As the year draws to a close, it is time to reflect on and review the past twelve months of life at St Andrew’s and to envision the future direction of the school.

There are many issues facing education in general and Catholic education in particular, in the light of the Gonski review, with the Government yet to announce the funding formula that will be followed for all schools from 2013. The impact is likely to be significant on Catholic schools, with a reduction in funding from both State and Australian Governments expected over the next few years. Many families may struggle to afford a Catholic education for their children. A significant number of children in our school qualify for the Health Care Card subsidy offered by the Catholic Education Commission of WA and this enables many families to access what would already be an education that is beyond their reach otherwise. I will continue to keep you informed about the progress of funding through the newsletter with information sent from the Catholic Education Office.

While NAPLAN is never far out of the news and educational bodies protest about its use, I do not believe that there will be any changes made to national testing for some time. Individual students’ progress over time is useful data for parents and schools and help us to constantly improve our educational practice to provide the best education for the children in our care. However, the practice of league tables, which have flowed from the publication of all schools data on the myschool website is unfortunate as the data is the result of one test in a subject area, given on one day of the school year. This does not give a true picture of a child, their strengths in sport and the arts, their scientific and environmental understandings, their personal characteristics – all of which combine to create the individual. I caution parents to read the NAPLAN data with an open mind – as one measure of your child’s success.

Early Years Learning, National Quality Standards for 0 – 5 year olds, AITSL Standards for Principals and Teachers and the Australian Curriculum all continue to provide both School Boards, leadership teams and staff with new and exciting challenges. Time becomes precious as more and more demands are placed on schools and it behoves leadership teams to ensure that teachers have the resources and support to provide the best face-to-face time with your children. We endeavour to do this and appreciate the support of parents who recognise that teachers make a valuable contribution to their children’s development and treat our staff with due respect and thanks.

We strive to maintain a school where Gospel values are witnessed in our daily lives. Our Making Jesus Real programme supports the Catholic Education Units of Work and we strive to develop children who are caring and compassionate, considering the needs of others before themselves. Our percentage of Catholic to non-Catholic students is higher than desirable with only 66% of our students being baptised Catholic. This figure should be closer to 80% to maintain and support the Catholic ethos of the school and this is a goal that I hope to achieve over the next two years, with waitlists for all Junior Primary years and Catholic families receiving priority as per our enrolment policy. Disappointingly, few parents join us for class and school masses and liturgies, while many attend our assemblies. What does this say about the catholicity of our school? Having said that, the support for the sacramental programme, from Catholic families involved is excellent and I believe great value is placed on these by the parents who attend with their children. I take this opportunity to thank Fathers Andrew and Tom for their involvement in our school and support offered to our families.

This year was again a busy one for students and staff with a number of wonderful events providing great variety and interest in our school programmes. Included in these events are the NAIDOC Week activities, led by Judith Birchall and Annette Parata and while I was on leave at the time, I received glowing reports about this week. Other events include the Constable Care visit, Musica Viva concert, the Cancer Foundation Morning Tea, Open Afternoon, Fathers Day Breakfast which is always well
attended with over 200 dads and father figures present with their children, raffles, sports carnivals, swimming lessons, and the upcoming St Andrew’s Day activities, Carols on the Oval and the Fun Swim Day — an inaugural event to celebrate St Andrew’s Day.

The P & F has been instrumental in providing social occasions for parents and students, including the Disco — well remembered for the unexpected fire drill when the alarms started ringing out (at least we learned how to turn them off, and identified a problem with car park lighting when you have to evacuate 200 children in the dark — since remedied of course), the Welcome to St Andrew’s night which has become an annual event and the raffles held throughout the year. Through the P & F levy, $8500.00 has been donated to the school for PE and PMP equipment and to support art and craft activities in classrooms. I thank you all for your support of the P & F through your attendance at meetings, assistance at events and payment of the levy.

Mathematics has been a focus of learning this year, through problem solving, and will continue to be so in 2013. With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, History has its own place in the curriculum, with a specialist teacher teaching this subject in Years 3 – 6 in 2012. This will continue in 2013 and our improved results in the WAMSE Society and Environment testing may be in part due to this focus. English and Science follow the Australian Curriculum and all four of these areas will be consolidated in 2013, with Geography and Languages being picked up in 2014. Other programmes that we promote include all aspects of the arts and sport, the instrumental programme, Seasons for Growth and our pastoral care programme led by Sr Wendy, a valued member of our staff, extension and support programmes, environmental projects and St Vinnies, which is new this year and has a strong following among the students. Thank you to all staff members whose work makes these programmes possible.

With the increased use of technology, and the need to maintain knowledge and use of digital media, the Board has spent $118,000 over the past two years on infrastructure, hardware and software. I am assured by CEO personnel that this has placed us in a good position to utilise the technology effectively in teaching and learning. We will need to replace all the projectors for the IWBs over the next two years, as well as continuing to replace laptops and desktops and make decisions about the extent to which we will adopt the use of ipads.

Other developments in the next few months include the long awaited changes to the Kiss and Ride and the refurbishment of the Junior Primary playground. I anticipate the playground will be completed over the summer holidays, with the car park completed during the April holidays.

Staff changes will see the loss of Alex Arundale, one of our Kindy teachers, as she takes up a position at a school closer to her home, and the movement of several staff members who are going on parental leave, joining others who are currently enjoying their babies – making a total of 8 staff members on parental leave. Eileen Peters, who has been one of our Reading Recovery teacher for the past four years, retires this year and is looking forward to spending time with her grandchildren, walking and having time to do all those things that we dream of doing when we are working. Bridget Jones, one of the longest serving members of staff, having started here when the school opened in 1997, is relinquishing her position as Assistant Principal, but will be continuing here in a part time capacity. I will miss her in the office. She has been a stalwart support to me and a joy to work with. She is looking forward to her mini retirement but we hope she will be here for a few years yet, to continue to support and encourage staff, particularly those in the early years of their teaching journey. Thank you, Bridget, Eileen and Alex for being members of our staff and nurturing our children.

Our Quality Catholic Schooling components this year were Student Achievement, Cultural Diversity, Evangelisation, Finances and Facilities and Engagement with Church and Parish. The outcomes of these are as follows:
That staff, through PLC meetings and professional development, ensure student achievement is maximized through the provision of suitable challenging learning experiences relevant to individual student needs across all learning areas.

That a cultural committee be established as a subcommittee of the Pastoral Care Committee to co-ordinate cultural activities for the school.

That a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee be established to investigate ways of creating organised, accessible and effective classroom environments given the limitations of our school and classroom design.

That the community grows in its awareness and understanding of the school’s Evangelisation Plan.

These have already been acted upon and will continue to be developed in 2013.

Kindy increases from 11 to 15 hours in 2013. This year we operated three groups of 20 rather than two groups of 30 and this has been of great benefit to the children, providing them with a great start in their education. This will continue in 2013. I thank the Board for recognising the benefits and underwriting the additional costs incurred. We also operate a playgroup in second semester, for children who will be coming in to our school as new students the following year. This has been highly successful in allowing children to gain familiarity in the environment and parents to make new friends, particularly those for whom St Andrew’s is a new community.

In closing, I thank the Board for their foresight, recognition of the issues facing Catholic education, the time they give to the school community through their membership of the Board and their support for me as Principal at St Andrew’s. I also thank the staff, whose dedication to the betterment of your children’s lives is to be admired. This is a wonderful place in which to work, supported by many caring parents who only want the best for their children.

I wish you all the best in the coming Christmas season. May the blessing of Christ be upon you all.

Eileen Climo
Principal
27th November, 2012