



Santa Clara School ACM

Principal's Report

Good evening, everyone.

I want to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to every member of our community for the warm, generous, and wholehearted welcome you have shown me.

From the very first day, I have been deeply moved by the way staff, families, students, and parish embraced me and supported my transition into the Santa Clara story.

Your encouragement, openness, honesty, and partnership have made this year not only fulfilling, but truly life-giving. It has been a privilege to step into leadership within a community so grounded in kindness, respect, and faith filled.

This sense of welcome and unity reflects what makes Santa Clara so special. We are a school where relationships matter, where people look out for one another, and where our Dominican-inspired charism of Blessing, Prayer and Preaching, guided always by Veritas, the truth and love of God, is not just spoken about...it is lived.

I would like to acknowledge and welcome our new staff joining us in 2026. Petra Donaldson, Kindy Teacher, Sarah Edwards STEM specialist, Christian Tang Music Specialist. Thank you for being here with us tonight.

As we come to the close of another meaningful and vibrant year in the life of Santa Clara School, tonight highlights not only our achievements, but the deep sense of spirit, community, and purpose that defines who we are as a Santa Clara family.

Santa Clara is a place where the partnership between school, home, and parish is cherished. As St Dominic is quoted "Community is essential for spiritual growth. We are meant to walk together, supporting and encouraging one another in our faith." We see this in the way families support one another, how our staff walk gently and lovingly with our children, and how our students strive to act with courage, compassion, and honesty.

I extend heartfelt thanks to our parish priest, Fr Richard for his presence among us. His preaching, and pastoral care within the Parish strengthen the faith that sits at the very heart of Santa Clara. Whether celebrating the Sacraments with us or joining us for whole school Mass, he helps nurture a community in God's truth and love.

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This year, we continued to embed the Santa Clara charism into our daily life in our prayer, our service, our relationships, and in the way we search for truth together. Our goal remains clear: that every child knows they are blessed, that they are called to pray and that they can confidently preach our values through words, actions, and kindness.

To our parents, caregivers and families: thank you for entrusting your children to us and for walking this journey by our side. Santa Clara thrives because of your encouragement, and willingness to support the whole community.

To those staff leaving us at the end of the year; Long standing staff members; Sue Hawkings, Renae Armstrong, Zak Abraham, Susannah Naim thank you for your support and service over your years at Santa Clara School. Also, to Dario Jiritano, Aaliyah Mirco and Vira Danilevych, may all your journeys ahead be filled with joy and many blessings.

To our devoted teaching staff: you bring Santa Clara to life each day in your classrooms. Thank you for your commitment, creativity, and heart. Whether teaching, supporting learning, leading programs, preparing liturgies, or nurturing students pastorally, you give of yourselves generously and joyfully. You embody the Veritas we strive to model for our children.

Our education assistants and support staff both at school and OSHC continue to be a blessing to our students. Their compassion, flexibility, and deep care are woven quietly through every corner of our school. They are, without question, an essential part of the Santa Clara story. Thank you.

To our warm and welcoming front office team, I offer sincere thanks; Suzanne your hospitality and genuine delight in our students echo the spirit of St Clare herself, who led through gentleness and joy. Jac, your stewardship ensures our resources serve the needs of our students and staff responsibly and generously. And to Sonia, thank you for stepping into the office team each Thursday and ensuring our students are well fed on Monday and Thursday and well clothed on Wednesday.

I would like to especially acknowledge Michelle for not only her support of staff and students in her many roles but also for her assistance in coordinating the numerous school events across the year both for the P&F and the leadership team. You ensure our events run smoothly and gracefully.

Our School Advisory Council is an invaluable sounding board in shaping the strategic future of Santa Clara. My gratitude to Luke, whose leadership, wisdom, and unwavering support have been invaluable.

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Thank you to Renae and Sharon who conclude their term on the SAC at the end of this year. Your service has strengthened our school community in ways that will continue well into the future. We have three nominees to join the SAC in 2026, Katherine, Tehnae and Rob. Shortly we will vote on your nomination, but I am pre-empting the outcome and welcome you to the SAC team.

Our Parents & Friends Association has once again demonstrated the heart of Santa Clara — community, generosity, celebration, and connection. Thank you to Mai, Stacie and Kim for your enthusiasm and leadership. To all P&F members: your creativity, energy, and “we can do that!” attitude have brought so much joy and spirit to 2025.

The beauty, cleanliness and well-kept grounds are often commented on by many visitors new to our school. For this I would like to thank our contractors Jayson and his team from Green Acres Landscaping, Jos who daily tidies our school grounds, Rakesh and his team from Blanche Cleaning and Theunis for his attendance to our maintenance requirements.

Before moving into two areas of focus for this year amongst many, I would like to take a moment to thank Denise and Andrew. Your support throughout the year has been unwavering. Each day, you give of yourselves to others, always ensuring that everyone has what they need to be the very best they can be. Sharing an office with you both has led to countless funny moments that have brought much-needed light and laughter into situations that were sometimes challenging. Your daily offer to assist me in my role has been an absolute blessing and I cannot thank you enough for exploring with me my many ideas, ensuring the daily running of the school is smooth and to even donning an extra jacket just so I can have the air-conditioning on, your kindness has not gone unnoticed.

You are both consistently generous with your time, often to the detriment of getting your own work done, and yet you continue to serve our community with patience and genuine care. I am so deeply grateful to you both for your support this year.

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Growing Student Voice – A Santa Clara Strength

A central focus of 2025 has been the growing commitment to student voice, grounded in the Dominican tradition of truth-seeking and encouraging students to speak with confidence and integrity.

Some highlights include:

- **Veritas Mailbox**

A new initiative giving children a confidential, respectful way to share ideas, concerns, and suggestions directly with the principal. This has empowered students to engage in meaningful dialogue, reflect on problems, and propose thoughtful solutions. The recent initiative by some Year 4 students to run a stall to raise money for fresh hams for the Vinnies Christmas appeal came from a letter students dropped into the mailbox.

- **Kindy T-Shirt Design Competition**

The whole community was invited to help create a new Kindy T-shirt design — a fun, spirited initiative that brought creativity, collaboration, and excitement to Santa Clara.

The children were so proud to see their ideas valued and considered. I am, pleased to announce the new T'Shirts have arrived ready for next year.

- **Student-Led Review of the Code of Conduct**

Students collaborated to rewrite our Student Code of Conduct in their own words, outlining the behaviours and expectations they believe reflect a true Santa Clara learner.

This was a powerful example of students *preaching through action* — taking responsibility, listening to one another, and working for the good of their community. The Code will be put in place in 2026 and onwards.

- **Friendship & Wellbeing Student Survey**

The Friendship & Wellbeing Student Survey Year 3-6 survey helped us understand children's strengths, concerns, and social needs. These insights are already informing pastoral care planning and will continue guiding our wellbeing focus into 2026.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to forming students who are thinkers, leaders, and truth-seekers. And this is just the beginning. In 2026, we will continue building a culture where every student feels valued, heard, and empowered to shape their school.

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Capital Development – Preparing for the Future of Santa Clara

This year, we began the important early stages of planning the next chapter of Santa Clara's physical growth. Guided by our mission, our charism, and the needs of our children, the preliminary planning process has included early costings, projected timelines, and consultation.

Future plans under consideration include:

- A new, purpose-built facility for both Three-Year-Old and Four-Year-Old Kindy programs to meet growing enrolment needs and regulations as we move to a five-day Kindy program in 2027.
- Reconfiguring the administration building to create a more visible first aid room, work room and an additional office for the principal.
- Refurbishing or rebuilding student toilet facilities to ensure improved visibility, design, and accessibility.
- A covered walkway connecting the Early Learning area to the school hall, enhancing safety, protection from the weather, and waterproof access for all.

These projects align with our long-term vision for Santa Clara — a school that remains vibrant, future-focused, and responsive to the needs of our children and community.

As we draw near to the holy season of Christmas, may our hearts be open to the light and peace that Christ brings. My prayer for each of you is that this season renews your spirit and brings joy and rest to your families.

In conclusion, thank you for your trust, your partnership, and your love for Santa Clara School. Together, we continue to build a community that is truly blessed in God's love.

God bless.

Julie Southwell
Principal, Santa Clara School

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