

Inspired

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ST ANDREW'S
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL



From our *Head of School*

Dr Julie McGonigle.



A milestone year has a curious way of re-orienting us.

Looking back forces us to ask a different kind of question about the future – not simply “what comes next”, but “who must we now become?”

As we emerge from our 140th year, I am more convinced than ever that the task of a school is not only to educate the mind but to shape the interior life. In a world that moves faster than wisdom, we must foster young people who can hold conviction with humility, ambition with purpose, and influence with integrity.

You will see that spirit alive in this edition of Inspired. In the story of our Ultimate Andreans, whose faithfulness over thirteen years shows strength is built quietly, not suddenly. In original works of theatre and innovation, where imagination becomes character forming. In service, music, science, leadership and risk, where learning becomes love made visible.

**The future will not reward
the loudest voices, but
the clearest ones – those
whose lives are anchored
deeply enough to offer
light rather than heat.**

May what you read here remind you that inspiration is not a sentiment but a calling. Not a moment of brilliance, but a way of being – steady, attentive, awake to where God is moving.

The next 140 years begin here.

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A journey of thirteen years, a legacy of 140

St Andrew's Cathedral School celebrates record number of Ultimate Andreans.

By Ivy Swibel (OA2021)



From top left across: Dean O'Mahony, Hugh Miller, Orlando Lennon, Cadel Holmes, Anders Chin, Dennis Cosmetatos, Nicolas Pirri, Danielle Chapman, Emily Dries, Connor Nelson

In the year the School celebrates its 140-year anniversary, ten graduating students stand out for an extraordinary reason.

Known as the Ultimate Andreans, they are among the few who have completed their entire school journey, from Kindergarten to Year 12, at our School.

For many reasons, the number of Ultimate Andreans is usually small. Families move, circumstances change and the path from K-12 is long. That is why this year's group of ten is remarkable. It is the largest in recent memory and, in its own way, a reflection of the School's enduring identity.

For Orlando Lennon, the journey has been defined by music.

"I've been a chorister at St Andrew's Cathedral for my entire time at the School," he reflected.

"I've loved being involved in that unique aspect and I'm grateful for all the staff and teachers who have supported me through my time here. It feels very special to graduate on the 140th year of the School, which was originally formed to educate choristers."

His story captures the deep connection between the School and its founding purpose. Established in 1885 by Bishop Alfred Barry, St Andrew's Cathedral School followed the English choral school tradition of providing education for Cathedral choristers.



Read more about our Ultimate Andreans

The ten Ultimate Andreans began Kindergarten in 2013 when our Junior School had only recently expanded to include K-2 and Gawura School was growing into an established part of the community. Outdoor education, through early trips to Kirrikee, pushed these students to build resilience – cooking on campfires, sleeping under the stars and abseiling down sheer rock walls.

At the Junior School and Gawura School farewell to Year 12 this September, the Ultimate Andreans were each presented with the Ultimate Andrean Medal. In that moment, thirteen years of memory was distilled into a single symbol – silver, engraved and heavy with meaning.

Other students, like Dennis Cosmetatos, reflected on how leadership shaped their years.

"My time at the School offered me lots of opportunities to try out things I never thought I would," he said.

"A highlight for me was being the Captain of Salisbury House. This gave me a window into what is involved in leadership and challenged me to grow."

For Connor Nelson, his memories of the School are infused with deep gratitude.

"I have adored being a student here. Growing beside my peers, with amazing teachers and communities to support me has been incredible," he said.

Ten students. Thirteen years. One School. In its 140th year, St Andrew's celebrates not just its history, but the people who carry it forward. The journeys of the Ultimate Andreans reminds us of the enduring light of a St Andrew's Cathedral School education.

Science students make their mark on national and global stages

By Ivy Swibel (OA2021)

Science is thriving, with students not only excelling in their classrooms but stepping confidently onto national and international stages.

In the space of just a few weeks, achievements across computing, physics, astronomy and biomedical research have shown how deeply curiosity and innovation are woven into the fabric of learning at our School.

When the conversation turns to rocket science, it's not often that a High School student is part of it. Yet Year 12 IB Physics student Owen Davies has done just that, recreating experiments originally performed by NASA in expensive wind tunnel facilities, with little more than a hair dryer, a force sensor and some 3D-printed nose cones.

NASA and SpaceX have invested heavily in optimising rocket nose cone designs. The problem is simple in theory but complex in practice: too pointed, and the rocket becomes unstable; too blunt, and drag forces waste fuel. NASA's wind tunnel tests produced a mathematical model of how drag changes with cone angle, which Owen set out to test in a school setting.

He built his own scaled-down 'wind tunnel' and tested a series of cones he had printed at different tip angles. Each was attached to a force sensor, with air blown directly onto it by the hair dryer. Astonishingly, Owen's results matched NASA's findings almost exactly, despite the far lower speeds and cost of his set-up.

"It's remarkable, that with a bit of initiative and 3D printing, we can mimic, in a school setting, the outcomes from experiments NASA have performed in multi-million dollar wind tunnel facilities," said Dr Andrew McGonigle, Scientist in Residence, who previously contracted with NASA.



"To see a student produce results that align so closely with these outcomes shows just how far our students are stretching their scientific capabilities with real experimental ingenuity."

For Owen, the project is both a validation of his method and a glimpse into the way science is about testing ideas with creativity, not just resources. His work also exemplifies what is happening across St Andrew's Cathedral School science classrooms: students taking bold ideas and putting them into practice, producing results that stand up on the wider stage of scientific inquiry.

The same spirit of innovation is evident in computing, where Year 12 student Arabella Simpson is set to showcase her Raspberry Pi Bird project at the PyConAU Python Developer's Conference in Melbourne. Selected as one of only seven high school students across the nation, Arabella's presentation will be streamed to developers and computing educators across Australia. While her work will be shared in a recorded video, Arabella will also join the conference live for questions.

"Arabella's project is well above high school computing level," said Deputy Head of Technological and Applied Studies, Mrs Amanda Hogan.

"I am very proud."

For fellow Year 12 student Amelia Woodyatt, science has been a pathway from the classroom to a university conference stage. She was invited to present her HSC Science Extension research at the [EX]plore Science Extension Conference at Macquarie University, marking the first time a St Andrew's Cathedral School student has reached this level. Amelia's research explored the link between diagnosed Metabolic Syndrome and post-operative pulmonary complications in surgical patients, a question that demanded both rigorous scholarship and sophisticated statistical analysis. Her presentation was awarded third place for best use of statistics, recognition that underlined the calibre of her work.

The conference also proved inspirational for the Year 11 students considering taking Science Extension in 2026, who attended to observe.

They listened to talks, examined research posters and engaged with scientists working at the forefront of their fields. One student reflected that the day had "broadened my perspective on what science can be," while another noted that it "gave me ideas for future research projects." Such experiences show how individual achievement feeds back into the school community, sparking new ambitions and widening horizons.

Achievement has also come on the global stage. Year 11 students Oliver Patrick, Yuze Ding and Martin Norman have progressed to the final round of the International Astronomy and Astrophysics Competition (IAAC), a demanding contest that challenges students to engage with real research and advanced astrophysical reasoning. Reaching the final means their work now sits alongside some of the top young scientific minds worldwide, a feat that speaks to both their persistence and their passion for science.

Taken together, these stories suggest more than just a string of successes. They reveal a culture where students are trusted to ask complex questions, to engage with material well beyond the curriculum and to test themselves against the standards of professional scientists. In physics, biology, computing and astronomy, their work is being recognised for its depth and originality – and in the process, they are redefining what it means to be a high school scientist.

As these students look ahead to life beyond school, their achievements stand as an inspiration to the younger years following behind them. Science at St Andrew's Cathedral School is not only preparing students for exams but cultivating the kind of curiosity and resilience that drives discovery. In that sense, each accolade is more than an award, it is a sign of the bright futures our students are building and the impact they are already beginning to make.



Read more about our Science students

Fair in the Square brings 140 years of community spirit to life

Sydney Square was filled with colour, laughter and celebration as the School community came together on Friday 19 September.

By Ivy Swibel (OA2021)



Held once every ten years, the Fair returned for the first time since 2015, marking a joyful highlight of the School's 140th anniversary celebrations. Students, staff, families and Old Andreans joined together in the heart of the city for a day that captured the energy and community spirit that defines St Andrew's Cathedral School.

The Square buzzed with excitement from morning to afternoon with rides and games, live performances, a petting zoo, delicious food stalls and the ever-popular Dunk Tank, bringing every part of the School together.

A special feature of the day was the 140th Pop-Up Museum: Celebrating Our Heritage, where visitors could step back through the decades and see how the School has grown and changed since its founding in 1885.

Music was a constant feature throughout the day, with bands, choirs and ensembles performing on the main stage beside George Street.

In a moment that perfectly symbolised transition and togetherness, our Year 12 students returned from their Seven Bridges Walk, a beloved rite of passage marking the end of their schooling years. Their arrival coincided with the height of the celebrations, greeted by cheers and applause.

Everywhere you looked, there were reminders of what makes St Andrew's Cathedral School unique. Parents and staff worked side by side at stalls, alumni reconnected over coffee and students laughed as they queued for the Meltdown ride or Mini Putt Putt Golf. It was not only a fair, but a living portrait of what the School stands for: community, shared joy and enduring connection.

Head of School Dr Julie McGonigle reflected in her message for the 140th year.

“Celebration is a discipline. Whilst that may seem paradoxical, in today's busy world, stopping to look back, to see the good, to show gratitude to those whose shoulders we stand on, is a lost art,” she said.

The Fair embodied that spirit: a pause to look back, a day to look around and a light cast forward toward the generations to come.

The Fair was made possible through the incredible efforts of our Community Engagement team, parent volunteers, students and staff who dedicated countless hours to planning and preparation.

After 140 years, the spirit of St Andrew's remains as vibrant as ever - a community where the way of light continues to shine through generations.



Read more about
Fair in the Square



Theatrical performances welcomed audiences to Wonderland!

Students from Junior School and Gawura School brought Lewis Carroll's classic tale to life.

By Marcia Svendsen

The Junior School and Gawura School production of Disney's *Alice in Wonderland JR* delighted audiences across three magnificent performances at the start of September. Their whimsical portrayal of Lewis Carroll's story of adventure and self-discovery was a joy for all.

The shows took place at The Concourse theatre in Chatswood, with three performances in two days. The musical involved all 307 students from Year 3 to 6! Our students and staff ably moved between School and the theatre by train, navigating the city's public transport as well as their respective dramatic roles.

Led by Director of Performing Arts, Mr Ben Milis, Junior School and Gawura School Head of Music, Mrs Kate Robertson, Junior School and Gawura School Chaplain, Mrs Emma Newling and Junior School Teacher, Rebecca Cavenagh, the staff pulled off a tremendous feat. Together, with a small but dedicated group of parent volunteers, and through the generosity of our wonderful sponsors, students were challenged, encouraged and supported, as they took to the stage in a professional theatre to transport their audiences to Wonderland.

"I was amazed at our students – each time we asked something new of them, they always rose to the challenge," said Mr Milis.

The original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll, was first published in 1865. With its fantastical tales and riddles, it became one of the most popular works of English-language fiction. The story centres on Alice, a young girl who falls asleep in a meadow and dreams that she follows the White Rabbit down a rabbit hole. She has many wondrous, often bizarre adventures with thoroughly illogical and very strange creatures, often changing size unexpectedly.

"I loved seeing how our students made this classic story their own. Although the story was written 160 years ago, it was still as lively, funny and idiosyncratic as Carroll first intended," Mrs Robertson said.

Being involved in a musical production of this magnitude offers a rich educational experience for our students, providing multiple opportunities for both academic learning and character development. It challenges them and promotes personal growth – something that can only be fostered in an environment outside of the usual classrooms.

"Being involved in a musical contributes to our whole-person approach to education; it is a fantastic combination of personal responsibility and teamwork, of challenge mixed with creativity," Mrs Newling said.

The story of Alice reminds us how powerful curiosity, creativity and a willingness to embrace the unexpected can be.

Bravo to our incredible cast and crew, you have made us so proud!



Read more about
our Junior School
production



Co-curricular activities get an exciting new boost

Mr Selwyn Wu will bring his signature energy and creativity to new co-curricular role.

By Marcia Svendsen

Below

Mr Selwyn Wu, Deputy Head of Co-curricular



Read more about
Selwyn Wu's role

St Andrew's Cathedral School places great value on co-curricular activities. The areas of Sport, Music, Drama, Outdoor Education and the plethora of other exciting opportunities outside the classroom, all play a crucial role in our students' lives.

With that in mind, the School has launched a new role to support the broad and growing co-curricular space. Mr Selwyn Wu has since been appointed and will take up these new duties in October 2025.

Tell us about your new co-curricular role. What does it involve?

The role of Deputy Head of Co-curricular has been created to bring the various components of co-curricular activities together, so that the experience for students is more cohesive and accessible. My hope is that students will be able to enjoy more of the opportunities we offer, without having to miss out on one for the other, wherever possible.

What do you enjoy about working at St Andrew's Cathedral School?

I'm passionate about seeing students flourish in their own way. Every student is uniquely gifted in both ability and character, and I love that the School offers such a wide range of opportunities. Whether in the classroom, concert hall, canyon, court or centre stage – we allow each young person to explore, grow and thrive in their own journey.

What do you hope to achieve in this new role?

My goal is to support, encourage and strengthen the School's Co-curricular programmes so that staff and students can collaborate in ways that nurture character, resilience, and authentic relationships. These programmes are not just activities—they are vital spaces where students engage hands-on, explore deeply and grow meaningfully.

What does life outside the School look like for you?

My wife and I have two children who both attend St Andrew's Cathedral School, which makes for a fun and meaningful overlap between home and school life!

As a family, we enjoy travelling, sharing meals and spending quality time together. We're also active in our church community, where we serve together as a family music team.

And... I genuinely enjoy vacuuming!

Middle School students lead a recycling revolution!

By Marcia Svendsen

August saw the official launch of the new Recycling Hub.

Australians currently recycle 63 per cent of their household waste, but Ava and Alec Chakar, siblings in Year 8 and 9, set out to help students at the School do even better!

Alec and Ava first got their idea after seeing the Recycling Hub at Marrickville Metro Shopping Centre. Following some initial research, they were surprised to discover that many Australians are confused about recycling.

They first presented their concept to Head of Gifted Education, Ms Estee Stephenson and Gifted and Talented Teacher, Ms Angela James. These two teachers provided valuable and constructive feedback, and ongoing support throughout the process.

The project was not without its challenges. The initial six months involved lots of research to inform the ideation process and Alec and Ava learned all they could about recycling.

The St Andrew's Cathedral School Recycling Hub was officially launched on Monday 11 August, followed by a special assembly in St Andrew's Cathedral.



"The best part of the project was witnessing the Recycling Hub come to life, from the carpentry being built to the background decals being installed. It was incredibly rewarding," Alec said.

The Recycling Hub is situated on Level 4 of St Andrew's House.

Upon asking Alec and Ava for their advice for other students pursuing a vision, Ava was keen to emphasise the importance of believing in yourself.

"If you have an idea, be brave and trust yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for help and seek guidance from teachers or mentors who can support you,"
Ava said.

Congratulations Ava and Alec, on having the courage to propose your idea, the perseverance to problem-solve it and the persistence to see it through!



Find out more about
the Recycling Hub



NATALIE COONEY

Trailblazer, philanthropist and innovator, Natalie Cooney (née Moss) (OA2005) has built a remarkable career at the intersection of business, science and social impact.

Natalie joined the School in 2003 for Year 10, when girls were only admitted into the Senior College – in 2005 she was appointed as School Captain.

Today, Natalie is best known as the co-founder and Executive Director of the FSHD Global Research Foundation, which she established in 2007. This funds world-leading research into facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy (FSHD).

A passionate advocate for transparency and innovation in philanthropy, Natalie is also the driving force behind Sydney's famous Chocolate Ball, a major annual fundraiser supporting FSHD Global's mission.

Her commitment to health and science has led to her latest venture, Kurk – a wellness product using a pioneering method to make curcumin (the active compound in turmeric) genuinely bioavailable. Innovations like these embody Natalie's lifelong dedication to improving health through evidence-based research and technology.

"The SACS spirit stays with me and the leadership style I learned from Phillip Heath to this day continues to inspire me. Life is more meaningful when you give back to society – big or small," she said.

Now a Junior School parent and the Director of the School Foundation at St Andrew's Cathedral School, Natalie continues to personify the values of leadership, compassion and service that defined her time as a student.

By Richard Hansen (OA2003).



Read more about
Natalie Cooney



JAMES YOO

Arriving at St Andrew's Cathedral School in 2003 on a Music Scholarship, James Yoo (OA2006) joined us when our Music Department was under the direction of the legendary Mrs Chris Belshaw. James quickly distinguished himself as an outstanding cellist – he continued a long line of accomplished Old Andrean cellists who have gone on to careers in performance and teaching around the world.

After graduating in 2006, James studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the Musikhochschule in Cologne and the University of Waikato.

Now based in Auckland New Zealand, James is the Convenor of Classical Performance and Director of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Auckland's School of Music, where he teaches cello and chamber music.

James maintains an active performing career, appearing with orchestras across Australasia and Asia, and is a member of the Jade String Quartet, which records for Rattle Records.

In 2013, James returned to St Andrew's to perform Haydn's Cello Concerto in C Major at our annual Showcase concert. In addition, in 2025, he reprised the same work at Showcase alongside other Old Andreans and senior students – complete with period costume.

Through his ensemble Symphonia x Sinfonia, which he co-directs with his wife Rosemary, James also facilitated a memorable musical exchange with St Andrew's Cathedral School students in Term 3 this year – a collaboration that culminated in a joint concert, celebrating creativity and cross-cultural musicianship.

By Richard Hansen (OA2003).



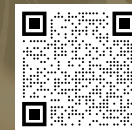
Read more about
James Yoo and watch
his performance

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STAY IN TOUCH
WITH WHAT'S BEEN
HAPPENING AND
WHAT'S COMING
UP AT ST ANDREW'S
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL
AND GAWURA SCHOOL.

News

Discover the breadth of activities occurring across St Andrew's Cathedral School.



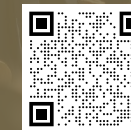
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Upcoming Events

Find out what school activities and events you can get involved in.



Visit our
website

Old Andreans Association

The OAA connects former students with the School and each other by organising reunions and social gatherings.



Follow us on Instagram

Gawura School News and Events

Discover all the events and activities happening in our Kindergarten to Year 6 First Nations school.



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Knowledgeable

Knowledge is the wondrous
art of expanding your mind.

FRONT COVER | STUDENTS PERFORMING IN DISNEY'S ALICE IN WONDERLAND
BACK COVER | GALA DAY CELEBRATION FOR 140 YEARS



ST ANDREW'S
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL



Gadigal Country
Sydney Square
Sydney NSW 2000, Australia
T +61 2 9286 9500

www.sacs.nsw.edu.au