



Annual General Meeting

Principal's Report

Principal: Paul Martin

Year: 2026

AGM Date: 9 March 2026

1. Mission & Catholic Identity

In 2025, Holy Spirit School continued to deepen its faith journey by engaging with the diocesan strategic initiative, the *Religiosity Project*. This project involved staff exploring the question, “*What makes a Catholic school?*”, and reflecting on their personal and collective roles in bringing this vision to life. As part of their professional development, staff engaged with the *Post-Critical Belief* scale, a component of the broader *Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI)* initiative. This ongoing project aims to strengthen the Catholic identity of our schools and align our beliefs and practices with our shared mission.

Throughout the year, our school community celebrated numerous key events that reflected our commitment to faith and community. These included Holy Spirit Day, our Lenten programme for staff, Ash Wednesday, and our active participation in the *Project Compassion* initiative. We also came together with our parish community for Mass as a staff, joined by our neighbouring parish schools.

Our school continued to embrace meaningful liturgical celebrations and events that foster spiritual growth and community engagement. These included significant occasions such as Lent, Easter, ANZAC Day, NAIDOC Week, Grandparents Day, Mission activities, and our End of Year Mass. One of the highlights of the year was the moving re-enactment of the *Stations of the Cross* by our senior students, an event that brought together both our parish and school communities in prayer and reflection.

Moreover, our weekly assemblies began with moments of prayer, grounding our community in Christ's presence. These same moments of prayer also featured in our meetings with parish leaders, community members, and representatives from Townsville Catholic Education.

Our shared faith continues to be the foundation of all we do, and we are inspired by the commitment of our students, staff, families, and parish to nurturing a vibrant Catholic identity within Holy Spirit School.

We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of our parish and wider community as we journey together in faith, collaboration, and service.

2. Enrolment & Staffing

In 2025, our enrolment numbers reflected steady and encouraging growth, demonstrating the increasing recognition of our school as a vibrant and faith-centred learning community. We started the year with 656 students and concluded with 685, a positive trend largely driven by families moving to Townsville and seeking a Catholic education for their children. Our Prep enrolments also experienced growth, reaching 100 students by the end of the year, which reflects our continued efforts to welcome and support new families.

Our ongoing marketing campaign has played a role in this growth, but what truly stands out is the power of our school community. Time and again, during interviews with prospective families, it becomes clear that our current families and parish members are our greatest ambassadors. Their positive experiences and enthusiastic recommendations—whether shared in conversations or through social media—have been instrumental in spreading the word about the welcoming and inclusive culture of Holy Spirit Catholic School.

While we celebrated this growth, we also navigated some significant staffing changes in 2025. These transitions, while not usual for our highly stable staff, included the well-deserved retirements of long-serving and much-loved colleagues like Kerry and Gayle. Additionally, some staff moved out of town or pursued new career opportunities. These changes, including some that occurred mid-year, required adaptability and resilience from both our staff and our community. I am proud to say that we faced these challenges positively, maintaining our commitment to delivering quality education and pastoral care.

As our enrolments and community needs grow, we have also expanded our staff, particularly in the area of school officers, to enhance the supports available to students entrusted to us by their families. This year, we continue to build on these efforts, including welcoming a new Chaplain and appointing a dedicated teacher to support the increasing number of students learning English as an additional language.

Staff professional learning has been another important focus. In 2025, our team engaged in a range of initiatives to strengthen our teaching practices and student outcomes. These included:

- Familiarising ourselves with Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum.
- Investigating cutting-edge research around the 'Science of Teaching and Learning'.
- Trialling a targeted project to support our English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) students, which is a growing area for our school.
- Increasing our commitment to Inclusive Practice teaching.
- Beginning a review of how The Arts are taught, which included appointing a dedicated teacher to enhance this curriculum area.

These initiatives reflect our shared commitment to the holistic development of each learner and to fostering a community grounded in excellence, equity, and our Catholic mission.

3. Teaching & Learning

At Holy Spirit School, we remain committed to using the data available to us to guide and enhance learning and teaching. In 2025, we introduced DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) to support

the teaching of reading. This tool has enabled us to track student progress effectively and receive timely feedback, allowing teachers to adjust and target their instruction where it is most needed. With the valuable guidance of our Curriculum Advisor from Townsville Catholic Education, we have experienced success in this first year of implementation. While we celebrate these achievements, we have also identified areas for improvement to ensure that all classes are fully supported as this initiative evolves.

Our MultiLit program continues to positively impact students who require additional support in literacy. This evidence-based program has proven effective in helping us meet the needs of those who are not yet reaching proficiency, and we remain committed to its implementation.

In addition to supporting students requiring literacy intervention, we have also begun to focus on extending students who are excelling in their learning. This year, we explored extension opportunities through our STEM groups, dedicating both time and teacher resources to this important area. By fostering curiosity and critical thinking, we aim to challenge these learners and are committed to refining best practices in this space to support their growth.

Recognising that spelling has been an area where we aspire to see greater improvement, we invested in staff training for the Spell-X program. This initiative is designed to have a positive impact on student outcomes in spelling, which has been holding steady but not progressing as much as we would like. The program will provide us with stronger evidence-based approaches to teaching spelling, complementing our existing Literacy program, particularly in the early years where MultiLit has been so effective.

Our dedication to improving literacy outcomes and exploring new avenues for extension reflects our unwavering focus on meeting the diverse needs of all learners. By leveraging data and evidence-based practices, we strive to ensure that every child receives the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

4. Student Wellbeing

At Holy Spirit Catholic School, we are deeply committed to nurturing the social and emotional wellbeing of our students alongside their academic growth. In 2025, we continued implementing the *Friendology* program as a key component of our approach to supporting students in developing positive friendships and managing conflicts, or “Friendship Fires.” This program equips students with essential skills in resilience, confidence, and conflict resolution, helping them navigate challenges with empathy and maturity. As we integrate *Friendology* into our school’s behaviour framework, *Our SPIRIT Way*, we look forward to deepening our commitment to this initiative in 2026.

Our focus on holistic development is further strengthened by complementary programs such as Life Education, Respectful Relationships, and Real Talk—a Personal Development program endorsed by Bishop Tim. Together, these initiatives reflect our shared commitment to fostering respectful, compassionate, and faith-filled individuals who are equipped to navigate life’s challenges.

Another highlight of our wellbeing initiatives is our *Spirit Buddies* program. This program sees our Year 6 students step up as leaders and role models, volunteering their lunch breaks to support and play with our younger students in Prep, Year 1, and Year 2. Whether hosting discos, umpiring playground games, skipping, running, building sandcastles, or simply engaging in imaginative play, our Year 6 students demonstrate what it means to be a ‘SPIRIT kid’. This program not only creates a sense of belonging and connection across year levels but also helps foster leadership and service in our senior students.

Beyond wellbeing, the school continued to provide a range of opportunities for student growth and development through our instrumental music program, school carnivals, gala days, and interschool sports. Students also engaged with various organisations and cultural groups, enriching their experiences and broadening their horizons. These included celebrations such as Harmony Day, workshops with First Nations presenters, Adopt-a-Cowboy, Defence Club, Mini Vinnies, and a variety of lunchtime groups.

These initiatives underscore our ongoing commitment to providing a well-rounded education that supports each child's academic, social, emotional, and spiritual development. By offering diverse opportunities and fostering a culture of inclusion and active participation, we strive to ensure every student feels valued, connected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

5. Community Engagement

At Holy Spirit School, we firmly believe in the importance of fostering strong partnerships with our families to support the education and wellbeing of our students. Each year, we strive to develop initiatives and opportunities that deepen this connection and encourage active family involvement in our school community.

One of the standout events on our calendar is Holy Spirit Day, which brings together students, families, and staff for a day of celebration and connection. Highlights of the day include the *Spirit Walk*, a family picnic, and engaging activities shared with year levels and buddy groups. This cherished event truly reflects the sense of togetherness and community that defines Holy Spirit Catholic School.

Beyond this, we are grateful for the ongoing support of our families in a variety of ways, including attendance at assemblies, participation in Mother's and Father's Day stalls, contributions as tuckshop volunteers, and assistance as classroom helpers. These acts of generosity and involvement enrich the school experience for all our students.

In 2025, we held several key meetings with stakeholders to explore ways to further engage families in meaningful and accessible ways, without imposing financial or time constraints. While Parents and Friends (P&F) and Board meetings continued to provide formal forums for collaboration, we also prioritised informal opportunities to connect. These included conversations with parents after assemblies, during the sacramental program, at Friday morning cuppas, and through the visible presence of our Leadership Team at the front gate in the mornings. These touchpoints have allowed us to listen, learn, and gather valuable feedback from our community.

The ongoing theme of creating 'more opportunities' for family engagement remains a priority, though we acknowledge the challenges of timing and availability. We are committed to finding practical and sustainable ways to build on this area of growth while ensuring that our dedicated staff are not overburdened beyond their teaching responsibilities. One idea under consideration is the revival and reimagining of the CCC (Community, Culture, Connection) program, which has been floated as a potential initiative to strengthen family engagement. Stay tuned for further updates as we continue these conversations and explore ways to build a thriving, connected school community.

We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of our families and their commitment to the shared mission of Holy Spirit School.

It is important to note that groups such as Board, P&F, First Nations Parent Reference group and parish commitment is valued, and we truly value their input into our school improvement.

6. Operations & Finance

Firstly, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Finance Secretary for her dedicated work in managing the financial operations of our school in close collaboration with Townsville Catholic Education. Engaging with families about school fees is not always an easy task, but she approaches these conversations with empathy and a genuine desire to support our families.

I am pleased to report that Holy Spirit School remains in a strong financial position. We are debt-free, and over the past eight years, we have made significant investments in rebuilding and enhancing our school, resulting in a campus that is often admired by other schools. From our state-of-the-art library to our new tuckshop facility, we are proud of the resources and spaces we offer to our students, staff, and families. At the same time, we remain committed to the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of our facilities to ensure they remain safe, functional, and welcoming for all.

In 2025, a number of key projects were completed to enhance our school environment. These included:

- Installing a new shade sail over the Year 5/6 ninja playground, as well as a new shaded playground for Year 3 and 4 students.
- Upgrading fencing along Albert Street, Hatchett Street, and Ross River Road to enhance the safety and security of our grounds.
- Introducing a new bell and alarm system (*Bell Commander*) to improve the efficiency of alerts, particularly for evacuations and lockdown procedures.
- Adding extra concrete paths to improve wheelchair accessibility and ease of movement for students and families.
- Upgrading our CCTV system for improved security across the campus.
- Enhancing the lighting in the Hall.
- Investing in new student devices as part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a high standard of IT resources to support modern learning practices.

In addition to these planned upgrades, we also addressed some significant Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) matters, including fixing drainage issues, repairing concrete slip zones, and replacing aging air conditioning units in several classrooms. These projects reflect our continuous efforts to maintain and improve the quality of our facilities for the comfort and safety of our students and staff.

One of the more unexpected challenges in 2025 was a prolonged investigation into the drainage system in our toilet facilities. Through the expertise and persistence of our plumbers, and in collaboration with Townsville City Council, we were able to identify and rectify the issue, ensuring that council plans are now fully up to date.

We are blessed to have such a fantastic school complex, but we also understand the importance of ongoing stewardship to maintain and enhance our facilities. These investments ensure that we provide a safe, modern, and welcoming environment for the students entrusted to us by their families.

7. Strategic Progress & Looking Ahead

The year 2026 marks our **Year of Renewal**, a valuable opportunity for us as a school community to reflect on the progress we have made over the past four years of our Strategic Plan. This period of reflection

allows us to celebrate our achievements, recognise areas for continued growth, and ensure we remain purposeful and strategic in our ongoing journey to become **Townsville's premier school**.

Over the past twelve months, our school has experienced significant activity and development across many areas. Despite the busy nature of school life, we have remained focused on our three key improvement goals for 2025.

1. Catholic Identity

Our first goal centred on deepening our Catholic Identity and exploring what it truly means to be an authentically Catholic school in today's increasingly secular world. Through our ongoing partnership with ACU and the Leuven Project, we have continued to engage with the ECSI survey data collected from staff, students, and families. This valuable information guides our planning and helps us ensure that all students leave our school with a strong sense of faith identity and a foundation that will support them as they transition to high school and the wider community.

2. Reading and the Science of Learning

Our second priority focused on strengthening reading outcomes through the implementation of DIBELS and the principles of the science of learning. This framework allows us to monitor student progress closely and use data-informed practices to enhance literacy instruction. We expect to see the impact of this work reflected not only in classroom learning but also in future Naplan results as these practices become embedded across the school.

3. Parent Engagement

Our third goal recognised the importance of parent partnership and the critical role families play in each child's education. Initiatives such as class newsletters and the increased opportunities for family involvement helped build stronger connections between home and school. A significant highlight was the introduction of the new Term 3 parent interview system, which received very positive feedback from both staff and families through conversations and follow-up surveys.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all families who contributed to school life in any capacity—whether through volunteering in the tuckshop or classrooms, assisting with stalls, supporting Spirit Day and school carnivals, or simply attending assemblies to celebrate student achievements. Your presence and involvement enrich our community and reinforce our shared commitment to educating the whole child.

As we continue through our Year of Renewal, we remain dedicated to fostering meaningful and productive partnerships with families and ensuring that every action we take supports our core mission: **providing the best possible education for our students**.

8. Board Achievements 2025

The School Board has had a productive and collaborative year, focusing on several key initiatives to support the ongoing development of our school community.

At the start of the year, the Board welcomed new members as we farewelled some longstanding contributors who have moved on from the parish and school community. Special thanks go to Robyn and Matt for their dedicated service and support to our school during their time with us.

In February, the Board participated in the Townsville Catholic Education (TCE) Board Formation session, which provided an opportunity to align our goals and priorities for the year ahead. As part of this process, we reviewed important Diocesan policies, including those related to Employment, Equal Opportunity, Workplace Harassment, and Student Protection.

A significant focus of the year was the review of our school's Constitution. Initially updated early in the year, the Constitution was reviewed again later to comply with updated TCE guidelines. The revised document was ratified by the Board and is now awaiting final approval from the head office.

The Board also reviewed and endorsed the continuation of the Chaplaincy Program, recognising its importance in supporting the spiritual and pastoral needs of our school community.

Another major project was the review and update of the school's Mission Statement. With guidance from Townsville Catholic Education Office and in collaboration with the parish, the Board worked throughout the year to refine the statement to reflect the values and aspirations of our current school community. A final draft has been completed and is now ready for approval.

In addition, the Board began the process of creating a Vision Statement for the school, as one had not been formally established in the past. This work is particularly significant as we prepare for a renewed future as a Catholic learning community. The draft Mission and Vision Statements have been carefully aligned to ensure consistency and are a testament to the hard work of the Board.

Towards the end of the year, the Board also engaged in discussions around emerging policies, including those concerning the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in schools. This is an area of growing importance, and we remain committed to aligning our practices with the guidance provided by TCE.

The Board would like to acknowledge the contributions of Andrew Glover, who departed in September due to his family's relocation to Perth. We are also grateful to Stacey Brennan for her work with the Board, and while she has stepped away for personal reasons, her efforts have been greatly appreciated.

Looking ahead, the School Board is excited to continue its work in shaping the future of our school, ensuring it remains a vibrant and inclusive Catholic community. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance as we support the learning, growth, and wellbeing of all students, staff, and families.



Paul Martin