

# inspired

THE SACS MAGAZINE | ISSUE 9 | 2021

## Character at the core

In what has been an entirely character-building year in 2021, St Andrew's Cathedral School has helped students develop the 'strengths' necessary to flourish in an ever-changing world.



heart  
mind  
life



ST ANDREW'S  
CATHEDRAL  
SCHOOL  
FOUNDED 1885

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**Cover photo**

During remote learning in Term 3, a staff LEGO competition was won by our Head of Wellbeing K-6, Bronwyn Wake, who recreated each of the 15 SACS Character Strengths. This is "Hopeful".

**Inside cover photo**

The Character Strength illustration of Hopeful is one in the suite of 15 promoted throughout the school.

**Photography**

Thanks to Mark Heriot, Craig Proudford, teaching staff and the Marketing and Community Engagement teams for supplying images from 2021 that appear throughout these pages.

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all the latest news and  
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**[www.sacs.nsw.edu.au](http://www.sacs.nsw.edu.au)**

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**StAndrewsCathedralSchool**

# Hopeful

A heart filled with hope has  
lots to look forward to.





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# Reflections on 12 character-building years

Character education is at the core of what SACS does and it is something that Dr Collier has nurtured over his 12 years at the helm. Here he shares his final *Inspired* reflections as our Head of School.



Members of our school community will indulge me a little I hope if I am a little wistful and nostalgic in this column. You will receive this publication I expect in my last week as Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School and Gawura, roles I have occupied for the last 12 years. Indeed, I have been Head of School for 31 years (four schools in total), on the executive of schools for 41 years and a teacher for 49. It has been a long incumbency, which has brought me great delight and where I hope I have contributed usefully, particularly to the lives of the young people we serve.

SACS and Gawura are unique schools. Few would need much convincing of this. The culture and their physicality is very special and remarkably distinctive. Perhaps my main observations are these: our students are delightful, lovely, caring, inspiring young people. Whereas one could conclude from many voices in society that our youth are disappointing, I find them immensely encouraging. It has been simply wonderful to have some small part in the journey to adulthood for so many.

SACS is making a distinctive contribution in character education. Increasingly, quality schools (like SACS!) are accepting that education at its best is a lot more than delivering high quality academic outcomes, vital and central though this be to

our mission. Quality education is, in fact, about educating the whole person: aspects include excellent teaching and learning, high quality pastoral care which promotes human flourishing, and wonderful co-curricular, sport and outdoor education experiences which help shape personhood. This is the platform within which we endeavour to, in company with parents, shape young people into emerging adults of high calibre who reflect our Christian values, and we hope, our Christian beliefs. Outcomes of a SACS education we hope include wonderful life destination options, but also lives well lived.

I have been immensely impressed with our staff, with their professionalism, their deep care for young people and their commitment, far beyond reasonable hours or what salary may justify to the work of the school, and to its fundamental mission of Christian education. Similarly, parents have been overwhelmingly supportive and a joy with whom to engage.

Perhaps my only regret is that education was not this good when I was a school student all those decades ago. What has been offered has been of high standard because SACS is deeply committed to the integration of education: of quality teaching and learning, pastoral care, co-curricular and sport, Christian education, student wellbeing and human flourishing.

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I will carry forward fond memories of people – students, staff, parents – and hope and expect to hear great things in future about individuals and the school as a whole.

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The most significant person in whatever leadership I have been able to provide is my wife Kate, who has been a steadfast supporter through all 31 years of my Headship and indeed all 41 years as a school executive. She has generously involved herself in my mission and accepted my absence from home for so many long days on school business over so many decades. None of it would have been possible without her.

I know Dr Julie McGonigle will do great work as Head of SACS. She is fully immersed in the culture and ethos of the school and is an educator of great substance and reputation. She will bring a passion and clarity to the school, forged in a stellar education through Oxford University and notable achievements within UK schooling. Her time working with us since 2017 as Deputy Head (Academic) has been both transformational and inspirational.

I will carry forward fond memories of people – students, staff, parents – and hope and expect to hear great things in future about individuals and the school as a whole. Thank you for your shepherding of me, as I have endeavoured to foster you over many years. I hope that you will find the words of Jesus *"I came that you may have life and have it in all its fullness"* (John 10:10) meaningful for you and in that respect, I encourage everyone on their journey through life to keep considering the Christian paradigm which offers salvation through Jesus.

Farewell, and the Lord be with you!

Dr John Collier



School captains and vice-captains from 2010 to 2021 gathered for a special reunion dinner in February to celebrate and recall their fondest memories of school and John and Kate Collier. They also presented Dr Collier with a framed photo gallery of each group of senior student leaders during his tenure.

## Captains celebrate Collier's deep impact

**Despite a very busy schedule as Head of School, Dr Collier's deep care and commitment to the lives of his students has always been evident. Ethan Crossweller (OA2016) speaks with other school captains about their favourite memories.**

Every School Captain from Dr Collier's time as Head of School will fondly remember Monday mornings at 10.35am. Once a fortnight, Dr Collier would invite the two school captains and two vice-captains to a meeting. The agenda was never explicitly stated but, by force of habit, a natural rhythm formed and all parties knew exactly how to proceed. The first order of business was to consume the baked goods, the second was to drink the chocolate milk, and then in between the mouthfuls, there was time for some light conversation about school and family life.

Callum Knox (School Vice-Captain, 2019) was lucky enough to earn the title of 'designated eater' during his time, which included the responsibility of consuming the leftovers. "I used to drop crumbs everywhere and leave the room red faced. Muffins would always go around and I would sit feasting in the corner," Callum said. "I never went hungry when I was around Dr Collier."

Apart from the food consumption, the meetings also provided students with

an opportunity for connection. "They were always enjoyable and almost casual," Layla Harris (School Captain, 2019) said. "We discussed school matters but also other things like what Dr Collier got up to on the weekend with his grandchildren and what we did on the weekend. I really valued the time. I think it showed he was invested in us not just as students but as people."

There are more than 1400 students at St Andrew's Cathedral School yet despite that numerical mountain, Dr Collier has always sought to invest in the young people under his care. His cultivation of a relationship with the student leaders is, by proxy, revealing of his concern for the entire student body. His faithful presence on the sideline of SACS sporting matches is a testament to this concern. So, too, his mission to remember as many student names as possible.

Vice-Captain Tim Mildenhall (2018) always appreciated Dr Collier's meticulous attention to detail: "He was able to remember everyone's name, and not just their name on paper but the name they

preferred to be called, as well as any interests they have, places they've been, and other parts of their lives."

In Anthony Segart's (School Captain, 2017) first week of Year 7, it was a passing interaction with Dr Collier that made him feel at home: "There were 100-plus students who started in my year and he walked down the corridor, knew my name, and said, 'hello Anthony'. It was such a tiny thing but it touched me that here was a school with a heart and a principal that cared about his students."

What was true in the corridor was also true in tougher times. Dr Collier's first year at SACS coincided with the tragic death of Year 11 student Kundayi Chiundiza in 2010. At that moment, it was his care of students he didn't yet have a relationship with that made a deep impression on Tom De Jersey (School Captain, 2011). "Our year group was incredibly irrational and emotional. Dr Collier cut us a huge amount of slack. I was struck by the way he was able to look after young people who were having a really tough time," Tom said.

Sam Pfeiffer (School Captain, 2010) remembers the event as Dr Collier's first real test and a moment that won him the respect of the student body. "When you're a child and something happens that you can't explain, you can get angry but there was an amazing calm that came over the school and Dr Collier instilled this sense of belief that we'll get through this," he said. "He applied logic and rationality, and at that moment of turmoil, his influence cannot be undersold."

Dr Collier's steady hand was bested only by the quality of his steady voice, at least according to Joey Watson (Head Prefect, 2014) who is now an ABC Radio producer. "I don't think I ever appreciated at the time how lucky we were to have a principal who has such an iconic baritone voice. I always thought it'd be great radio and a couple of years ago I was listening to ABC Radio National and sure enough there was 'Doc' speaking in the lower register. Thank you so much for setting the tone in what were some really great formative years."



# Character at the heart of education

Our unique character education program entered a new phase in 2021 – being integrated into all areas of school life, including the curriculum. Melanie Collins reports on how the program is impacting students' lives.

In schools today, the development of strong character and a moral compass is seen as more important than ever. But it isn't new. In 1947, the great Martin Luther King Jr wrote about the purpose of education, stating: "Intelligence plus character – that is the true goal of education." He said, perhaps "the most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals".

At SACS, a major focus is to equip students with the positive Character Strengths required to navigate and flourish in an increasingly complex world. But how does a school approach such a challenging goal?

A select team of educators at the school spent years designing a unique character development program that incorporated the 10 existing IB Learner Attributes (that come with being an IB World School) with five that reflect the school's Christian foundations and values.

## SACS Character Strengths

Caring, Grateful, Principled, Courageous, Servant-hearted, Knowledgeable, Thinking, Inquiring, Open-minded, Reflective, Hopeful, Balanced, Persistent, Self-controlled, Communicative.

The IB Learner profile encourages students to be: Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced and Reflective. These 10 attributes were adapted and five additional character attributes unique to the school were added: Grateful, Servant-hearted, Self-controlled, Hopeful and Persistent.

A key component of the program's rollout in 2021 was the production of unique, engaging illustrations for each of the 15 Character Strengths, which are presented as large colourful decals in stairwells and walls on every level of the campus. The images provide a visual narrative for teaching and learning and are replicated in teacher handbooks and classroom resources as part of the strategy to embed the Strengths into every class and subject in the school. Through both incidental and focussed classroom discussions, alongside tutorial (secondary) and wellbeing (primary) lessons, all students are given the opportunity to reflect on the meaning and application of each Character Strength, and any behaviours that accompany that Strength.

"The development of character is at the heart of our teaching and pastoral care, taught both explicitly and implicitly through habits and routines, role-modelling, service opportunities, leadership and relationships," says the Head of Wellbeing and Character



Derek Champion. "In a co-educational environment, character education equips boys and girls to grow in wisdom and hope, so they can use their developing knowledge and expertise in ways that positively impact those around them.

"The highly relatable visible presentation of the Character Strengths around the school this year boosted learning conversations and our program also saw students being recognised with stickers and merits for demonstrating those strengths, which we call 'Strength spotting'.

"We aim to embed strong values through our Junior and Middle School years so that in some of those more difficult years of adolescence, our students will be able to make better decisions that direct their lives."

The illustrations prompt students to engage with the concepts at a deeper level and also create great conversation starters for students and staff that can help them see a different perspective or way of approaching an activity, which ultimately leads to growth in character.

The Junior School Wellbeing Coordinator Bronwyn Wake says the illustrations have prompted some great conversations among students. "Students in the Junior School do particularly love the Grateful image," she says. "It is painted in the stairwell on the way up

to the rooftop playground and many students point to all the things in the picture that they are grateful for as they walk past it going off to play. The Persistent image is another one they love. They can relate to the idea of having lots and lots of unsuccessful attempts before they succeed and we work hard to make persistence a normal part of the learning process. We encourage students to not give up, but rather to have a growth mindset and enthusiastically strive for excellence in all that they do."

Year 5 student Titus says he found learning about Persistence particularly helpful in Term 3. "Even though remote learning is hard we have to keep going with it. I have learnt that sometimes you need to walk away and then come back and try again," he says.

Year 6 student Aidan enjoyed learning how Balanced helps improve wellbeing: "I learnt that a balanced lifestyle is one where you do different things and diversify your activities. This is good because it means you never get bored and you get good at lots of different things."

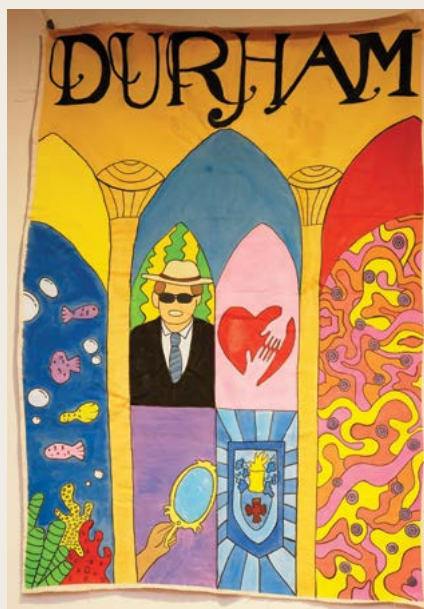
Year 1 student Dashiell says he has learned how to apply Grateful, Persistent, Caring and Self-control: "I try to not give up while doing remote learning, [being Persistent] and I am grateful for the teachers who are impressed by my work."

**Continued on page 6 >**



Clockwise from top left: the The Balanced Character Strength illustration shows the many facets of a student's life that may need to be addressed in order for them to have a healthy balance of activities; Derek Champion and Bronwyn Wake oversee the wellbeing and character development programs at the school; the Grateful illustration shows a child putting thank you stickers on all the things she appreciates in life; and the Persistent illustration, which covers a wall in St Andrew's House, demonstrates the joy that comes from achieving a goal after many unsuccessful attempts.





Students participating in the Gala Day's House banner competition were challenged to create an image that combined an element of the school's Character Strengths with something representing Dr Collier. There were some very creative posters produced, with Durham's Reflective and Servant-hearted illustration judged the winner, just ahead of Winchester and Westminster.

Year 4 student Clementine found that learning Self-control helped her stay focused: "Self-control showed me you should try to stay focused and do what you think is best... not just doing what you want but what is best for you."

The teacher handbook, used for classroom discussions in both the Junior and secondary school, explains in greater depth the meaning and values behind each character strength and how to guide open conversations with students about growing in character. The wall decals and replicated graphics in the classroom improve teaching practice as they provide a launchpad for further discussion.

The school's MYP Coordinator, Kate Layhe, says there are lots of interesting ways teachers are approaching and implementing character development in their classes.

"Just one example was in science, where a class was using toy 'slinkies' (precompressed helical spring toys) to demonstrate how waves work," Kate explains. "Prior to starting, the teacher explained that one of the learning intentions for the class was to demonstrate the Character Strength of 'self-controlled'. This really made a difference to the productiveness of the class, which then resisted the temptation to simply play around with the slinkies."

Other areas of school life that have incorporated character strengths include the MYP Service Records, which encourage Caring and Servant-hearted activities, and the 2021 Andrean Writer, Composer and Artist of the Year competitions, where submissions needed to use one of four Character Strengths (Hopeful, Thinking, Persistent or Caring) as their theme. For Gala Day's House banner competition, the students were given the task of incorporating character strengths into an image representing Dr Collier, and the results were incredibly creative (see images above).

"Character growth can develop out of positive conversations that challenge students to re-evaluate their assumptions about themselves, others and the world," Mr Champion explains. "One area we openly discuss is the source of our Character Strengths, which is the Christian story that offers meaning, hope and life 'to the full'."

**Watch the 2021 SACS Character Strengths roll-out video:**

[https://youtu.be/kSh7q\\_Caeb8](https://youtu.be/kSh7q_Caeb8)

## Spreading hope

In Term 3 of remote learning, the Junior School's weekly SEW (Social and Emotional Wellbeing) lessons invited students to come up with creative ways to secretly "smuggle" Hope into their homes, streets and local communities. The results were overwhelming. Students baked cookies and wrote cards for family members and neighbours, drew

pictures of hope for friends and neighbours and painted rocks with messages of hope and left them along nearby streets and parks. Kindergarten student Giorgio painted love hearts and wrote a message of hope on the back which he gave to café owners and left on park benches to spread hope in the community.



Giorgio (Kindergarten) and Allan (Year 3) distributed messages of hope to their community.



# Celebrating our Olympic athletes

Several Olympic and Paralympic athletes started their climb to the pinnacle of their sport while at the school. Archivist Kelton Jarvis shares their stories.

It was said to be the Olympics that couldn't happen. Yet despite a year's delay and the risk imposed by a worldwide pandemic, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics was an unstoppable force, a welcome reprieve from the drudgery of the second Sydney lockdown.

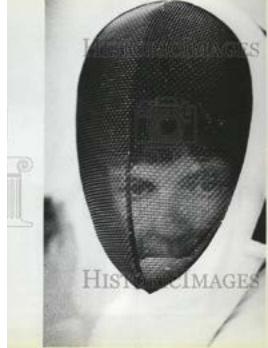
St Andrew's Cathedral School has a collection of Olympians/Paralympians of its own. This year, we were able to cheer on Old Andean Matthew Levy OAM (OA2006), one of Australia's most awarded Paralympic swimmers, who, at the age of 34, brought home a bronze medal in the 100m breaststroke and a 4x100m freestyle relay gold medal in a Games record. Matt took up swimming as treatment for Cerebral Palsy, and never looked back. While still a student at SACS, he competed in the 2004 Games, and then went on to compete in the 2008, 2012, 2016 and now 2020 Paralympic Games. Overall, Matt has won three Paralympic Games gold medals, one silver medal and five bronze medals for Australia. He has swum at five world championships and won a staggering 53 major swimming championship medals from state, national and international events and broken four world records. Matt is a motivational speaker and Change Analyst for Westpac and has recently published his biography, *Keeping your head above water*. He was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for services to sport in 2014 and was inducted in the SACS Hall of Honour in 2015.

Among our school's first Olympians were two fencers. Back in the 1950s, a fencing

club was founded by Maestro 'Tex' Clarke, a legendary fencing teacher (famous in the film industry for fight choreography) and under his tutelage, many students became passionate and successful fencers, including two eventual Olympians, the late Graeme Jennings (OA1967) and Bill Ronald (OA1967). Graeme competed in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics and continued to follow his passion for the sport as a professional coach, first at the University of Sydney and later in the USA as the head fencing coach at Cornell University in New York.

Bill Ronald was inspired to take up fencing by seeing "Zorro" on television. While still a student at SACS, he became the Australian Junior Foil Champion in 1964, 1965 and 1966; then the Australian Open Epee Champion in 1969. Like Graeme, he competed in three fencing events in the 1968 Mexico City Games. Two years later, he claimed silver in the Foil Teams event at the 1970 Commonwealth Games. In subsequent years, he became President of the Australian Fencing Federation, having a key role in the Australian Olympic fencing teams in 1976, 1984 and 1988. He managed the fencing competition for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sydney in 2000 and he was also the fencing coach for the Modern Pentathlon team at the London 2012 Olympics. Bill returned to SACS as our fabulous fencing coach in 2013 and was inducted into our Hall of Honour in 2019.

One of our most extraordinary Olympic stories is that of Warwick Selvey (OA1958).



Clockwise from top right: Paralympic swimmer Matt Levy, Olympic discus thrower and shot putter Warwick Selvey (centre), Olympic gold medal sailor Malcolm Page (right) with his teammate and coach, and Olympic fencers Bill Ronald and Graeme Jennings.

When Warwick was 15, Mr Farthing, the sports and geography teacher at SACS, introduced discus, javelin and shot put to the school. SACS was the first school in Australia to have all three throwing events. Warwick enthusiastically took up all of them and a year later he broke the Under 16 Australian record in discus and shot put. He competed in discus and shotput at the 1960 Rome and the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games and won the discus gold medal at the 1962 Commonwealth Games. Warwick took up weightlifting as part of his training for athletics and managed to win two national weightlifting titles. His career as a chiropractor spanned 50 years and he was inducted in the SACS Hall of Honour in 2015.

Malcolm Page OAM (OA1989) is one of Australia's most successful yachtsmen,

winning a staggering six world championships in the 470 men's sailing class. His Olympic record is similarly astounding, competing in the 2004, 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games and winning gold in the latter two. He was the captain of the Australian sailing team from 2005-2012 and was the Australian flagbearer in the 2012 London Games Closing Ceremony. After three years as the head coach for USA sailing, Malcolm returned to Sydney's Northern Beaches in 2019 and is the Australian coach for the 49ers class.

The Olympic values of *excellence, friendship and respect* sit well with our SACS Character Strengths. In a challenging and fragmented year, it is a joy to be inspired by current and former Olympians, to witness their courage and persistence alongside their caring and kindness.

# Students develop resilience in the face of adversity

**Outdoor education is a significant part of a student's journey at SACS. Ethan Croweller reports on the transformative nature of the progressive and purposeful outdoor experiences that are transforming students' lives.**

In the heart of winter, it can be tempting for most people to stay under the doona dreaming of sunnier days. But St Andrew's Cathedral School's Outdoor Education Department has adopted a different approach to cold weather. According to Head of Outdoor Education, John Chapman, that's because bad weather is not always a bad thing.

Rain, hail, or shine, the school's Outdoor Education camps proceed undeterred. There are, of course, exceptions (aside from the COVID restrictions in 2020 and 2021). In 2019, one camp was forced to come to a premature end as bushfires raged across NSW. Safety is always paramount. But in general, inclement weather is considered an invaluable opportunity. It calls for and brings out something deeper from students: grit and guts.

"We're teaching skills in the Outdoor Education Department but also wellbeing. We want the students to build up their resilience. We want them, in the later years of school especially, to go through pretty significant challenges [in our program]," John says.

Outdoor Education, insists the Head of School, Dr John Collier, is an important part of SACS' education of the whole person. "Our outdoor campus Kirrikee, in the Southern Highlands, is 'the lungs of the school', an important antidote to the tar and cement of the city. It is the centre of our

outdoor education experiences through to the end of Year 8 and the base from which we can range statewide, interstate and internationally, across the final years of school," he says. "Moreover, our model is very distinctive. Unlike most schools, we do not outsource outdoor education to professional providers. Instead, we have our own permanent outdoor education staff, all highly trained in the field, who run a consecutive and longitudinal program, where each year builds on skills attained in previous years and where the same staff work with students and their personal growth, over often more than a decade. Hence, as in other aspects of SACS, relationships are at the core."

The program starts in Kindergarten and continues through to Year 10. Each year group takes part in an experience that is tailored to their age and stage; the youngest SACS students will experience a day-long field trip while the oldest students can opt-in to experience a 20-day expedition.

The opportunity to take students to amazing places where they can experience nature (sometimes at its worst and sometimes at its best) and face challenges they may not have encountered before, is irresistible. It stands as a real point of difference for SACS students who are very familiar with a city lifestyle and would otherwise miss out on the unique experiences of an outdoor education.



"We don't expect them all to come out being Bear Grylls and wanting to be in the outdoors for the rest of their lives," John says. "We also want them to realise it's not just about learning the hard lessons – cooking outdoors or sleeping on the floor – but that they can transfer these things into everyday life."

The challenges of camp equip students with the resilience required to get out of bed on life's wintry days. It models that there can be joy in challenges; hope in adversity; perseverance in the face of opposition.

Year 11 student Reilly O'Sullivan went on the school's iconic 20-day expedition last year and counts the experience as one of his best. "The hardest thing was probably walking every day, prepping, packing up your stuff, unpacking, doing it all again the next day," he

says. "Also, not talking to my family was kind of a big thing. There were times I'd get a bit homesick in the pouring rain. I learnt to pick my head up.

"After the second week you get used to the new pattern. There's no other worries in your life apart from, am I tired? Am I hungry? Do I need to go to the bathroom? You also start to look at your surroundings more. You're surrounded by beautiful scenery the entire way. Now, when I'm on the bus, on the way home, I like looking out the window and just appreciating what's around me."

When asked if he would do it again, Reilly was emphatic: "One-hundred per cent, yes, one hundred per cent. I absolutely loved it. It's one of my favourite experiences that I've ever gone through."





The sea kayak camp, snow camp and Year 10 Kosi-to-Coast 20-day expedition are sought-after experiences by secondary students at SACS, with all camps building students' independence, leadership skills, resilience and friendships.





# Junior students get a taste of camp life – in the city

SACS' Kindy to Year 2 outdoor education experiences lay the foundations for longer overnight camps in later years, writes Ethan Crossweller.

Year 3 camp marks a special moment in the life of a SACS student. It's a camp filled with 'firsts': first time away overnight as a year group, first time dangling from a rope on the jungle vines course (with a safety harness, of course), first time stargazing and wombat hunting at night and often the first campfire with friends! Yet for all the drama and adventure that these new experiences bring, the greatest challenge for students has been the simple task of falling asleep at night in a tent at a new adventure playground – Kirrikee.

According to Outdoor Programs Supervisor Bec Wise, students regularly arrive at camp so excited at the prospect of sleeping in a tent for the first time that sleep fails to come at all. It turns out tents can serve two purposes. They're places of rest, yes. But they're also a haven for whispered conversations.

"Many students reported that it was their first night ever away from home," Bec says. "It's a big jump to go from always sleeping at home with your parents to sleeping in a tent, two hours away from home at our Outdoor Education campus. We didn't have too many upset and anxious kids. They were just so excited by the whole thing."

As staff observed student behaviour, it became clear that the challenge of getting enough sleep was not an isolated incident but a recurring experience. So, in 2019, the Outdoor Education program was extended to include students from K-2. The result is a carefully designed program that takes our youngest SACS students out of the familiar classroom setting and into the great outdoors.

In Year 2, students are now treated to a night in a tent within St Andrew's House. It's affectionately known as the 'Year 2 sleepover' and it's a proven winner. Students spend the day at Bicentennial Park exploring the natural world

and bonding with their fellow classmates. Come nightfall, they settle in for a movie (with popcorn, of course!) and then, when the time is right, head to bed in the comfort of their own tent. It all takes place within the four walls of a building that students already know and love.

"We were thinking about what we could do in Year 2 to make it a bit easier in Year 3," John Chapman, Head of Outdoor Education, says. "We knew we still wanted to do a sleepover, but we thought, let's do it at the school instead. The idea was to give Year 2 students a night away but in a spot that the kids are more comfortable with."

The excitement and challenges of the sleepover prepare students for their trip away to Kirrikee in Year 3. And the Kindergarten and Year 1 day field trips prepare students for the sleepover. It's a pattern that points to an educational philosophy that runs right through the school's Outdoor Education program.

"Our idea of Outdoor Ed is that it's relevant and the right difficulty for the age group. With all our programs we aim to increase and build on the skills that students have learnt the year before," Bec explains.

"In those early years we don't want to overload our youngest students with a whole bunch of information or make them hike kilometre after kilometre. We want to provide them with a different environment where they can actually enjoy being in nature."

By the time students hit Year 10, they're offered the chance to take part in the school's iconic 20-day Kosi-to-Coast expedition which starts at Mount Kosciuszko, skirts the Snowy River, and finishes at the Victorian coast. Thanks to the new program, this year's Kindy students will take steps towards Year 10 and, it is hoped, fall in love with nature and appreciate the many blessings these experiences can bring along the way.







Year 1 students experience a day-long field trip while Year 2 students extend this experience with a sleep-over in tents in St Andrew's House.



# Coaching takes teaching to new heights

The growth coaching program at SACS is gaining traction with teachers and leading to striking improvements in classroom practice and student engagement, writes Elle Smith and Melanie Collins.



At the heart of teaching at St Andrew's Cathedral School is its Teaching and Learning Model, which focuses on three key aspects: Instruction, Practice and Feedback. To support teachers to implement this model within their classrooms, SACS has introduced Growth Coaching for teacher professional development. As a result, the school has seen a significant change in the way staff are collaborating and working alongside each other to reflect on their teaching practice and measure their impact on student learning.

Renowned education researcher Professor John Hattie considers that most teaching strategies have a positive impact on student outcomes, however, he says the interventions that have the greatest impact should be the focus of best practice in schools. Hattie's research places teacher collective efficacy, or teachers working together to evaluate their impact, as having a significant influence on student growth.

The coaching program at the school reflects Hattie's research on Visible Learning that encourages a shift from what works, to what works best! Coaching promotes this shift by teachers as they engage in deep reflection of their classroom teacher practice, student learning and current educational research.

## Teaming up with Growth Coaching International (GCI)

Coaching at SACS is centred around the Growth Coaching International (GCI) framework, which sees strong relationships evolve between teachers and learning coaches to achieve a shared goal. It is these relationships that help our teachers to live out the school's vision to *inspire students to be passionate, creative learners who ... fully develop their gifts and abilities*.

The school has an increasing number of staff who are trained in Growth Coaching through GCI. The coaching strategy and culture is driven by Senior Learning Coach Elle Smith, who works with a team of coaches to deliver professional development programs and 1:1 coaching, focused on the Growth Coaching framework.

"We know that Growth Coaching is becoming an increasingly popular professional development option among our staff, with more than 50 per cent of our teachers now accessing coaching for professional development," Elle says. "At any given time we can have up to 50 teachers and leaders engaging in 1:1 coaching conversations each fortnight across K-12. It's also encouraging that over 75 per cent of our teachers accessing coaching report that their growth in teacher expertise was at least one step

up on our teacher expertise scale, ranging from support needed, developing, good, excellent through to expert."

## Impact on student outcomes

Learning Coach (7-12) Dominique Haynes believes Growth Coaching is having a positive impact in the classroom: "It is apparent from the evidence we have collected as coaches, not just numerical data from assessments, but also from work samples of students, that the students at SACS whose teachers engage with coaching are being challenged to achieve high standards in their academic work."

Dominique says improvements in student engagement and work production are a direct result of teachers implementing small incremental adjustments to teaching and learning in the classroom. "Students are also benefiting from seeing a teacher who is engaging with current educational research and evidence as a reflective practitioner – students see their teacher as a life-long learner who talks the talk and walks the walk," Dominique says.

The Coordinator of Teaching and Learning (K-6), Kaye Chalwell, who is also a Learning Coach, says the coaching program gives teachers space to develop their skills, and this has got to be a good thing for our students. "Ultimately everything we do at SACS is about our

students; we develop as teachers because we know this is how we help our students," Kaye says. "Growth Coaching gives teachers the opportunity to be reflective as we grow as educators and ensures that our approach to student improvement is evidence informed."

## Coaching improves staff wellbeing

A recent independent survey of staff, which saw SACS win The Voice Project's Best Workplace of the Year Award, found that, perhaps unsurprisingly, coaching positively impacts staff wellbeing and professional growth. As a result, coaching is now a key component in the school's Strategic Plan that aims to *attract, retain and develop the best staff*.

Senior Learning Coach Elle Smith puts the growth in the number of teachers and leaders accessing coaching down to the practical nature of two colleagues working with the evidence gathered from the classroom. "Our coaching approach has both teacher and leader voice guiding what's best when it comes to supporting our teachers; this ensures that what we are doing is specific to both the professional goals of our teachers and the whole school goals for teaching and learning," she says.





Top left: Senior Learning Coach Elle Smith. Top: students are benefiting from the improvements in teaching practice. Above: Staff professional development days often promote Growth Coaching opportunities.

## Skilled and passionate coaches are key to success

The Learning Coaches at SACS take pride in their role and Elle says the success of the coaching culture is only as strong as the skills and dedication of the coaches. "We strive to support our coaches to develop professionally by providing access to the best professional development with GCI and regular ongoing coaching," she says.

Years 7-12 Learning Coach Natalie Bouroncle says the fact that coaches can also access professional coaching has been essential to her skill development and ensures

that she is modelling reflective practice to the teachers she coaches.

While the coaching culture at the school will evolve, depending on teacher and student needs and demands, Elle says it is clear that coaching and mentoring staff does have a positive impact on student outcomes. "Over time, we will be able to measure exactly what type of coaching most impacts classroom effectiveness, but it is already clear that a growing, supported teacher, who is adjusting their teaching practice to have more impact on students, leads to more engaged and purposeful learning for our students."

*"Ultimately everything we do at SACS is about our students; we develop as teachers because we know this is how we help our students"*

**– Kaye Chalwell,  
Coordinator of  
Teaching and  
Learning (K-6)**

## Coaching Triads a hit with staff

Senior Learning Coach Elle Smith says one thing that is likely to remain part of the SACS coaching toolbox is the Coaching Triads, which have proved to be popular with teaching staff.

"Coaching Triads resulted from the 2020 remote learning period to enable staff a platform to collaborate and communicate with each other, to reflect on evidence of best practice and share their experiences," Elle explains. "The triads create an opportunity where three teachers K-12 can come together around a central theme to review research, share evidence, and reflect on their own practice to implement new teaching strategies and measure their impact on student learning."

As a regular participant and facilitator, Years 7-12 Learning Coach Anthony Sharman sees immense value in the Triads, as teachers can use the time to be "creative and think outside the box as to what could be possible. They are also in a safe space for teachers to reflect on what works best."

# Twelve transformational years

Our current Head of School departs after 12 incredible years that has seen St Andrew's Cathedral School become a leading light in NSW education. Director of Community Engagement Lyn Jarvis was a SACS parent when Dr John Collier joined the school in 2010. She reflects on his journey and achievements and speaks with current and past members of the community, who share some of their highlights and memories.





Where do you start when you reflect on the leadership of a school? I was once told by senior staff member Philip Bryson that the challenge for a principal was keeping students, parents and staff happy. A good principal might manage two of these, a great principal succeeds at all three. Dr John Collier has been a great principal!

Morgan Au (OA2021) sums him up perfectly: "I think it should be mentioned how hard working and servant-hearted Dr Collier is. It's amazing to see him on the television speaking up not only in the defence of his students, but also of the teachers and staff at SACS. It's been so uplifting having a headmaster who very visibly cares about not just those he is directly in charge of, but also those around him in general. I personally will remember Dr Collier as one of the most warm-hearted and compassionate men I have ever met."

Some students have said that Dr Collier is a little scary at first. According to Josh Ralph (School Captain 2021-22), they soon see he is "softer than he seems and always intrigued as to what you are up to". Saffron Little (School Captain 2021-22) agrees: "He is, in fact, very friendly and makes a huge effort to know who you are". Students are constantly amazed that Dr Collier knows their names. They describe him as legendary, wise, considerate, humble, generous, witty, personable, friendly and thoughtful. They all mention his iconic voice and many of the students do excellent impersonations. Olivia Bishara (2021-22 Prefect) shares that the funniest description of Dr Collier that she has heard references the famous Harry Potter stories: "He's a bit like the Dumbledore of the school;

all-knowing, funny, kind, serious when the time calls, and a little bit mysterious." Students think this description is hilarious, especially considering the incoming Head of School is Dr McGonigle.

### Staff grow under servant leadership

The staff's faith in the leadership of Dr Collier is unquestionable. In 2020, St Andrew's Cathedral School was awarded the Voice Project's 'Best Workplace Award' for achieving exceptional levels of employee engagement. He is quick to praise and thank staff and credit their achievements, while being endlessly humble as to his own contribution. A giant intellect himself, Dr Collier is a champion of life-long professional learning for all staff. Under his guidance, "the professional learning program for teaching staff has developed to be world class" says Kirsten Macaulay, Director of Teaching. As staff we all appreciate Dr Collier's delight in our milestones, both personal and professional, and like the rest of the school community, we enjoy his dry humour.

### Transparent communication wins parent respect

Former parent and P&F President Craig West describes Dr Collier as "fiercely protective of his staff and his students and ... very happy to hold parents to account when they 'misbehave'". Dr Collier became quite the media sensation in 2018 when, in a newsletter to parents, he told them to "chill". It was applauded not only by staff and the media, but perhaps unexpectedly, also by SACS parents. "John had a unique

style and an unwavering commitment to directly communicate with parents – he never refused to answer, he never glossed over things, and he never stopped communicating," Craig says.

They have "so much affection and goodwill for him," says former parent Rebecca Hetherington. Parents are amazed that he attends so many school events – sport, music, drama, socials, Cathedral, fundraising, everything – and at each event, he tries to see and say hello to as many parents as possible. They are genuinely fond of him, as well as having enormous respect for how he cares for their children. The P&F even ensures his favourite treats appear at their meetings (Tim Tams and cheese).

### Growing enrolments and school culture

One of the most significant changes to SACS since 2010 has been both the size and shape of the school. Just prior to Dr Collier starting, the school had gone through a difficult enrolment period due mainly to the Global Financial Crisis, with enrolments dropping to as low as 1040. The school was what Dr Collier called an "inverted triangle" – with a massive 620 students in Senior College and less than 200 in the Junior School. According to Registrar Bruce Perry, "Our growth has in fact been astronomical since that time, growing almost 40 per cent to our current high of 1450". Our 'inverted triangle' has also changed, with Dr Collier working closely with the School Council and staff to cap Senior College, grow Middle School and girl enrolments, increase the number of students in Gawura and double the size of the Junior School.

### Gawura goes from strength to strength

One of Dr Collier's legacies is his support of Gawura. Founded in 2007, it was a fledgling, innovative model of education for local First Nations students 12 years ago. Now, it is the 2020 winner of the prestigious Australian School of the Year Award for its lighthouse educational program that achieves results well beyond the national averages for Indigenous students and provides exceptional cultural experiences that uphold and promote the dignity of First Nations' cultures. The school also employs a large percentage of Indigenous staff and through a variety of initiatives, the broader St Andrew's Cathedral School community has proudly grown in its understanding and support for First Nations' histories, cultures and perspectives. Head of Gawura John Ralph has appreciated Dr Collier's ongoing support and is particularly grateful that he supported the introduction of a dedicated Gawura Kindergarten class in 2018 that resulted in "our First Nations' Kindergarten students moving into Year 1 at the same ability level as their peers in Junior School", regardless of whether they had previously attended preschool or had any other formalised learning.



Dr John Collier delighted in welcoming students and parents to the school and was a striking presence at all outdoor events – always wearing a tie and broad-brimmed hat.

## Improvement in academic results

Dr Collier is well known for saying he believes that we educate the whole student “not heads on sticks”. School parent Belinda Davies remembers Dr Collier being asked how he would define success and his answer was “a young adult I’d be proud to call my own”. He affirms that as a school, “we are equally delighted with those students who have not made the published honour lists but who have achieved personal bests and/or have overcome adverse life circumstances to achieve”. Nevertheless, his tenure is marked by significant improvements in academic results, with every cohort since 2015 achieving better overall final year results than the year before. As part of his strategy, Dr Collier introduced the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme in 2016, an internationally accredited framework to promote ‘higher order thinking’. He brought Dr Julie McGonigle to the school in 2017 as the Deputy Head of Academic Improvement and has focused on developing an effective teaching and learning framework and outstanding evidence-informed teaching

practice, which is then combined with deep care for each student’s individual needs. Under his leadership, data dashboards were developed and implemented by Brad Swibel (Deputy Head of School, Secondary) and are now used to help students visualise and set academic goals. The success of these programs can be seen in our Year 12 2020 results, which Dr Collier announced as “the best in the school’s history, surpassing last year’s high tide mark, which surpassed the previous year’s high tide mark”.

## Care beyond graduation

Dr Collier’s support and care for our students remains long after they have graduated. He is delighted always to hear how our Old Andreans are faring and excited by their successes. It is significant that in the 11-member Old Andreans Association Council, nine councillors graduated under Dr Collier’s headship. OAA President Matt Noble (OA2005) has appreciated that Dr Collier “has always been quick to meet, listen and respond to our concerns” and that “his consultative, respectful and supportive approach has enriched and helped build the OAA.”

## Leader in Christian education

Dr Collier is highly regarded as a leading Christian educator whose personal Christian faith underpins his teaching practice and relationships and informs all he does as the Head of School. Dr Collier is one of the leading voices in the formation of authentic Christian schooling, both nationally and internationally, and he has contributed to more than 10 books and countless articles. Rev. Craig Tubman, our School Chaplain, believes that “one of Dr Collier’s great legacies is his ability to combine great theology with excellent educational practice. For Dr Collier, these were always two sides of the same coin.”

Few relationships are as integral to the culture and identity of our school as the one we have with St Andrew’s Cathedral. While the Dean of the Cathedral is a member of the School Council, Dr Collier (and his wife Kate) are active members of the Cathedral congregation, and Dr Collier is a member of Chapter, the Cathedral’s governing body. “As a result, the Cathedral community’s prayerful interest in and appreciation of the life and ministry of the school has deepened and grown,” says

Archbishop Kanishka Raffel. “John’s visionary and inclusive leadership has been an essential part of ensuring the successful partnership of the school and the Cathedral.”

So did Dr Collier achieve all that he hoped in these past 12 years? Did he keep the best of the school’s unique, admirable and warm school culture, while focusing on what could be done even better? Absolutely!

The Chair of School Council, Ray Jarratt, says Dr Collier’s leadership has been extraordinary: “A school like SACS holds a particular promise because of its history and traditions, but its current standing is underpinned by a leader whose singular character, wisdom and experience has been at the foundation of all of the school’s success over the last 12 years. So it’s not just being able to “run” a thing as complex as a school like SACS, it’s about leading – inside the school and outside in the wider community – in particular, the ability to actually inspire a whole community.”





With current Deputy Head Strategic Improvement, Dr Julie McGonigle, stepping into Dr Collier's role in 2022, it is apt to finish with her comments: "The three new mixed relay events in the Tokyo Olympics – triathlon, athletics (4x400m) and swimming (4x100m) – were some of the most exhilarating and interesting competitions in the Games," she says. "I am both privileged and excited to be taking over the baton from Dr Collier in our own new mixed leadership relay. Dr Collier's leg can aptly be described as a *'Tour de Force'* and it will certainly give me a strong starting advantage."

# Relationship building at its finest

One of my earliest memories of Dr Collier was at his first Kirrikee Picnic in 2010. In my role as the President of the P&F, I was chatting with new parents, telling them why I loved St Andrew's Cathedral School. Dr Collier listened intently to all I was saying, probing with a few considered questions – and that is exactly how I remember the first year of his headship – he listened, he reflected, he learnt all he could about what was good and wonderful about our school, and then focused on what could be done to make it even better.

I would argue that one of Dr Collier's great strengths is building relationships. Back in 2011, SACS had a rather 'bruising' encounter with Sydney City Council when the proposed cycleway design threatened to destroy our Kent Street 'drop-off zone'. I witnessed Dr Collier's calm, respectful and patient approach to discussions that not only led to a positive outcome for the school,

but to a meaningful and constructive relationship with both the Mayor and CEO of Sydney City Council that continues today.

There is no doubt that Dr Collier is impressive as an educator and is a giant intellect in the educational sector as seen by his career highlights, awards and publications. He is also a caring, compassionate, genuine and inspiring leader. Since he spent the first 25 years of his teaching career in the state/public system, he is not divisive in his approach to education and believes passionately that Government funding should go where it is most needed.

Dr Collier seeks to provide hope as well as opportunities for young people and has been deeply distressed by what he calls the 'tsunami of mental health issues for young people'. "Because I came from a very dysfunctional family myself, I have always had a great

rapport with students who are struggling or who are from difficult family circumstances," he says. "I have found that very helpful in the role of principal and Head of School in understanding and helping care for those kinds of students."

At the age of 70, Dr Collier is leaving SACS and moving into the tertiary sector as Dean of Education at Morling College. His passion for education is undiminished and his new role will focus on educating the educators (teachers).

I have great respect for Dr Collier and have been a grateful recipient of his kindness, his grace and his calm, enduring wisdom. It has been a joy to be part of his journey at SACS.

– Lyn Jarvis,  
Director of Community Engagement and former P&F President (2010-2012)

Lyn Jarvis (centre) with John and Kate Collier at the school's 125-year birthday celebrations in 2010.



# Farewell to Kate ...



Kate and John Collier at the 2021 Gawura fundraising evening.

Dr Collier tells us that “the most significant person in whatever leadership I have been able to provide is my wife Kate, who has been a steadfast supporter through all 31 years of my Headship and has generously involved herself in my mission”.

Kate has been actively involved at SACS, attending events and chatting with interest to parents, students and graduates. During term time, she has spent around four hours a week individually signing birthday cards for all the students and staff and she also hand-delivers them personally to Junior School and Gawura students.

Upon hearing that Dr Collier was leaving, Emma Tomkins (Year 2) asked, “Does Mrs Collier have to leave too?”

It’s not just in Junior School where Kate has had an impact. Nina Perry (Vice Captain 2015) remembers her being “a constant supportive presence in my life at school ... who would always take an interest in what I was up to ...

even teaching me how to quilt for my HSC major work.” She adds that now, as a graduate, “Mrs Collier is one of my best memories from school and I am still, and will always be, so incredibly grateful for the care she showed and her friendship.”

Kate says she has enjoyed her 12-year connection with the SACS community and will take away many fond memories. She is grateful for how welcome she has been made, sharing that “always when I attend any kind of school function, whether it be a performing arts activity, an information evening or Saturday sport; parents, staff and/or students thank me for coming. People have been interested in me as a person, not just as an appendage to the role of Head. I have really appreciated this graciousness and the great strength of the SACS community.”

Fortunately, Kate is a SACS grandparent, so we will still see her at special events and grandparents’ day.

# An inspiring educator and leader

When Dr Collier won Australia’s top education award – the prestigious Sir Harold Wyndham Medal – in 2018, it was the first time in 24 years that a Head of an independent school had received the honour. The CEO of the Australian College of Educators, Helen Jentz, said John was a “once in a generation leader and teacher. He has changed the education profession. His passion for learning is infectious, and it’s not just his students who benefit, rather his colleagues and the entire school community. He has shaped and influenced the lives of thousands of students for the better. He’s an inspiration and example to every educator in NSW.”

Some of the many qualifications, honours and awards John has received include:

- BA DipEd (Sydney University), Diploma of Biblical Studies (Moore Theological College)
- Doctor of Education (University of Western Sydney) Doctoral Thesis (2008) on the Role of Leadership in Developing New Schools, Academic Excellence, and School Culture and Ethos, and Christian Education
- Fellow of Australian College of Educators and the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (these are the ultimate honours for educators in Australia, from the peak professional bodies)
- Winner of the Alan Laughlin Medal (2012) from the Sydney Branch of the Australian College of Educators, for school leadership
- Winner of the JT Laing Award for Principals’ Leadership (2014) from the Principals Australia Institute
- Winner of Australian College of Educators Sir Harold Wyndham Medal (2018) for contribution to education in NSW
- Under his leadership, St Andrew’s Cathedral School won the Voice Project’s Best Workplace Award (2020) for staff satisfaction and engagement
- Under his leadership, St Andrew’s Cathedral Gawura School won the Australian Education Awards’ School of the Year (2020).

Dr Collier receives Australia’s top education award, the Wyndham Medal.





# Archibald finalist captures wry smile

Ann Cape's portrait of Dr John Collier was commissioned by St Andrew's Cathedral School's Association of Parents and Friends.

It is somewhat of an oddity that western culture celebrates certain people by painting their appearance on canvas. It's a tradition that's widely appreciated and regularly practised around the world, with the final piece hung on a public wall for all to see. The *Mona Lisa*, for example, attracts eight million people to The Louvre in Paris every year. The portrait's extraordinary success might tell us skeptics something. What exactly, I'm not so sure. But after talking to Ann, I think I have a far better understanding.

Ann is Ann Cape, a long-time artist, two-time Archibald Prize finalist, and genuine portrait enthusiast. She has turned her passion for portraits into a living. She spends her time connecting brush to canvas in order to create portraits of people, for people.

"The challenge has always appealed to me, to get a likeness or to get something about that person that you can't always get in a photograph," Ann says. "I find the actual process of creating a portrait very exciting, getting it to work, moving it around and manipulating it."

Thanks to the generosity of St Andrew's Cathedral School's Association of Parents & Friends, Ann was asked to capture the face of the much-loved Head of School, Dr John Collier. It's not the first time a SACS principal has been memorialised on canvas. A portrait of Phillip Heath hangs outside the Heath Centre on Level 5 of St Andrew's House, and according to archivist Kelton Jarvis, we have a framed photo of every principal since the school's inception.

Together, the portraits form a rich collection – a mini history of the school. Over the past 12 years Dr Collier has contributed to that history and now, thanks to Ann, he finds his place within the story.

But the beauty of portraiture lies not only in its ability to document history. A good portrait also captures what it is about the person that makes them who they are. Call it personality or character. It makes the job a complex one. The artist must consider her subject on a deeper level. And then, after forming a picture of the whole person in her mind, the artist must distill her impressions into the space that lies between the four walls of the canvas.

"It's a selective process," Ann says. "You have to decide what's going to work, what you are going to do to get the image you want. You may need to exaggerate some things, soften others, and even get rid of stuff. The goal is to get the image that feels right for that person."

"I found with John that the likeness came quite easily. I got an expression that I wanted. Sometimes I really have to fight for it and start again or do a couple of paintings 'til I get what I want. But with his painting, it came quickly."

The result of Ann's work is a portrait that captures the man many of us feel a deep affinity with. John's wry smile is evident and there's kindness in his eyes. His hands are clasped in trademark fashion and his well-knotted tie speaks to the integrity of a man whose school enforces proper



uniform. It's a fitting tribute to Dr Collier and a remarkable feat considering Ann first met John as she sat down to begin painting.

You may be tempted to call portraiture an old-fashioned, somewhat pompous, ornate

tradition. But hear these words from the mouth of a skeptic – there's something undeniably special about the moment you look at a portrait and the man you know looks back at you.

– Ethan Croweller

## Dr Collier: Why I love teaching ...

*"I never wanted to be anything else. It arose initially out of my love for English and history and my growing understanding that I could have a great rapport with young people and that this was a calling and vocation."*

*"Teaching is an activity with a moral purpose. Part of that purpose is the shepherding and equipping of the young. As the young are the future of our civilisation, it is difficult to think of too many activities which are more important. What our nation becomes depends heavily on what we do in education, as that prepares our emerging generation to control the levers of power in every aspect of our society."*



On Dr Collier's 70th birthday, 70 Junior School students surprised him with 70 balloons.

## 'Johnisms' that bring a smile

A 'Johnism' is one of Dr Collier's regular sayings – it might be a gold nugget, something that gives you a giggle or something heard many times before... delivered in his iconic, deadpan way. Parents, students and staff fondly recall some of his most well-known sayings.

**To everyone:** I find all of our young people truly delightful – and I miss them when they aren't here at school.

**To everyone:** Children are a blessing.

**To everyone:** I've been told to keep this speech short.

**At the annual prizegiving event:** I believe that the students like to make jokes about the length of my speech and, in fact, there is a competition amongst some staff and parents to see who will guess its length most accurately.

**During assembly:** Well, I guess I should keep my ramblings to the appointed time.

**At P&F meetings (enjoying the cheese plate):** Crackers are wasted calories. I like to use them as a plate for my cheese.

**On Grandparents' Day to grandparents:** You're in a great position because your grandchildren like seeing you here, they don't like it when their parents are invited to come – that's a different story altogether. Grandparents are very special and have such an important role – you get all the fun stuff.

**About the school:** We are not one of those sandstone private schools with treelined driveways – I'd like to have a driveway; I'd like to have a tree.

**To parents:** Children do much better at school when their parents get involved with school life.

**To parents:** We don't just teach 'heads on sticks'.

**To parents:** There are some parents here at SACS that I describe as lawn mower parents – always trying to smooth the way for their children so they never walk on anything but perfectly cut grass.

**To parents:** There is a phenomenon known in current society as helicopter parenting – unfortunately we have just a few parents who come under the category of Black Hawks.

**To parents and prospective parents:** Senior students can go out into the city and enjoy their cappuccinos and focaccia (updated recently to 'soy lattes and smashed avocado').

**When parents are "misbehaving":** We'd like to keep the students but expel the parents.

**At the Kindergarten information event:** If you don't believe half of what your five-year-old tells you about us, we won't believe what they tell us about you.

**To Junior School parents:** This school journey goes so quickly, one minute they are starting school and the next they are borrowing your car keys.

**To Year 7 parents:** I don't want the Year 12 formal to be the first time I speak with you.

**To Year 7 parents and students:** Dr Collier would call up one of the tallest Year 12 students and call them 'Exhibit A' – this is how much your child will change in only five years.

**To Middle School parents:** My advice to you is to clean your child's bedroom once really well. Take a photo of it that way and stick it to the door on the outside – and never open the door.

**To Year 10 parents:** For parents who decide to teach their children to drive, I have one word for you – 'don't'.

**To Year 12 parents and students:** It's a marathon, not a sprint.

**To Year 12 parents:** Virtually all our graduates will achieve placement in their preferred course in one of our three big universities – that is UNSW, Sydney University and UTS. Some will go to universities interstate or even overseas, and a small percentage will spend a year travelling the world finding themselves on your credit card.



# Some things change but many stay the same

David Gosling (OA1993) reflects on his schoolboy memories and how much he has enjoyed reconnecting with the school for his children's education.

During my student years at St Andrew's Cathedral School, it was all boys and started from Year 3. When I began in Year 7, it had just two floors (Levels 7 and 8) and the rooftop, with a few extra floors in another city building known as the 'Fletcher Building' in Kent St. The only entrance to the school was the Kent Street back door we have now as there was no foyer onto Sydney Square. I recall watching an old building on the corner of Druitt and Sussex St being demolished, not knowing a few years later I would be moving into Levels 1 and 2 of the new Bishop Barry Centre building when I entered Year 10.

St Andrew's was much smaller then, probably around 800 students rather than the 1400-plus now. We used to be able to squeeze everyone from Years 3 to 12 shoulder-to-shoulder into the Cathedral for term services. It was an amazing sound to have the whole school singing traditional hymns with the pipe organ, led by the Headmaster.

My daughters cringe when I tell them about the carpets, which used to go about one metre up the walls to protect

them (from students), or the way around 300 boys (Year 7 to 9) could make their way down the northern fire stairs in only a couple of minutes at the end of the day (the trick was not to stop).

Thankfully one thing that hasn't changed is the strong relationships I see between teachers and students, particularly in Years 11 and 12, and the support offered to students as they approach the pointy end of high school.

After leaving SACS in 1993, I wasn't involved with the school for many years although I always felt a certain affinity for the place whenever I passed Sydney Square.

When deciding on a school for our three daughters, my wife and I were looking for a school that would not only provide academic tuition but would also expose our daughters to a variety of extra-curricular experiences with a strong emphasis on pastoral care and music. All three of my daughters have quite different personalities and we wanted a place that could provide both challenges and support to each

of them in a way that worked with and developed them as their own person.

We took tours of a number of schools and were impressed by the somewhat intangible 'feel' of SACS; the way the teachers and students interacted with each other seemed natural and constructive. To reference a well-loved Australian movie: it was "the vibe".

When my eldest daughter started at SACS in Year 7 in 2016, I reunited with the school and have become more involved over the last few years – attending P&F meetings and volunteering at various functions and activities. This has included being an Old Andrean and parent representative for the 2020-2025 school strategic planning days, being an industry representative for the *Learning the Ropes* career nights and more recently helping as a reader/writer for various Senior College students' exams. I have also enjoyed attending various performances including musicals, *Showcase* and other activities, watching my daughters and the wider school displaying their many abilities.

Volunteering at SACS means I can meet other people in a pleasant atmosphere and also give a little bit back to the school. Despite what some may say, I feel I am a natural introvert, so through volunteering I get some small tasks to work on which can be a good common point to start conversations with other parents. There always appears to be plenty to do but with many people pitching in, everyone seems to have a good time.

In 2020 I started helping as a reader/writer for Senior College students sitting their exams. Writing out an essay on *Macbeth* dredged up memories of studying Shakespeare 30 years ago (the student this year was more articulate than I was at the same age). Through this I have been able to meet some wonderful examples of the great young people SACS is nurturing. Every student I was given the privilege of helping has exceeded my expectations and hopefully my small assistance was helpful for them.

David Gosling with daughter Kate (Year 3) at Kirrikee in 2021.



David Gosling and his wife Lina with daughters Kate (Year 3), Emma (Year 10) and Amy (Year 12, 2021).





# Events snapshot 2021

St Andrew's Cathedral School hosts a large variety of events that are an exciting and vital part of building our community. Here we provide some of the highlights from the year.



## P&F Welcome in the Square

One of our loveliest school traditions is the welcome to new and returning parents at the beginning of each year in our iconic Sydney Square. The Association of Parents and Friends provided barista coffee, a light snack and warm smiles, helping alleviate those first-day nerves for everyone.



## International Women's Day

SACS welcomed back barrister and Old Andean Karen Petch (OA2004) as part of our International Women's Day assembly. Her speech challenged all students to pursue what they believe they can be by continuing to turn up. Organised by our Student Representative Council, the assembly acknowledged the achievements of women across the globe.



## Official opening of Chapter House

In March this year, the school and St Andrew's Cathedral celebrated the completion of the stunning restoration of Chapter House. Officially opened by The Most Rev Dr Glenn Davies, the then Archbishop of Sydney, the guests were toured through both floors of Chapter House, the gallery and the striking new atrium. They were then treated to performances not only by the Cathedral Choir and SACS Jazz Orchestra, but also from world-renowned pianist Simon Tedeschi (OA1998).





### Parent socials (JSGS, MS, SC)

As our Welcome evenings could not be held at school due to COVID-19 restrictions, three parent socials were held at the beginning of the year on the nearby rooftop of Primus Hotel. With giant balloons identifying the year groups, parents had a wonderful time catching up with friends, welcoming new parents and chatting with the divisional Heads of school.



### Big City Make Off

The Cathedral, Chapter House and SAH foyer were transformed as part of the Big City Make Off. Students from the eight Houses created their own lolly stands, complete with carefully chosen themes, decorations and costumes. Congratulations to Winchester who won with their Wild West theme. The event raised funds for Rough Edges Cafe, supporting those experiencing homelessness and marginalisation.



### Kirrikee Picnic Day

We were delighted to be able to hold our annual Kirrikee Picnic Day. Although a different format, with a morning and afternoon session, the incredible outdoor activities of abseiling, crate climbing, log rolling and the high ropes were enjoyed by all – not to mention the excellent lunch that was provided – and would it be SACS without a barista? A huge thank you to the Outdoor Education staff.



### Gawura Cocktail Party

Held this year in the BBC, it was lovely to see so many parents and staff at the Gawura Cocktail Party, supporting Gawura and First Nations secondary students. A big thank you to Jodie Taylor from Supply Nation, our wonderful MC, and to the supporters whose donations to the silent auction helped raise \$40,000. A shout out to staff member Brad Swibel for donating his photography for the auction, to Michael Kirk for being our guest speaker and David Callan for his wonderful auctioneering skills. Thanks also to the many parents who volunteered on the night.





## NAIDOC Week

This year's theme, *Heal Country*, encouraged everyone to seek greater protections for land, water, sacred sites and cultural heritage. Gawura and SACS had a full week of activities celebrating Indigenous culture, starting with a Smoking Ceremony for Gawura on the roof. The NAIDOC assembly included a dance performance by the Gawura children, who had been learning traditional dance with Uncle Matt Doyle. We had a wonderful speaker, Wiradjuri and Gamilaraay man Jonathan Jones, and a beautiful performance by Mi-kaisha Masella, a proud Darumbal Murri and Tongan woman. The centrepiece of the assembly was a Dreaming story from Yuwaalaraay Nation on *The Creation of Narran Lake*.



## Mr Burns

Our first major drama production in the newly refurbished Chapter House was *Mr Burns*. Showcasing clever and innovative direction, quirky sets and a very talented cast of senior students, the play stunned, surprised and provoked the audience.



## Just Chill – Showcase Concert

Our annual performing arts extravaganza returned to Sydney Town Hall and featured over 23 performances by 16 student music ensembles, supported by 15 music staff. The jazz theme was a tribute to Dr John Collier in his final year as Head of School. Jazz virtuoso James Morrison performed and rehearsed with the students – something they will remember forever. We were extremely lucky to stage this major event before the COVID lockdown restrictions hit!



## Giving Day

Our annual 24-hour fundraising day in June had a phenomenal result. This year we rallied our school community to contribute funds for secondary school scholarships for our First Nations students to transition from Gawura (a primary school) into SACS for Years 7-12. The stunning result of over \$490,000 in donations is testament to the kind-heartedness of the SACS community and we cannot give enough thanks to all donors, as well as parents and alumni, who volunteered behind the scenes to make this happen.





## OAA Learning the Ropes

The Old Andrean Association's biannual careers night returned for its third, and most successful iteration. A myriad of Old Andreans and parents representing a wide range of industries and occupations came to the school to offer insights and answer questions of eager and curious senior students and their parents. One of the evening's highlights was a panel of graduates from 2010-2011, who shared their very different post-SACS journeys in an informal panel.



## Life Hacks

'Life Hacks' introduces Year 12 students to some of life's many important and useful skills usually found outside the classroom. Over the course of the term, students learned how to barbecue food, stay fit at home, cook a quick and nutritious meal on a budget, and even change a car tyre!



## Lockdown events

A return to remote learning throughout Term 3 meant that physical events were postponed or reimagined. The Lockdown LEGO® competition was hotly contested, and the Boredom Busters Booklet sent out to thank our donors and sponsors didn't replace the event, but was lots of fun. The P&F held a well-attended online family trivia night and the P&F Presents events and meetings continued online. Even Book Week went ahead, with author visits and dress-ups included, while sports skills training via video kept our students active and preparing for a return to competition in Term 4.



## Farewell to Year 12s

The disrupted end to school for Year 12 led to some innovative online solutions in Term 3. Just prior to their Trial exams, their normal pencil case gift was delivered, accompanied by a care package of sweets and a cookie saying "you've got this". The JS farewell to Year 12 became an online Teams event, with Kindy students videoing their poem "The Places You'll Go". The Year 12 Valedictory Service was brilliantly recreated as a live online event, with reflections from a student, staff member and parent, alongside photos and videos of the students' time together. Families were encouraged to dress up (not school uniforms) and received a hamper of snacks to enjoy during the event.



# Giving Day unites two school communities

**On 18 June, in just 24 hours, SACS and Gawura School communities raised more than \$490,000 for secondary scholarships for Gawura students, which was more than double what was initially hoped, writes Cath Gunning.**

St Andrew's Cathedral School is a diverse community, with students and staff from all over Sydney and the world coming together to learn in the heart of the CBD. On 18 June this year, this wonderful, warm-hearted community celebrated Dr Collier's achievements and showed their support for Gawura by raising enough funds for two students to continue their education at SACS in secondary school.

"We managed to raise enough for two full scholarships, paying not only the school fees for two First Nations' students but for all of their associated educational costs," Lyn Jarvis, the Director of Community Engagement, says. "Gawura secondary students have access to the Gawura Homework Centre, the support of a full-time mentor, tutoring, cultural excursions and the annual On Country trip.

"The result was outstanding and it tells you something about how the community feels about Gawura."

Gawura opened 14 years ago with a small number of students and today many of its graduates have completed university degrees, with one attending Oxford University, several attaining law degrees and one studying Medicine, each of them having ambitions to give back to their community.

"Education is the best weapon against poverty and injustice," Mr John Ralph, Head of Gawura, says. "At Gawura's core is the idea that every child deserves an opportunity. We offer children an opportunity to change their lives.

"From small beginnings full of obstacles and challenges, Gawura is now the Australian School of the Year, and our model for First Nations' children is well regarded by educators all over Australia."

While places at Gawura for Kindergarten to Year 6 students are well funded by Government, it is when these students reach Year 7 and enter St Andrew's Cathedral School that Government funding drops off considerably. Through the support of donors, big and small, we can offer students the opportunity to stay at SACS for their entire education. This year's Giving Day has guaranteed two more students a place right through to Year 12.

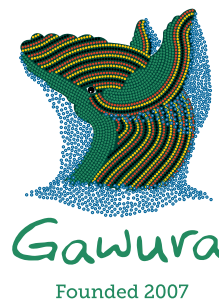
"The Gawura staff and I were so thrilled and touched by the amount raised and the beautiful comments families posted as they made their donations," John says.

"I'm really proud of the strong connections Gawura students have with the Junior School at St Andrew's Cathedral School. We are a stand-alone school, but the two schools share such



a strong connection. It also means that the 400-plus students in the Junior School learn Wiradjuri language and culture. This flows into their families. Imagine if the reconciliation we see at St Andrew's Cathedral School was rolled out across Australia!

"Everybody associated with Gawura, every donor, every volunteer is a spoke in the wheel. Everyone is contributing to make a difference for First Nations' students now and into the future."



## Some comments from Gawura donors:

*"Access to quality education is priceless. Thank you Gawura team."*

*"What a great fundraiser for our beautiful Gawura children."*

*"We are happy to help you on your educational journey!"*



# Students take remote learning in their stride

**Gawura students found online learning far more manageable second time around, writes John Ralph**

Head of Gawura John Ralph on a Teams video call with Gawura students.



Term 3 in 2021 saw all NSW schools enter remote learning due to the second major COVID-19 outbreak in the community. This was the second lengthy occurrence of remote learning – with the first in Term 2 of 2020 – and this time around was much more successful for our Gawura students.

Our First Nations students are very relational and nothing beats being together learning within the classroom with each other. Remote learning brings on different challenges. All Gawura students had their devices delivered in week 1 of Term 3. Our K-2 students use See Saw as their main platform to view and upload their work. It is simple for children to use and navigate, so is ideal for this age group as all the information is in one place. Students in

Years 3-12 use Schoology and One Note to complete their work tasks. One Note allows students to complete their work online and teachers can see their responses live. There is also a collaboration space where students and the teacher can work together, similar to the classroom environment. Microsoft Whiteboard is another useful tool used by teachers. For example, in doing a Stage 2 lesson on fractions, the teacher was able to cut up an apple and all of the class could see it happening live and contributed to the overall discussion.

All staff use Teams to video conference with their students daily. This is the main way students see each other and is usually a highlight of their day as it works as an online classroom. Gawura staff said

all students love conferencing with each other. We also managed to celebrate Book Week with students getting dressed up as their favourite book characters for the online conference.

One online program which has resonated with all students is Kahoot – a fun competition quiz app with colourful multiple-choice answers. There is an overall winner based on points. We had Kahoots on the Olympic Games, maths curriculum, times tables and even a Kahoot on Year 5 staff, which had over 90 participants!

During this period of remote learning, Gawura students still accessed a number of school opportunities. Music tuition went ahead online, with tutors conducting lessons via the

Teams conferencing app and students who regularly see speech or occupational therapy specialists had these consultations at home through the telehealth conference system.

While remote learning has its challenges, our First Nations students generally coped well and progressed in many areas of learning. The return to face-to-face classroom teaching in Term 4 was an immensely exciting week for not only our teachers and students but also our parents and fabulous bus drivers!

# Growing a passion for service

**Learning and participating in the service of others is a key component of an education at St Andrew's Cathedral School. Melanie Collins reports on the secondary school's service programs and their impact on school culture.**

House competitions, charitable fundraisers and several lunch-time clubs have long had a component of service, but in recent years, it has also been embedded in the curriculum as part of the Middle Years Program (MYP) in Years 7-10, which has boosted the overall servant-hearted culture of students.

Year 7-12 Service Learning Coordinator Lizzie Skipsey says the school's Christian foundation has driven its servant-hearted approach to education and relationships within the school.

"As a Christian school, we want to model our lives on Jesus who, Matthew 20:28 tells us, 'came to serve, not to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many'. Every student is encouraged to be involved in some kind of service," she says.

Lizzie says the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme five years ago has strengthened student service at the school by creating a structured curriculum component and expectations around student involvement.

"Service is a compulsory part of the MYP, with every student needing to record what they have done as a service activity each term, reflecting on it and rating themselves as a learner, novice, practitioner or expert," she says. "This has resulted in a community language and culture where a lot more students are invested in service and they are more willing and excited to talk about their service activity openly.

"This cultural shift became evident this year when a record number of candidates [30] applied for the Service Captain leadership role this year."

Year 9 student Callista Christabel has been an enthusiastic participant in the Eco Club and other service activities since Year 7 and says being involved in service has really added to her personal growth.

"I was introduced to service activities at school and began to learn and understand the importance of them and what good it does to the community," she says. "Often, you learn more about yourself and what you are capable of because the discussions and activities make you think of ways to help the community and so you grow as an individual. You are also helping someone else, so naturally you feel good about yourself knowing that you are making a difference for the community."

This year, the lunch-time Eco Club expanded from a Middle School initiative to include Senior College students. It also partnered with Plastic Oceans, an organisation that helps schools put together waste audits and suggests ideas and systems to reduce waste. The first step in the audit was to examine what recycling was being undertaken by the school. Andrew Simpson, from the Maintenance team, led the students and staff to the P2 basement parking level in St Andrew's House in June to demonstrate how recycling was occurring. The students donned gloves and emptied expired bottles of water into the gurney used to water the

school's plants and then sorted through a recycling bin to separate the rubbish and varieties of recyclable material into the correct bins. Later in Term 3, while students were learning from home, Plastic Oceans ran a workshop to demonstrate and encourage students to conduct a waste audit at home.

Another service club that functions across all segments of the school is the Knitting Club, which trains students how to knit squares that are eventually sewn together by volunteer parents or school staff into a blanket, which is then donated to an Anglican aged care facility.

The Middle Years' service program culminates in the Year 10 Community Service Week, which sees the students leading a variety of activities. The major fundraiser for the week has become Anglicare's annual Toys 'n' Tucker campaign, which sees the students raise funds, then order and pack food hampers for those in need in the Redfern community. In November 2020, Canterbury and St Paul's Year 10 students raised more than \$10,000 in the two-week campaign – enough to purchase the products to assemble 200 Christmas hampers. The storage and packing of hampers needed to take place onsite at the school, rather than in the Anglicare warehouse where it had previously run, due to COVID restrictions. This continued in 2021, and expanded to include all Year 10 students, who sought to double the amount previously raised in order to put together up to 400 hampers.



Eco Club students get their hands dirty discovering how the school processes the recycling of its waste.

"Spreading the love, just as Jesus taught, through this amazing program, is a privilege, especially during these uncertain times when more people than ever are facing insecurity," says Isabell Ni, one of the student organisers.

Another student initiative that has gained momentum in recent years is the Roughtober (sleeping rough) event, which sees Year 10 and 11 students seeking sponsorship to sleep outside overnight with just a sleeping bag and no shelter. The 'sleep-out' experience is designed to recreate, in a small way, the trials experienced by thousands of homeless people in Sydney. Funds raised go to Rough Edges Cafe, a drop-in centre in Darlinghurst, run by St John's Anglican Church, which provides much-needed food and community to people who are experiencing





homelessness in inner Sydney. This year's event saw 23 students raise more than \$15,000 for the charity.

"It's so important for our community to keep supporting charities even during this tough lockdown," said Year 11 student Olivia Bishara, ahead of the 2021 Roughtober event in October. "People have been doing it rough in the midst of the pandemic, so we want to do as much as we can to help!"

### House service partnerships

The service program is also a major part of House activities, with each House assigned a charity partner. Hereford and Salisbury partner with South Sydney Anglican Church to support disadvantaged residents in the Redfern area. Westminster and York work

with Rough Edges Cafe for Roughtober and the Big City Make Off. Canterbury and St Paul's partner with the Toys 'n' Tucker program, as well as clothing drives for Anglicare. Winchester and Durham also partner with Anglicare, usually visiting residents in aged care homes, but in 2021 switched their focus to a Christmas letter-writing program, and handmaking Christmas decorations to gift to those residents.

As students work together in their House groups to support their members at sports carnivals or in fundraisers, the focus is also on building a strong student community that cares for one another.

"The House structure at St Andrew's fosters a strong sense of belonging as students collaborate in student-led

House competitions where they learn how their contributions add to the success and wellbeing of the entire House," explains long-time Head of St Paul's House Michael Sahlstrom.

A major event of the school year is the inter-House competition called Big City Bake-off, which also doubles as a fundraiser for Rough Edges Café. In 2021, the event was renamed the Big City Make Off, switching the creative displays from baked cupcakes to lollies. It sees secondary students, led by the eight Year 12 House leaders, creating a themed stall that is decorated with lollies – which are then sold off to students and staff. The House winners, judged for their creative elements and also funds raised, were Winchester's Wild West-themed stall (complete with horse saddle,

horseshoes, sheep skulls and a wagon wheel) and Canterbury's colourful chemistry lab of lollies.

In the future, Lizzie says the school plans to consolidate many current activities and also establish an international service/charitable group.

"A lot of what we do with our SACS students is very localised, which is great, because it means students can volunteer at the Rough Edges Café or knit a square for a blanket that goes to a local aged care facility – so it's practical and hands-on, but we want to also have an international partner organisation," she says. "We would love to add an international service trip to our program but that may be a year or two away."

# Keeping it all in the family

Nicole, Warwick, Nicholas (OA2020) and Maddie (Year 11) Overton share some of their memories of the school over the past seven years, the impact of recent lock-downs, and their reflections on Dr John Collier and Dr Julie McGonigle.

## Choosing SACS

**What first made you choose SACS for Nicholas and Maddie?**

**Warwick:** Initially SACS was a school we knew little about, but ultimately we were blown away by the openness of the school, with Mr Perry being able to offer Nicholas a place at the school based upon his personality and character. He invited Nicholas to try out for a music scholarship, which he ultimately received (and went on to get an IB mark of 7 in music). For Madeleine a few years later, we decided that SACS could provide the care and support that we wanted for her.

**How would you describe SACS to someone who knows nothing about it?**

**Warwick:** It is a big school on a small footprint and despite its history and heritage, it is built to serve the people that make it up.

**Nicole:** SACS is not just a school focused on academic learning. It's a place that provides a strong sense of community, allowing different children to grow and develop at their own pace, in all areas, as they progress towards adulthood.

**Is there anything you think is particularly unique about SACS?**

**Maddie:** I think one of the unique things about SACS is our community and the relationships that we have between students and teachers.

**Nick:** There isn't much that isn't unique, and I think that in itself is unique – whether that be the students and the community or the office block we go to school in.

**Can you share your favourite memory of your time at SACS?**

**Maddie:** I think my favourite memories are from the school camps, especially the 20-day. I think it is a good way to develop life skills and create relationships and lasting memories of our years of high school.

**Nick:** My highlight would be the 2018 UK Music Tour. It was an absolutely marvellous opportunity. We went to the Tavern Club where the Beatles first performed, had masterclasses with some of the best musicians in the world and performed in the ANZAC Day Service in Westminster Abbey.

**Nicole:** One of my favourite memories was watching Nick deliver the Valedictory Speech to his Year 12 cohort in 2020. We couldn't attend the Cathedral but the school did an amazing job, streaming the event live for parents. We were able to share this moment with some special SACS parents we have bonded with over the last seven years. The friendships made during these years will last a lifetime.

**Warwick:** I have always enjoyed attending school sporting events. A highlight was watching Nick lead a fiercely competitive boys 1st Football in 2020. One thing that still makes my spine tingle is watching the choirs perform at Showcase. I remember one year, after a particularly impressive solo from a talented chorister, the loudest cheers came from the Year 7 boys in his rugby team.

## Involvement in P&F

**Nicole why did you choose to become involved as a volunteer, including being the P&F treasurer?**

I started attending P&F meetings when Nicholas started in Year 7 in 2015, volunteering for events and I eventually became treasurer. The P&F allows you to be directly involved in school life, encourages collaboration and interaction with other parents and staff, and fosters an open forum for discussion on any matters pertaining to the students – no issue is ever too big or too small. It gives you a chance to volunteer and give back to the school community.

## Leadership in good hands

**This is Dr Collier's last year at SACS. As parents, how would you describe his leadership of the school?**

**Warwick:** The clarity and resonance with which Dr Collier has been able to disseminate his deep and insightful understanding about the education of young people has made us honoured to partner with him in developing the character of our own children.

**Nicole:** Dr Collier is an exceptional man, whom we are so privileged to have crossed paths with as part of the journey Warwick and I have been on in educating our children. He is a strong Christian leader with many years of experience who has provided honest guidance and advice, as both a parent and educator. His love of jazz music, cheese, Tim-Tams and the hope he instils in the young people he leads is nothing but admirable.

**As you were here in 2017 when Dr McGonigle first taught at SACS, do you have any memories or thoughts about her?**

**Nick:** I remember when Dr McGonigle was leading a group of students, including myself, to improve our writing skills. Her teaching set me up very nicely to start Year 10 and move through to Year 11 and Year 12 where I developed a real love for English.

**Nicole:** I remember meeting and listening to Dr McGonigle address parents for the first time at a P&F Meeting in 2017. I thought our school community was lucky to have someone with her experience come and share her knowledge with the staff and parents. She has such an inclusive and caring nature, so when Dr Collier announced his retirement, I was devastated that he wouldn't be seeing us complete 'our' schooling years at SACS, but when Dr McGonigle's appointment as Head of School was announced, I felt relieved that Dr Collier was leaving us in good hands.

**Warwick:** Our experience has shown that Dr McGonigle has the same capacity to nurture the spirit of the students she supports, and that is underpinned with a fierce motivation to see the students get the most that they can out of themselves.



## Lockdown 2021

**What has been the best and worst part of 2021?**

**Warwick:** The worst part over the last 18 months has been the lost opportunities to connect with the school. As parents we have necessarily been at arms-length for much of it, unable to participate in and observe the activities of students. But the best thing is that despite this, our children have been able to continue to connect with their teachers and peers in learning because of the forethought and planning of the staff through remote learning.

**Maddie:** The worst part was not being able to connect with school friends and I think the best thing has been spending more time with my family.

**Nicole:** For me, the worst part of 2021 has been dealing with some health challenges, but the positive has been that I've been able to spend a lot more time having my family close.

**Nick – as the first cohort impacted by COVID, how did that affect you and what are you doing now?**

**Nick:** For the most part I think my year group was pretty lucky considering what the 2021 Year 12s went through.

Academically, I think I benefited as it gave me an opportunity to focus purely on my studies without involvement in the many other activities which 'normal' life at SACS looked like for me. I was York House Captain, so missing out on the winter sports season, the Athletics Carnival and SACS Factor affected me the most. I am currently studying for a Bachelor of Psychology and a Bachelor of Cognitive and Brain Sciences at Macquarie University, while also working at SACS in the after-hours team and Sports Department as a Middle School Football Coach.

**Maddie – you had to learn remotely in 2021. How did it go?**

**Maddie:** I had to study for my Year 11 exams which were online. In the past I have always had trouble finding the motivation to get work done but I was stuck in a house with three other people who constantly reminded me of the need to do work. I also think that because this was not my first time doing school online, it ran a little smoother.

**Lyn Jarvis,**  
Director of Community  
Engagement

The Overton family – Nicholas, Maddie, Nicole and Warwick – have enjoyed spending more quality time together during recent COVID-19 lockdowns.





# First steps as Head of School ...

Since 2017, Dr Julie McGonigle has been a member of the school's senior leadership team and played a major role in the development of a strong teaching and learning framework across the school. Melanie Collins asks the incoming Head of School about some of her key priorities in 2022 and beyond.



**What projects and initiatives at the school have you been involved in over the past few years?**

When I returned to the UK in 2018, I took up a post as Director of Teaching School across a group of six schools. I also did some work remotely for St Andrew's. During 2017, we had established a new Executive structure at SACS and therefore, in the first instance my remote role was to support some of the members of staff who were new in their posts. These staff members were carrying on some of the work that I had started in 2017 in areas such as teaching and learning, staff appraisal and student target setting. Therefore, my role was to provide them with documentation, training materials and mentoring to sustain and embed that work.

In 2019, we began the process of developing a new Strategic Plan, which I then became involved in. Out of that process grew my new strategic foci, which were to lead a review of curriculum and assessment and to develop a Teaching and Learning Model and a Leadership Framework.

**You have been developing a leadership framework for staff development. Can you please explain why this is important?**

We lead out of who we are and that is a good thing. However, school leadership is not individualistic, it is a team sport. Therefore, it requires a shared framework within which the whole team can prioritise, develop and align together. Without that, leadership can be too personality driven. This can lead to fragmentation, unsustainable practices and the false narrative of a "Hero Head". The leadership framework that we have created aims to mitigate this possibility. It aims to create shared reasoning, behaviours and practices that those whom we lead recognise as core in all of our leaders. Whilst we all bring our own personalities and particular expertise to our positions, we need to stand on the same principles and enact the same values.

**Please tell us about the "Language of Learning" project you are driving and what role Professor John Hattie has had, and what impact you believe this project will have on student learning.**

Professor John Hattie's main thesis is that the learning process should be visible to students. Hence all of his books and courses are titled "Visible Learning". Up until relatively recently, the specialist language that teachers use about the craft of the classroom has been used by teachers with other teachers. Hattie's point is that if students are to be truly empowered in the learning process, they too need to understand what is happening in the classroom. They need to understand the process so that they can own it and have agency within it. It is important that they also understand the evidence base for what enables the best learning, as well as the teacher.

Our "Language of Learning" project is just that. It is about creating a student-friendly version of our Teaching and Learning model so that students understand the classroom processes and what behaviours they can habituate so that learning is most effective.

**You were a key instigator of the student Data Dashboards to feed back to students and their parents a student's progress at school. How effective has this project been?**

The evidence repeatedly shows that students have performed better in the subjects where they have had a set goal as opposed to those where they haven't. For me, this has been such an interesting project. The dashboards enable students to see how far they need to move to get to the next grade or the next level. Invariably, when you speak to students, they set goals far beyond that; and teachers have often needed to mediate these student expectations. Again, the evidence shows that those who perform the best set small achievable goals often, as opposed to large unobtainable goals less frequently. We are trying to habituate the former and not the latter of those two behaviours for our students.

**Is there a next step in data management to improve student learning outcomes?**

The next step is for staff to use them for goal setting, as well as students. At present we have very good individual dashboards for students that we would like to mirror with staff. We will also pull the individual dashboards together to give us a whole school summary of all the various bits of data that we can cross-reference.





Dr Julie McGonigle returned to Sydney at the start of Term 4, 2021, with her husband Andrew, sons Rafferty, 10, and Theo, 14, and daughter Innes, 12.

**Your transition into the Head of School role hasn't been the typical one, since you have been working at the school and working closely with Dr Collier for five years already. Will this make the transition smoother for you and staff?**

Most certainly. We are viewing me as an insider/outsider. That is, I have enough knowledge of the school and the teams, and they of me, to ensure a smooth handover. Yet, I have enough external experience and international experience to perhaps look at some things with fresh eyes. The staff are remarkable, their expertise, agility for change and ability to welcome new faces just makes this process even more seamless.

**What are your plans and what will be your approach in your first year as Head of School in 2022?**

Ha! What to do in your first 100 days? Good question. I am already heavily involved in the current Strategic Plan and therefore, much of what I do will be carrying on with the strategic initiatives from this year. Beyond that, I have three main agendas: the first is to establish leadership around the new leadership framework that we already mentioned. The second is to work with students, parents and staff around a shared language of learning, as described above. The third is to take a baseline of everything. While I have some knowledge of the school, I don't know everything. Therefore, I am keen to give department leaders and area leaders the opportunity to show me their areas, so we have a sense of where we are starting from. As I go through

this process, my general agenda will be to "find the bright spots and spread them around" – which is a quote from Chip and Dan Heath's book, *Switch*.

**Looking to the future, what do you see as some of the major challenges that our students will face and need to overcome in coming years?**

It's interesting that the current zeitgeist often focuses in on the challenges for young people rather than the opportunities. Popular teenage fiction drives that message too, through an abundance of dystopic fiction. Yet, what is also being messaged in some of these series are that young people are the saviours of civilisation through their curious questioning, physical bravery, collaborative spirit, agile knowledge and sheer grit. The young people that I see coming through today do have

challenges to face. However, what I also see is that we are pushing forward to a time when young people have a greater voice than ever before and are greater change agents than ever before.

I recently read a book called *Rise Up: ordinary kids with extraordinary stories* (I highly recommend it). The common factor in all of these children was grit – the passion and perseverance to pursue their goals. My view is that young people are excitingly positioned to have real voice and to be able to make real change and, as schools, we need to assist them to not only know that, but to know how to do it.

# St Andrew's Cathedral School:

St Andrew's Cathedral School is a coeducational K-12 Anglican school, located in the heart of Sydney's CBD.

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