



Brigidine College St Ives

Mission Report 2023





1 Introduction

Our mission...

Brigidine College St Ives is a Catholic congregational school, founded by the Sisters of St Brigid and dedicated to the education of girls. The College recognises that faith and mission are central to all areas of College life. Brigidine College St Ives, a Kildare Ministries school, aims to live our Catholic faith and Brigidine identity in response to the spiritual needs of the girls in a changing world.

This is supported by the goals which:

- provide spiritual formation for girls, staff and parents
- ensure opportunities for girls and staff to grow in understanding Christ's mission to love and serve humanity
- offer a transformational curricular and cocurricular program which integrates Catholic, Brigidine and Kildare Ministries values
- embed an understanding of St Brigid and Brigidine within the daily life of the College.

The Deputy Principal Faith and Mission, in consultation with the Principal and the Leadership Team, oversees the implementation of the *Faith Strategic Plan*. The *Annual Management Plan* based on the *Strategic Plan* goals puts into practice due process to achieve outcomes and to embed faith in all aspects of College life



2 Liturgical life of the College

In 2023 the liturgical and prayer life of the College was once again in full swing. Throughout the year we gathered together to celebrate mass and liturgies on significant occasions such as Ash Wednesday, Easter and Thanksgiving Mass. These essential whole school celebrations centre the College community around the Eucharist and The Word at important times of the year.

The Kildare Ministries (KM) value of Courage was explored throughout 2023 through activities, prayer times and assemblies. The value was embedded and deepened in students, encouraging them to be courageous in many aspects of life, from taking risks with their learning, to being stronger and more assertive in relationships and advocating for others as a member of our Christian community. It also aligned well with our College motto of 'Strength and Gentleness' with courage required for both aspects.

The Commencement Mass was celebrated in February 2023. Father Sunny from the Carmelite community in Sydney presided at the Mass and offered blessings and relevant prayers with the community. The new staff and new students were also specially welcomed and acknowledged at this event to start the new year.

In Term 1 we celebrated Ash Wednesday together as a community. In Term 2 we held a Mother's Day Liturgy in May, with many Brigidine mothers and carers attending. Founders' Day was held at the end of Term 2 as a communal celebration. We welcomed Father Walter Fogarty, from the Diocese of Parramatta to celebrate mass with us on that day. The Mass also featured the announcement of the 2024 Student Leaders.



In late Term 3 we held a Graduation Mass and Dinner for the Class of 2023 and their parents. The Mass featured new Graduation candles: Each student carried a candle individualised with their name and wore a special Graduation stole. These candles and stoles are an important keepsake for the students and a clear reminder for them to share their 'light' with the world, and always take time to minister to others and to lead with strength and gentleness beyond Brigidine College. We also celebrated a special Father's Day Liturgy with our fathers and carers in September.

In Term 4 we were able to come together for a Thanksgiving Mass at the end of the term. The Mass featured special prayers in multiple languages, the blessing of new Eucharistic Ministers and the farewell and blessing of departing staff in 2023.

Chapel time in 2023 followed a regular structure of hymn singing, in preparation for Masses and upcoming liturgies, followed by a short reflection from the Deputy Principal Faith and Mission on certain central themes and seasonal church times throughout the year. Chapel time created space for quiet reflection, peaceful prayer and for quieting the soul of the relevant cohort. The improvement in student engagement and participation in quiet reflection continued to enhance their own wellbeing and sense of purpose. In 2023 there was a stronger focus on ecological stewardship with all students pledging to do more as individuals in caring for the world. A variety of leaves were placed around the Chapel with student pledges written upon them in Term 3.



3 Prayer and Spirituality

Retreats continued to offer quality reflection and service for the girls.

Year 10 participated in a Spirituality Day in Term 4 that was held at Oxford Falls. Students were provided with the opportunity to reflect on their life journey and experiences, their relationships with each other, their families and God. This was achieved by small discussion groups, personal reflection time, one on one discussion, quiet prayer time and a liturgy with the whole group. This short experience gave the students a 'taste' of the benefits of Retreat and to find time to nurture one's inner life. Later in the 'transition week' the affirmation activity built a strong foundation of connection within the cohort leading into senior schooling.

Year 11 attended a Street Retreat, adopting the theme, *My True Self: Rediscovering Myself and Others*. It was intended to stimulate and engage students as they prepared for their final years of secondary education. Normally, the purpose is to assist students to recognise the importance of their holistic development, to give them further understanding of the fullness of life. In 2023 the emphasis on the awareness of the issues of the marginalised with guest speaker presentations. The presenters from William Booth House had a profound effect on the students with the openness and honesty of their personal stories. The students participated in an overnight stay at the College, 'sleeping rough', and then took part in experiences and visits over two days to organisations such as Our Big Kitchen and Kids Giving back. Later in Term 3 this cohort again took on the special responsibility of leading the whole College in support of Homelessness Week in August. In 2024 the College is planning to move to more individualised placements for this Retreat as communities open up more to external visitation.

Year 12 attended their Retreat at Galston Gorge in Term 1 building on their experiences during their Year 10 and Year 11 experiences. This extended the students' reflection on their emerging self in relationship to their family, their peers and God. The retreat was themed, *To Everything there is a Season*, and was designed to prepare the girls for the stresses and challenges of the HSC year and beyond. With time for a bush walk, reflection on their own lives, prayer, meditation, yoga, music therapy and special liturgies, the group encountered a deeper understanding of their faith and their relationships. The new venue was an outstanding success and we hope to plan more Year 12 retreats at this site in the future.

For Years 7 and 8, a Student Spirituality Day was organised in Semester 2. Year 8 enjoyed a day of reflection, music and joyful celebration with Chris Doyle from Kairos Productions at Camp Kedron in Ingleside. In Term 4 Year 7 celebrated a spirituality day at Oxford Falls focusing on the theme of *Brigidine and Me* and their connection to the College and its spiritual heritage.

Staff Spirituality

Staff spiritual nourishment came in the form of Chapel and special liturgies at the start of each term. Each weekly briefing and twice a term staff meetings, provided timely reflection on key world issues and the purpose of their work and life as a Brigidine community.



4 Community Service

The College community supported Reconciliation Week and Homelessness week in 2023. These 'whole school' weeks brought a renewed focus on these critical areas of social justice and outreach to our community.

In keeping with our holistic focus and the core values of Kildare Ministries, we maintained the compulsory Community Involvement Program from Years 7-10 in 2023. Driven by the College Social Justice and Leadership Coordinator, Skye Wachter, the students were required to log a range of service hours in community settings and complete this before the end of Term 3. It is hoped this compulsory program will deepen the student's connection with the local community and enable to develop qualities like compassion, gratitude and advocacy for others through this initiative.



5 Social Justice

Year 12 supported an organisation called 'Sock it to Sarcoma' in 2023. More than \$20,000 was raised which was an amazing achievement. Inspired by the loss of their classmate, Maddie Gladen, in 2019 to Ewing's Sarcoma, they found a community in WA needing financial support for research and medical treatment programs for these cancers.

Year 11 promoted the issue of Homelessness in 2023. A special homelessness week activity divided the whole College into a range of activities supporting Dignity Dishes, cooking meals for the homeless and marginalised, or Days with Girls, providing support for young girls overseas with menstruation support kits and other toiletries. Both activities were well supported and ably led by the Year 11 students in Term 3.

In 2023 the College continued its close affiliation with Dignity Dishes. With the support of the Social Justice Coordinator Ms Skye Wachter, the dishes swelled in number across the College as more and more families and students came on board with cooking meals for the homeless and disadvantaged in Dignity Dishes care. This program has been a remarkable success with over 3,000 dishes had been cooked and prepared by the College community.

The normal Year 9 Pink Day and Daffodil Days were run in 2023. Year 8 in 2023 supported the St Vincent

de Paul Winter Appeal. Students organised food packs of non-perishable and practical items to be stored for emergency use by those living on the streets or struggling to manage daily life. Year 7 organised over 70 Christmas hampers for families in need. These were split evenly between two centres and also enabled the College community to work in conjunction with Corpus Christi Parish at St Ives with the hamper collection. Each Mentor Group looked after a particular family's needs.

Social Justice Forum

The 2023 Social Justice forum was held in Term 1. Organised by the Social Justice and Leadership Coordinator and the two College Social Justice Captains, Maria and Anai, the forum included 50 students from about 10 local schools. The students listened to refugee advocates and stories from refugees. Mr Phil Glendenning spoke about his work in Afghanistan with EREA and refugee advocacy. The students then attended a range of workshops and built network connections and knowledge to take back to their own communities.





Towards 2024

As we enter 2024, we will continue to encourage our students to grow in compassion, build their capacity to engage with marginalised people, show grace and justice and create in them a desire to both support and advocate for others where ever possible.

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DEPUTY PRINCIPAL - FAITH AND MISSION

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