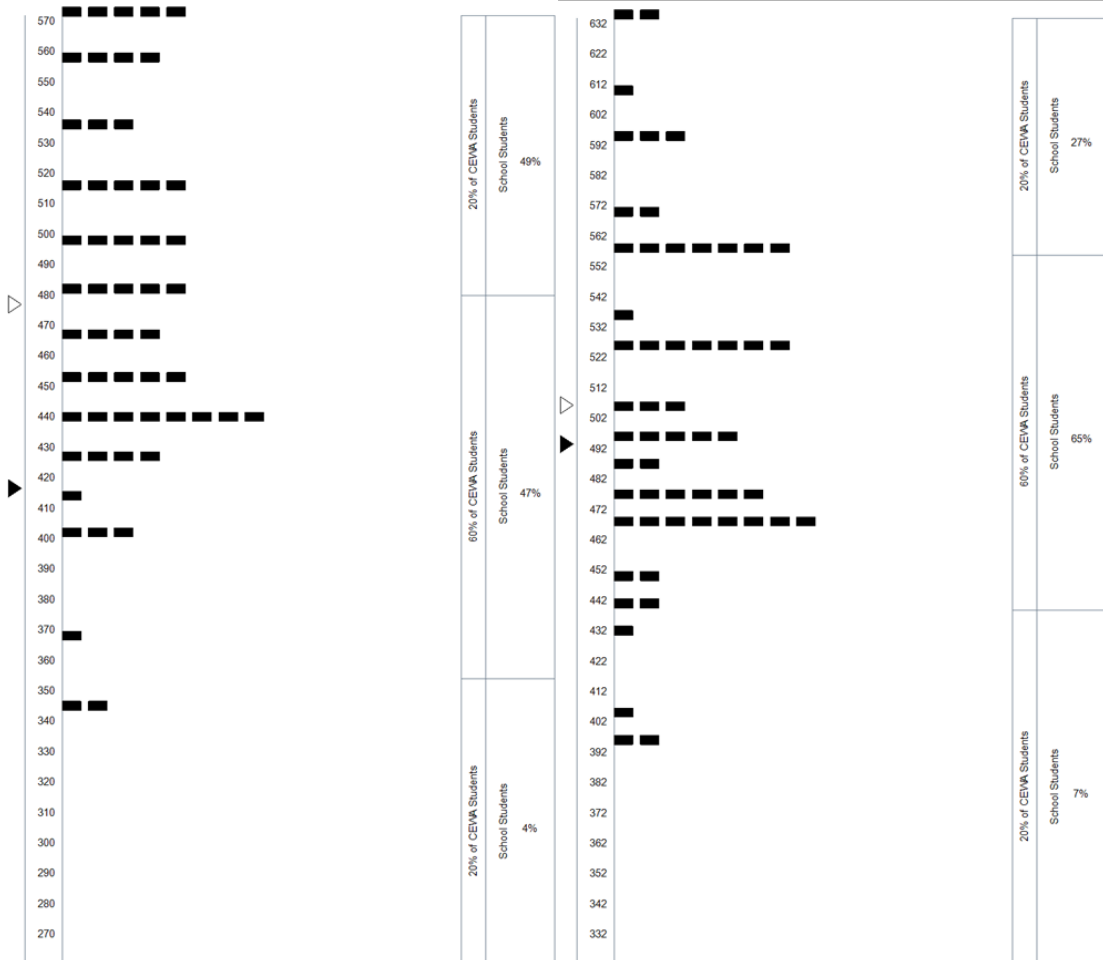
BISHOP'S RELIGIOUS LITERACY ASSESSMENT

Our BRLA results showed a dramatic decline for Year 5 students from 2013 to 2016 (Year 3 results are not available), which was of great concern. Although our 2017 results show marked improvement, following discussion with staff, the agreed decision was that Religious Education would be a focus in 2018. This was because the new Religious Education units of work are due for release in 2018.



1013 St Columba's School (Bayswater)
 2017 BRLA Year 3
 BRLA WA Mean: 416.6
 School Students Mean: 477.1

1013 St Columba's School (Bayswater)
 2017 BRLA Year 5
 BRLA WA Mean: 493.7
 School Students Mean: 506.5



2018 PRIORITIES

- Innovations & Digital Technologies
- The 21st Century Learning, incorporating digital learning & 'Design Thinking'.
- Professional development and training on the new Religious Education Units of work.
- Develop a whole school approach to learning support using the MiniLit/MacqLit programs.
- Continue to further develop and review our curriculum programs within the school.
- Continue to implement the Western Australian Curriculum and reporting.
- Continue to develop the practices that are showing progress in student achievement, across all Learning Areas.
- Explicit teaching of concepts.
- Regularly using and analysing data, to differentiate the curriculum, to cater for the needs of students.

ENGAGEMENT

Patrick Lencioni tells us that ..."Teamwork requires some sacrifice up front; people who work as a team have to put the collective needs of the group ahead of their individual interests."

Our school community is very blessed to have people who have put the collective needs of the school and our families foremost. I would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the many volunteers who have been members of the School Board, Parents and Friends Association including the class representatives, our Pastoral Care group and our uniform shop coordinator, as well as any parent who has volunteered their time and talent for the benefit of us all. These amazing people give up their own time and share their talents and expertise in a way that enhances our school and helps strengthen our community spirit.

The most important role of our Parents and Friends Association is the coming together of all our people with the purpose of developing positive relationships and a strong sense of community. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the Parents & Friends' Association who have continued to work together, throughout 2017, to raise the necessary funds to purchase much needed resources, including the refurbishment of the Years 1 to 3 classrooms over the next 3 years. On behalf of the community, I thank you all for your hard work and commitment to making St Columba's the place it is today. This year we say farewell to Steve Vinciullo, who has been the co-President in 2017, and Abbie Ehrhardt, the P&F Treasurer for several years. We thank them both for all their efforts and hard work and wish them both the very best for the future.

St Columba's is very fortunate to have many people who have contributed to our achievements during 2017. I extend my sincere gratitude to all School Board Members, led by Chairperson Mar Hube who, along with Treasurer Greg Armstrong and our Business Manager Karen Meleca, have ensured once again that the school finances and strategic directions remain well managed and secure. We thank them sincerely for their contributions to the school.

This year students from St Columba's participated in the City of Bayswater's inaugural Community Art Program. The main aim of this Community Art Project was to help develop public pride and promote a sense of place in our community and, under the direction of local artist Vanessa Bradley, 57 students from Years 1 – 6 participated in her project "Wetlands Through the Ages". Kindergarten and Pre-Primary classes were also involved in creating the timeline backdrop.

The project had a true community approach as Mrs Bradley involved students, parents, local residents, environmental volunteers, an Indigenous storyteller and local government bodies who worked together to create a temporary sculptural installation, using recycled materials. The project sought to raise awareness about the historical, cultural and environmental aspects connected to the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary. We are very appreciative to have had the opportunity to be involved in such a wonderful community experience.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2018, the transition to double stream will be complete and we anticipate that the renovations on the old church will be finished by the end of March 2018. This building will house the Music room and Social Worker's office, and will mark the completion of the Stage 7 building program.

It has been a long period of transformation, as we have gradually progressed to double stream, and the community should be very proud of the wonderful new facilities that we all enjoy. Special mention must be made of Greg Martin's foresight and dedication in creating a school environment that caters for the needs of those in the community who are seeking Catholic Education. Hand in hand with our wonderful facilities, Greg worked with determination and vision to ensure that we have continued to develop quality teaching and learning programs delivered by highly skilled and professional staff, which combine to ensure that St Columba's school is highly regarded in the community. We will all dearly miss Greg's presence at St Columba's.

In Greg's own words, *"I believe we have transformed the school together and there were occasions when difficult decisions had to be made, but look where the school is today, thanks to your support and commitment. We can be truly proud of St Columba's."*

I also wish to acknowledge the professionalism of all staff at St Columba's School. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated people, that enjoy working together, and are committed to ensuring student educational needs are met. There are many elements and administration processes within a Catholic school, which are necessary to ensure the school runs effectively. At St Columba's School, we have a very committed team that work together in the office. I would like to thank Karen Meleca, Peta Santella and Lisa Slocum for their continued support and willingness to put in the extra hours for the school and community. At the end of 2017 we will bid a sad farewell to our Business Manager, Karen Meleca and sincerely thank her for her wonderful efforts that go above and beyond the call of duty.

At the end of Term 3 we farewelled Sarah Bolton who is currently on maternity leave following the birth of her third child. Alex Glasson has been with us this term as our Science teacher, in Sarah's absence, and it has been wonderful having her here. We will be saying goodbye to Alex at the end of term, as she returns to her position at Good Shepherd School in Kelmscott in 2018. This year we say a 'goodbye for now' to Penny Pettit who is taking up a position at Durham Road Special Education Centre in 2018. We wish Penny all the best in her new adventures and look forward to welcoming her back in 2019.

In 2018 we welcome Brianna Bechelli who will be joining the St Columba's staff as a Year 3 teacher. We will also be welcoming our new Principal, Mr Art Lombardi, who has already made his presence felt here at St Columba's when he recently visited the school and met the students in their classrooms. We are looking forward to the future, with Art at the helm, with great joy and anticipation.

In Greg Martin's words, *"The community is very lucky to have Art Lombardi as their new principal. A man of integrity, vision, compassion and unbelievable work ethic. Having said this, I humbly state he has big shoes to fill, if I do say so myself! The only concern I have about Art is that he is a North Melbourne supporter, but don't hold that against him! On a serious note, he is an amazing man and leader and will take the school to the next level."*

DISCIPLESHIP

St Columba's Parish and the school maintain a very close relationship. We continue to build relationships with other local Catholic schools, especially through the Sacred Saints sport program. Father Minh-Thuy is a wonderful support to staff, students and families and this year we also enjoyed getting to know Dominic Sandon, a seminarian on his parish placement at St Columba's. Dominic visited classrooms every Thursday and has been a great inspiration and role model for our students. Special mention and sincere thanks must be made of the wonderful support from the St Columba's Parish during the recent building program. With limited space available, Father Minh-Thuy accommodated our needs in making the church facilities readily available ensuring that there was little disruption to the operation of the school.

The school and parish continue to work closely together for the instruction and celebration of the sacraments and we are all committed to the notion of celebrating these events as a whole parish group rather than school and parish. We look forward to continuing this tradition in 2018.

Religious Education and Faith formation are the primary purpose of Catholic schools. In partnership with all parents, the school and parish work together to assist the children to develop knowledge of their Catholic faith and provide opportunities to engage in Catholic practices. The explicit teaching of Church doctrine and traditions, through the Religious Education Units of Work, mandated by the Bishops of Western Australia and the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, are the basis of all Religious Education lessons. In 2018 CEWA will release the revised Religious Education

Curriculum Units of Work and staff will be engaged in Professional Development opportunities that will support their delivery of the RE Curriculum to students.

During 2017 the students of St Columba's have supported a variety of charities including the Life Link program, Caritas, Project Compassion, Catholic Mission, and St Vincent de Paul. This is an important aspect of our faith and a way of spreading Jesus' message of life and love.

This year we have been participated in the following:

- Ash Wednesday Celebration
- Sacramental Programs & Celebrations
- School/Parish Weekend masses.
- Celebrations during Holy Week
- Liturgies and celebrations
- Staff Prayer
- Catholic Mission Celebrations
- Archbishop's Lifelink Appeal
- St Vincent De Paul Society
- Special Feast Day Masses
- Archbishop's RE Assessment

2018 PRIORITIES

- To continue to develop strong school-community links through outreach activities and fundraising.
- Provide opportunities for parent faith development.
- Sacramental Interactive Family Workshops
- Sacramental Reflection Days for Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff, parents and the wider community for the support given to the on-going development of our students at St Columba's School – you have helped shape St Columba's into the wonderful school that it is.

Wishing you all many blessings for Christmas and may you have an enjoyable holiday break spending time with family and friends.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Dwyer

Principal

29th November 2017