

St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School

Principal: Ms Toni Riordan, B Ed, M Ed Le, MACEL, MACE, GAICD

Introduction

For St Aidan's, as for all schools, 2020 was a year of challenge as our best laid plans gave way to COVID 19 and all that entailed. Through the pivot to online learning, and the return to face-to-face classes, as well as the unknown territory of a new senior assessment system, St Aidan's has emerged strong and confident, and always deeply embedded in the ethos of the Society of the Sacred Advent.

There was no aspect of our school life that was unaffected by the pandemic, however our academic results and the story of 2020 indicate that, with our eyes fixed firmly on our values, and with a clear understanding of mission, we were able to respond to all that the year brought with compassion, resolve and courage.

Worship & Christian Ministry

The faith life of the school began with our first Commencement Eucharist, which took the place of the Senior Leaders' Induction Service. The Commencement Eucharist ensured that we still began the year liturgically.

While most of the services of Term 1 occurred as planned, including Ash Wednesday, the Year 6 Leadership Eucharist, and our Mother Emma's Day combined Eucharist with St Margaret's, by the end of term it was clear that normal service would not resume for some time. It was with sadness that we realised we would not be celebrating Easter as a school community, although families were provided with online Holy Week at Home resources to enable them to incorporate the liturgical rhythms of Holy Week in their own places.

Chapels in Term 2 were all facilitated through classroom and Form teachers, and this was an invaluable formation opportunity for staff. Each teacher was provided with resources for leading chapel with their own class, either online or face to face as circumstances allowed. In this way occasions such as ANZAC Day and Sorry Day could also be observed.

While chapels resumed in Term 3, major school services were slower to resume, and when they did so it was in a highly modified form. Despite these restrictions we still celebrated Admission to Communion with Year 5 students and their families, Year 6 Transition Service and Junior and Senior School Christmas Services. The Valedictory Eucharist was celebrated as a student-only in the round liturgy which was livestreamed to parents. Junior School classes each received a Messy Christmas in a box, thanks to the efforts of the P&F, and were able to have Messy Church activities in their own classrooms, before gathering for the final celebration as a whole Junior School.

Engagement with Local Parishes

St Aidan's continued to work closely in a shared ministry models with the parishes of Sherwood and Chelmer-Graceville. Although all of our activities were restricted, we were able to welcome parish clergy to school services, and the chaplain took services in both parishes on Sundays and on other occasions. We greatly appreciated the ministry and inspiration received from the Sherwood Messy Church team who helped us think about COVID-safe Messy Church.

Chaplaincy

The School Chaplain, the Rev'd Gillian Moses, continued to work in a fulltime capacity across the Junior and Senior Schools, as well as ministering with staff, alumni and the wider school community. This included the ministries of baptism and funerals. The Chaplain worked closely with staff from Music and Art faculties in the staging of school services. The work with the Society

of the Sacred Advent, to ensure the Sisters' stories and ethos are lively and embedded in the daily life of the School, was especially rewarding and we anticipate this work bearing much fruit in the years to come as the Society once again is able to take a more active part in school life.

Religious Studies

Religious and Values Education falls under the auspices of the Chaplain and is taught in all year levels from Prep to Year 12. In 2020 students engaged in a diverse field of topics including Indigenous Spiritualities, World Religions, Environmental Spirituality, Sacramentality and Peace and Nonviolence Education. Year 12 students attended their first RVE Master Class, on the topic of Vocation, and heard from members of staff and they reflected on their own experience of vocation.

During home-based learning, students were encouraged to continue their reflective practises and to journal their reflections regularly as a way of maintaining spiritual life. Year 9 students planned prayer spaces at home and were able to construct and host these on their return to school.

Missional Engagement

Hands-on missional activity was curtailed this year, and it is with some sadness that we acknowledge some of our previous activities may never return. The hiatus has provided us with an opportunity to revisit our service learning framework and to create a program that is more educationally rich and transformative for our students.

Students across the Junior and Senior Schools undertook to write cards to residents in the local Aged Care facility, and students in the Junior School also wrote to their peers in Victoria during the long lockdown those students experienced in the second half of the year.

School families responded enthusiastically to the Anglicare food and toy drive for Christmas. Many boxes of food and gifts were collected for distribution through Anglicare's networks.

Staff Development

Many teachers in the Senior School were actively involved with QCAA in the preparation, administration and marking of external exams, and have gained valuable insight into the system, to the benefit of our students.

All teaching staff engaged in extensive preparation and training for online learning, with much peer-to-peer training in Teams and other platforms, and collaboration in developing resources for students to access. It is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of our teaching staff that the online learning environment proved so successful.

Research plays a significant part in the development of sound pedagogy at St Aidan's and in 2020 the school partnered with a range of university-based research projects with Griffith University, the University of Queensland, and the University of NSW in fields including social justice, pedagogy, technology and community.

In 2020 the Karen Spiller Teaching Fellowship was awarded to mathematics teacher Ms Samantha Lee who is undertaking research into peer-to-peer tutoring as a tool for enhancing independent learning.

Reconciliation Action Plan

The St Aidan's RAP was approved by Reconciliation Australia in June. This achievement represents a milestone in our developing relationships with local Elders and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. St Aidan's continues to participate actively in the Educators' Learning Circle hosted by local Elders through Benarrawa Community Development Association, and values their guidance in the work of reconciliation.

Although local Sorry Day observances were cancelled because of COVID, we were able to hold our own Sorry Day observances in classrooms, using resources created by Benarrawa Elders.

School values

St Aidan's values are informed by the values of the Society of the Sacred Advent. Those values include humility, courage, compassion, resilience, faithfulness and whole-heartedness. The Sisters' values find expression in the school values of developing and promoting authentic, caring, confident, creative and connected women who value reason, imagination, truth, compassion and responsibility.

The schools' values are embodied in the presentation of alumni awards each year to past students who serve as exceptional role models in the school community. In 2020 Alumni Awards were presented to Bhavisha Bakranie (the Emma Betts Award for Young Alumnus), Claire Baguley (the inaugural Mother Emma Award for Entrepreneurship and Innovation) and Catherine Thomas (the Caroline Amy Award for Continuous and Significant Contribution).

The school's values were also evident during the initial lockdown as the tuckshop shifted from serving student lunches to providing take-home dinners for staff on site. As the lockdown continued the tuckshop was able to continue to provide meals to the wider St Aidan's community, ensuring the financial continuity of tuckshop services and offering a much appreciated service to families.

Achievements and Contribution

In the first year of the ATAR system, St Aidan's senior students achieved outstanding results, with 12.5% of the graduating cohort achieving an ATAR above 99 and 69% achieved an ATAR above 90. Significantly, the median ATAR score was 92.0. 3 students achieved perfect subject scores of 100%. It should also be noted that 97% of the senior cohort was ATAR eligible.

On the sporting fields, St Aidan's retained the Percentage Cup in the QGSSSA Athletics competition. Although some of the core sports did not take place in 2020, students continued to prepare and to compete wherever possible.

Senior visual art students Paloma Jacobsen, Alexandra Spalding and Kayleigh Viviers achieved success in the Creative Generation Awards for Excellence in Visual Art.

Senior science teacher Mr Shane McDonald was awarded the prestigious Peter Doherty Award for Outstanding Teacher of STEM.

Events

COVID offered St Aidan's students opportunities to reimagine some of the major events of the school year. Innovative approaches included a virtual cross-country competition run during home-based learning, as well as art in the back yard and the St Aidan's couch choir which recorded a version of the Beatles classic, *Let it Be*.

At the end of Term 2 St Aidan's held its first ever Giving Day. Staff, families, alumni and members of the wider community all contributed generously to the day, and we exceeded our target of \$60 000 to raise over \$72 000. This money will be used to support Born to Fly bursaries to support St Aidan's students experiencing financial hardship now and into the future. As COVID continues to affect families financially, these bursaries will be more important than ever.

The Senior Formal took place early in the year, as planned, although Year 11 students waited patiently until the last week of the school year for their Semi-formal. Some camps took place in modified forms, and at different times of the year, ensuring students still gained the educational and social benefits of the camp program.

Major events such as the Annual Awards night were livestreamed to parents at home as well as to family and friends all over the world. The capacity to livestream events going forward means that families overseas or interstate can still celebrate with their students, and this has proved to be one of the benefits of our 2020 experiences.

In October we farewelled former school Principal Miss Marjorie Neil, with a memorial service at the school. Miss Neil oversaw much modernisation of St Aidan's during her tenure in the 1980s and her legacy lives on in the Ambiwerra Sporting Fields, the school Chapel and the professionalism of teaching staff.

Major Projects

In 2020 Retire Australia donated Fancutt's House to St Aidan's. This former residence of the Fancutt tennis family has been located at the Ambiwerra playing fields and will be a valuable additional resource for the school.

Fancutt's House represents the first stage of a major building project located at Ambiwerra which will see the upgrading and expansion of sporting and teaching facilities for the school over the next 10 years.

Archbishop's Message

The diocesan theme of Being Together- Practising Peacemaking was celebrated at St Aidan's not least through the introduction of a Peace and Nonviolence curriculum for Year 10 and 11 students. We have also built on the work of Talking Circles and encourage their use in classrooms and elsewhere as a tool for complex conversations. This has led to many rich discussions about topics that students long to explore safely, and to healthy approaches to conflict management.

Future plans

In 2021 St Aidan's aims to learn the lessons from 2020 in being flexible and building a resilient community that will meet any challenges. Our students are well-placed to engage in external assessment, online learning, fast-developing technology and the enduring gift of relationships and common life. Our families are valuing new ways of staying connected, while appreciating all opportunities to be physically present at the school.

The faith of the Society of the Sacred Advent is a resurrection faith, so we hold fast to the promise of new life always emerging, often when we least expect it. While 2020 could have brought disappointment, loss and hardship, it has instead energised the school for future growth and enterprise, and we remain hopeful about all that lies ahead.

Ms Toni Riordan
Principal