



SYNOD 2023 REPORT

ST STEPHEN'S SCHOOL

MEMBERSHIP

Chair	Kevin Smout
Convenor of Finance	Anneke Klopper
Convenor of Governance	Brett Dorney
Convenor of Planning	Mike Schrick
Member	Sheel Gor
Member	Tim Cornish
Member	Daniel Wright
Member	Jaco van Staden

REPORT

A Christian community for everyone

As a Uniting Church School, St Stephen's School is founded on the principle that we are a Christian community for everyone. The core values of the School; faith, learning, care, service, and community speak to equity and inclusion for all within a Christ-centred environment. To support this claim, the School offers several initiatives including academic scholarships, regional scholarships, music scholarships, a robust fee-assistance program, learning enrichment and support programs, flexible learning options for students involved in elite sports as well as those who require extra support for physical and mental health challenges. These are only a snapshot of ways in which St Stephen's School reflects a Christ-centred, student- focussed and community-based school that is open to all.

St Stephen's School's strategic and operational alignment with the proposed 'Vision, Strategic Directions and Values' of the Uniting Church WA.

The work of the School is underpinned by our current Strategic Plan: Shaping the Future 2022-2024. This Strategic Plan operates within a three-level framework. The Strategic Plan can be accessed via the link below:

[St Stephen's Strategic Plan 2022-2024 - Shaping the Future](#)

The Strategic Plan informs all the work of the School including teaching & learning, service learning, community partnerships & relations, staffing, pastoral care, and faith development of all members of the School community. This is clearly reflected in the Strategic Plan.

To illustrate some of this work in action please see some practical examples under each of the five areas of the Uniting Church WA proposed plan and how they link to the School's Strategic Plan:

a) Growing Disciples

- Exploration of the Uniting Church is found in our Secondary Curriculum. For example, Yr 11 Biblical studies unit – Church History: WA Uniting Church (particularly in Perth) is studied. Proposed excursion to Wesley and Trinity Church to take place in Term 4. Biblical Studies Staff PD/Retreat Term 4 at Wesley Church – Topics relating to the Uniting Church will be: Basis of Union, Current role of the Uniting Church in Perth CBD (focus on Wesley and Trinity Church), History of the Uniting Church in WA.
- Our students are encouraged through worship and Biblical Studies to view the contemporary world through a Christian lens without judgement, fear or favour. Active discussion on the word of Christ is a welcome and common activity amongst our students and staff. Students can be open about their faith in a time of change and challenge when the security those words provide is needed most. Students from secular backgrounds form long and dear friendships with active Christians, demystifying and se-stigmatising the Christian faith in a context where fewer and fewer families list Christianity as a core part of their identity.
- We continue to facilitate the parent bible study for K-12 parents each Wednesday morning. This provides the opportunity to explain how the Bible is taught to our students, so parents learn and have the time to ask questions.

b) Valuing Diversity

- Over the last few years, our new student enrolments have led to greater diversity at the ELC. We continue to celebrate our diverse cultures as well as learn from each other. Harmony Day and ongoing opportunities through the teaching program provide

students and families the opportunity to share the culture and experiences with the extended community.

- Through Service-Learning Programmes, staff and students visit and support a variety of agencies engaged with assisting, vulnerable and marginalised people such as Rocky Bay (adults with disabilities), Ronald McDonald House (isolated families receiving medical treatment) and Salvation Army (homeless people).
- Through the Service-Learning Tour Programme, students and staff can work alongside those in overseas or Aboriginal communities that are vulnerable and marginalised.
- Having diversity is important. **Valuing** diversity is the frame with which we see difference – for the advantages we have because of the rich difference in our community – and the deficits if that difference is not present. Our community becomes more diverse each year and the ‘welcoming and affirming’ position that the Uniting Church holds correlates with our inclusive and harmonious student body. Our progressive policies and the way in which we support and celebrate students from diverse personal and physical places are non-negotiables for us. Our programs for international students and catering for the needs of EALD learners are drawing positive attention and enrolments from overseas.

c) Living Sustainably

- The theme for Staff Expo 2023 was “Stewardship: Global, Professional and Personal”. A significant component of the Staff Expo Programme was dedicated to presentations around sustainability and living with environmental responsibility.
- From our buildings and new native gardens to a focus on self-care and wellness, living in a sustainable way is at the forefront of many conversations, strategies and actions at St Stephen’s School. It forms a significant part of our curriculum, our strategic plan and is observable around our School as we acknowledge the impact climate change will have on the lives of the young people in our care.
- Following our wonderful presentations at Staff Expo, Worship Gatherings that focus on our responsibility to nurture and care for our world will be presented along with practical considerations of how each of us can contribute to sustainability in our homes and school.

d) Building Community

- Building community through a range of fundraising events with the wider school community and other agencies.
- Weekly worship gatherings encourage attendance and involvement of staff, students and St Stephen's School families where community engagement is fostered and built.
- Through Service-Learning Programmes, there are, whole-school events/collections for support of Uniting WA initiatives, such as Uniting WA Sock Appeal / Christmas Appeal, as well as support with meal provision.
- The St. Stephen's School, WA Charity Direct Student Committee research, evaluate and award small grants to families and agencies in need of financial assistance. This is done in partnership with WA Charity Direct.
- As part of St. Stephen's School Food Cart, and in support of Food Rescue, students and staff perform a weekly collection of unsold food from Lakeside Joondalup Cafés. The collected food is passed to Salvation Army (Heathridge) as part of their Doorways Programme to feed vulnerable people.
- Building community from a school sense is about cultivating safe spaces and exploring brave spaces to connect us all. Our dedication to pastoral care is key in ensuring our community of students, staff and parents can thrive over a long period of time.

e) Reconciling People

- As we have now committed to the development of our first RAP, we also actively commit to our own learning about the journey of our first nations people. We make intentional time to celebrate NAIDOC week and Harmony week and encourage students to voice their own views on the importance of reconciliation.
- Walking alongside Aboriginal students and people provides our students and staff a better understanding of the current cultural divide and bridge a pathway to reconciliation.
- When working overseas students and staff are provided living examples of polarization, inequality, and unjustness allowing the opportunity to grow from the experience.
- NAIDOC assemblies for Secondary students on the Duncraig and Carramar campuses utilise external experts to teach the children about the importance of reconciliation and for the Year 11 and 12's understanding the Voice referendum (Duncraig).

- Biblical teaching on God's value of humanity and the importance of being reconciled, firstly to God through the work of Christ on the cross and secondly to each other continue to be a focus of worship gatherings from K-6.

[Annual Snapshot](#) and [School Satisfaction Survey](#)

The Snapshot provides a summarised report on St Stephen's School. The Satisfaction Survey provides St Stephen's School with data about the needs, attitudes, and perceptions of the whole school community.

One of the highlights from the last 12 months is the focus that the School has placed on continued development and wellness for staff. This has culminated in St Stephen's School being awarded the *Educator Magazine's 5 – Star Excellence Award* – National Employer of Choice. The School is one of 20 schools nationwide and only one of 2 schools in WA that were recognised in 2023.

The appointment of a Director of People and Culture to the School's Executive is another explicit sign that St Stephen's School is aware of the growing demands on staff and reflection of the growing importance of Human Resources, Industrial Relations and Work, Health & Safety in Schools.

The School is also developing an extended *Wellness Framework* to include an action plan with a focus on addressing and managing psychosocial hazards and risk moving forward.

Another highlight over the past year has been the continuing focus on our graduate outcomes with particular emphasis on providing students with experiences that reflect the importance of sustainability.

From our Service-Learning Programme, where we partner with local environmental groups such as Friends of Trigg Bushland and Friends of Hepburn Heights. Students and staff assist with general environmental maintenance such as, tree-planting and weeding. Through to our littlest ones in the Early Learning Centre where the students have been active with several initiatives, including vegetable and bush tucker garden, worm farm and recycling programs. We have also had our Year 1 students actively fundraising and building community awareness of endangered native animals. The students raised over \$1000 dollars, created literature that is now a part of school library and resources for the students at the ELC.

Living sustainably and explicitly being taught about the notion of 'stewardship' in Yrs 7 and 10 with an in-depth exploration in Yr 12 ethics unit 'Humans relationship with the Environment' all assist in driving the concept of sustainability across St Stephen's School.

There are many highlights over the past year at St Stephen's School. I am proud to present this Synod report and thank all members of our community for the work and commitment towards our School.

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