

Principal Report 2020 P&F AGM (The Year of COVID)

2020 has been a year like no other and has thrown challenges globally, which like everywhere, has filtered into some radical changes at the local level. Whilst these have been significant, broadly speaking, I am very proud of our community in managing these successfully.

- The year began with my return from Maitland-Newcastle, as Principal Coach. We also welcomed Maria Kennedy as Assistant Principal.
- Pre-COVID, we held some successful events at the start of the year. These included P&F 'Welcome Picnic' (and Talent Quest), P&F AGM (wine and cheese theme re-scheduled from 2019), Parent Information evening, and we just squeezed in our Parent – Teacher interviews in term 1 before COVID restrictions hit.
- Our swimming carnival was rained out, but a successful evening version took place on 19th Feb. Our Cross Country Carnival in March was also very successful. Unfortunately, many school related and inter-school rep sports could not go ahead. We were able to go ahead with our school-based Athletics Carnival (Years 3-6) and K-2 Fun Day albeit with no parents. These were both well-received.
- The early days of COVID-19 tested our flexibility. Our 'Home-Based Learning' environment undertook early versions as we grappled with supporting both staff and students with needs.
- Although we evolved over time, I was particularly proud of staff as they rose to the challenge of Home-Based Learning into Term 2. We recognised that many families found the going tough, but we also received a huge amount of positive feedback from families in recognition of the efforts of staff – we were really boosted by that.
- At the same time, I acknowledge the very real difficulties many of our OLSS families have had, and in many cases continue to face. Both financial and social pressures have happened, and the school has privately supported many – and there are others who have taken advantage of fee relief as determined by our central office.
- We were first among many schools to broadcast a range of new and innovative projects, including our live virtual assemblies, Mother's and Father's Day Liturgies, and our live parent forum as we forecast new needs and procedures for return after Home-Based Learning. We also held a very successful Kinder Transition Zoom meeting for parents recently, and plan to hold a second next week. We received a huge amount of positive feedback for many of these and this was a real boost.
- COVID also dictated we quickly change our morning drop-off and afternoon drive-through procedures. Whilst it was disappointing not to welcome parent presence before and after school (something I think we should strive to return to when possible), our new procedures were very successful and the envy of many communities who looked to us for some direction.
- In acknowledging the very real disappointments for many of our families as COVID restrictions have occurred, we have sought to maintain as much 'normality' as possible. We received a huge amount of positive feedback from Year 6 parents at a Zoom gathering last term as we sought to include opportunities for the students not evident in many schools. Our plans for Year 6 Graduation (outdoors), camps for Year 6 and Year 5 are examples of this.
- The P&F agenda has been also been stalled somewhat due to COVID. Our hope to hold engaging social and community functions has not been able to proceed and hopefully this will improve into 2021. This in my opinion should be a high priority post COVID as our community is defined by the sense of connection which we've had to put on hold in many respects.
- After much delay again due to COVID, I am delighted to announce the new girls' Skorts and blouse uniform option is now available. I expect this will be a popular option for girls moving

into 2021, and thanks to our P&F and especially Jacqueline Powers for the hard work behind the scenes to enable this.

- Work is about to commence on the Creative Playground which again stemmed from P&F suggestions and fundraising. We currently have a staff committee also looking at creative 'loose parts' to complement the space, to be stored in a new shed nearby. We look forward to seeing the results of this.
- Meanwhile, our central school's office at Pennant Hills has undergone a serious restructure. Although not always visible to parents, this has filtered strongly into the school. One very pleasing aspect was the very high rating parents provided overall in the satisfaction survey mid-year with a very high number of parents extremely supportive of the school. The data for this has been shared on the school website.
- We also have a very high interest in families connecting to the school. We have had to put on hold some enrolments in grades due to high demand, and our Kinder 2021 cohort is full, with a lot of families seeking to join us.
- Finally, as mentioned previously, I have been asked by our new Director of Schools to join the team at Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) in a senior leadership role from next year, with a transition already underway. I leave our community with mixed feelings. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here as principal. We are a large, dynamic community with many challenges, but also much to be proud of. There have been many highlights, notwithstanding that ups and downs have also played a part. I thank the P&F and Parent Council for the great working relationship we have established with many initiatives coming from these groups over the years. I thank the staff who have been enormously trusting and supportive of my leadership, and above all I thank our wonderful children who I've seen grow over many years in maturity and performance. I will keep you all in my prayers.

God bless,

Rob Peers.