HOLY SPIRIT COLLEGE
WHOLE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER
TERM 4 , WEEK 2

Principals message



Welcome to Term 4 and the very first Holy Spirit College Newsletter!

As the very proud principal of Holy Spirit College, I am super excited to be launching this fortnightly publication. It is my great hope that through sharing the stories of the college, the successes of the young people, and the practices and philosophes that underpin our work, together, we can better serve **the most vulnerable young members of our community.** As they say, it takes a village to raise a child, and with the awesome young people we work with at Holy Spirit College this is certainly the case.

For those that may not know, Holy Spirit College is a **Special Assistance School** with locations in **Manoora, Edmonton** and **Cooktown**. We are a fee-free Catholic College charged with the mission of reaching out and caring for the most vulnerable young people in our Cairns and Cooktown region, operating under the auspice of Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns. We hold the fundamental belief that every child is made in the likeness and image of God and therefore have the right to access the power of education to improve their life circumstances. Specifically, we seek to re-engage young people aged 12-18 years for whom a mainstream education is not currently accessible; focusing on the core learning areas of Well-being, Literacy, and Numeracy.

To achieve this, our staff undertake the very best training in trauma-informed practices, that are embedded in research and child-centered philosophies; creating learning spaces where our young people feel **welcomed, safe** and **understood**.

Over the coming weeks, months, and years, I hope to share much of this knowledge with you, along with more general information relating to site-specific operational matters. You can expect to receive a copy of the Holy Spirit College newsletter every second week of the school term. Our aim is to publish a Whole College Newsletter in Week 2 and Week 8 this term, and a Site-Specific Newsletter in Week 4 and Week 6.

I take this opportunity to thank each member of my Leadership Team, who will be contributing their stories and wisdom to each edition. Though we operate under one strong framework of understanding and practice, how this is lived and felt within each of the three college communities is diverse; enriched by the gifts of each specific context.

This week, as the principal of the whole college, I want to start my journey of sharing by unpacking a word that is often misunderstood, yet central to understanding our work, and that word is – **compassion**.

Empathy, sympathy and compassion are often spoken about together, but they are not the same. Empathy is our ability to understand and connect with another person's experience. Sympathy is feeling concern for someone who is suffering. Compassion, however, takes us one step further. As Associate Professor James Kirby from the University of Queensland describes it, compassion is "the sensitivity to suffering in self and others, with a commitment to try and alleviate and prevent it." **Compassion is therefore not simply feeling; it is purposeful action. It is an active commitment to do something helpful in response to suffering.**

This distinction is important in the Holy Spirit College context. We work alongside young people, families and communities who have often encountered significant adversity. Empathy helps us understand their experiences. Sympathy allows us to acknowledge their challenges. However, **Compassion is what motivates us to remain hopeful, maintain high expectations, and continue investing in the growth of the young people in our care.** Compassion does not excuse poor choices or lower standards. Rather, it is built on the belief that every young person possesses dignity, capability and potential. It recognises the reality of circumstances while refusing to define the individual by them. Compassion says, "I see your struggle, but I also see your strength."

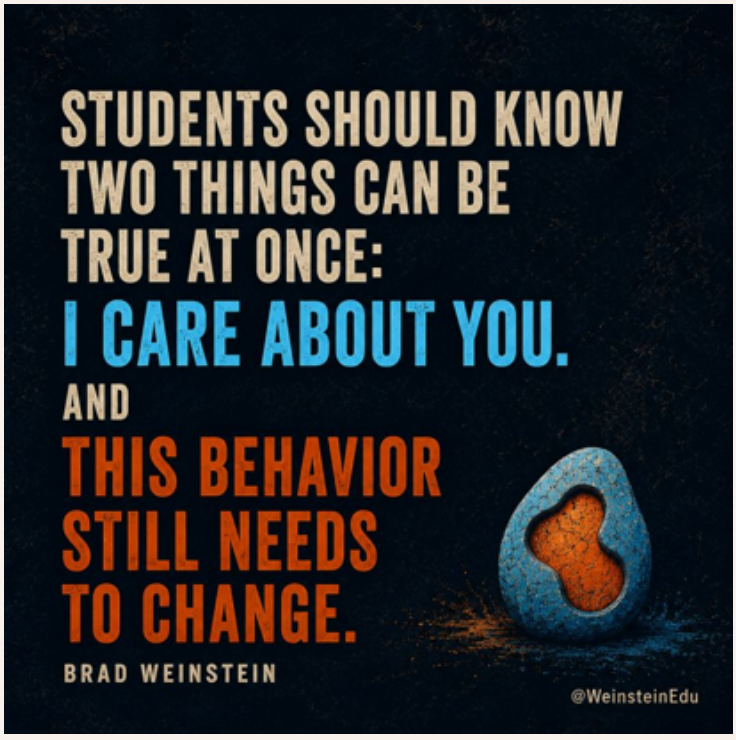
At Holy Spirit, compassion means walking alongside young people and their families with respect, patience and persistence. It means understanding their story while remaining committed to helping them build a different future. It is the belief that growth is possible, that success is attainable, and that hope must always be stronger than hardship. Noting that Hope comes from a combination of Will Power and Way Power (Edwards et. al. 2007), which I will unpack further in our Week 4 Newsletter.

As parents, carers and professionals who work in this space, compassion must also extend to ourselves and to one another. James Kirby's research highlights that compassion is not only directed outward but inward as well, helping individuals regulate stress, build resilience and sustain their capacity to care for others. Parenting is tough, teaching is tough, caring is tough. In these emotionally demanding roles, we need to encourage, understand, and support one another while continuing to hold one another accountable to delivering for our young people.

As we commence this term, may compassion continue to be more than something we feel. May it be the purposeful action that drives our work, sustains our hope, and brings life to our mission every day.

God Bless.

Dr Lucas Felstead
Principal – Holy Spirit College



Deputy Principal – Engagement Wellbeing & Learning



This year, Holy Spirit College introduced the role of Deputy Principal - Engagement, Wellbeing and Learning. As I take on this newly developed role working across Edmonton, Manoora and Cooktown, I keep returning to a simple question: **What is it that truly engages a young person?**

I have come to believe that engagement begins when a young person recognises their own strengths, sees purpose in what they are learning and starts to believe in what might be possible for their future.

At Holy Spirit College, we are interested in understanding what helps our young people connect with learning, recognise their strengths and see new possibilities. That means paying attention to where each person is in their journey and creating opportunities for growth where mistakes, setbacks and success are all recognised as part of learning.

For me, this is where hope and engagement intersect. Hope is the belief that there is always potential to uncover, growth to pursue and new possibilities to create. Engagement is what happens when a young person starts to believe those possibilities are within reach and that they have a role in achieving them.

Learning remains central to our work. I am interested in what happens when young people discover they are capable of more than they thought possible. When students can see the relevance of their learning, they are more likely to engage, contribute, persist through challenges and recognise that they have something worthwhile to offer.

As a Catholic college, we hold a simple belief: every young person matters and every young person has something to contribute. That belief shapes how we approach learning, wellbeing and engagement, and challenges us to create the conditions for students to discover their gifts, develop their capabilities and contribute to the world around them.

Increasingly, our focus is on helping students see the connection between what they are learning today and the lives they want to lead tomorrow. When learning has purpose, when success is experienced, and when young people recognise their own growth, wellbeing becomes more than a program or initiative. It becomes real.



That is the opportunity before us at Holy Spirit College. To continue building a learning community where young people are known, challenged, supported and empowered to see what is possible for their future.

If our purpose resonates with you, whether as a family, community member, employer or potential partner, we invite you to reach out and learn more about the work taking place across our three campuses. This conversation will always be worth having. I hope to talk to you soon.

Robyn Arri

Head of Boarding Cooktown



Dear families and carers,

Welcome to the first edition of our College Newsletter!

Boarding is much more than a place to stay. It is a home away from home where young people are supported to develop independence, build positive relationships, and learn the life skills that will help them thrive both now and into the future.

Each day provides opportunities for growth, whether it is learning practical skills such as cooking, laundry and personal organisation, participating in recreational and cultural activities, or simply sharing experiences with peers and staff. Our aim is to create an environment where every young person feels safe, valued, supported and connected.

It is a genuine privilege to care for and support your young people during their boarding journey. We recognise the trust families place in us, and we value the partnerships we build with parents and carers. We welcome your input and would love to hear any ideas, suggestions or opportunities you would like to see more of in our boarding program. Your feedback helps us continue to create meaningful experiences that support the wellbeing, growth and success of our boarders.

We look forward to sharing highlights, achievements and memorable moments from boarding throughout the year. Take a look below for a glimpse into some of the activities, adventures and everyday experiences that make our boarding community such a special place.

Terry Parsons









Deputy Principal – Head of Campus Cooktown



Welcome to Holy Spirit College, Cooktown

Holy Spirit College is a unique learning community in Cooktown, providing education and boarding opportunities for young people from Cooktown, Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.

Our community is built on the belief that every young person deserves the opportunity to succeed. Through personalised learning programs, Individual Education Plans and a strengths-based approach, we support young people to build confidence, resilience and meaningful pathways for the future.

The College operates through two dedicated programs:

- Day School, providing flexible and individualised education that meets the diverse learning needs of young people.
- Boarding, offering a safe, supportive home away from home where young people can develop independence, routines and life skills.

Our experienced team of teachers, mentors, youth workers and boarding staff work closely with families, communities and partner organisations to create an environment where young people feel safe, connected and supported to thrive.

At Holy Spirit College, education is about more than academics. We focus on wellbeing, personal growth and helping young people discover their strengths and potential.
We are proud to be part of the Cooktown region and look forward to continuing to work alongside families and communities to support the success of our young people.
As a college community, we recognise that the success of our young people is built on strong relationships, shared responsibility and a collective commitment to their wellbeing and learning. By working together, we create a foundation from which young people can build confidence, develop independence, embrace new opportunities and achieve outcomes that will positively shape their lives for years to come.

Fiona Connell







Deputy Principal – Head of Campus Edmonton



Our Vision

With GuGu, Wulungulbor, our Holy Spirit family welcomes young people from diverse backgrounds to empower them to be the best versions of themselves through providing meaningful learning opportunities for personal growth.

GuGu: *Guugu Yimithirr – spending time with God/prayer/spiritual relationship/conversation and connection.*

Wulungulbor: *Gimuy-Walubarra Yidi – God.*

Our Purpose

With the aspirations of the young people at the centre of our work, Holy Spirit College seeks to promote the spiritual, cultural, social, emotional, academic, and physical growth of those for whom a mainstream education is not currently accessible. Guided by trauma informed best practices and the love of Christ, Holy Spirit College provides a space where young people are welcomed with unconditional regard, utilising Individual Education Plans (IEP) to pursue each young person's life aspirations.

At Edmonton Campus, our vision and purpose guides everything we do. We are fortunate to have a dedicated and caring HSE team, including mentors: Robbie, Shelley, Tash and Izzy Education Support Officers: Yazmin, Hannah and Gus counsellor: Ashlee and Nicole, our administration officer as the friendly face who welcomes students, families and visitors each day.

The strength of our team helps create a positive and supportive campus culture. Through strong relationships, encouragement and a shared commitment to a young person's success, we strive to ensure every young person feels connected, valued and capable of achieving their goals.

Our enrolments have continued to grow steadily throughout the year, reflecting the strong sense of belonging that exists across our campus. Every young person who joins our Edmonton family is welcomed with unconditional positive regard and the belief that a fresh start is always possible. We know that every day presents new opportunities to learn, grow and succeed, and we encourage students to make the most of the learning, wellbeing and personal development opportunities available to them as they step through the door each day.

One of the highlights of the year has been our Wednesday off-site excursions and Outdoor Education program. Students have enjoyed exploring many of Far North Queensland's beautiful locations, including Goomboora Park, Palm Cove, Ellis Beach, Harvey's Creek, Lake Eacham, Granite Gorge, Babinda Boulders, Etty Bay, Holloways Beach, Yorkey's Knob, Cattana Wetlands, Crystal Cascades, Behana Gorge, the Botanical Gardens and the Red, Green and Yellow Arrow walking tracks. These experiences provide opportunities for adventure, teamwork, resilience and connection with the natural environment.

Young people also participate in a wide range of engaging and practical learning experiences, including golf, pickleball, indoor soccer, tennis, art, workshop, cooking, barista training, music, humanities, Work Ready, literacy and numeracy. These activities help build confidence, develop life skills, explore interests and strengthen engagement in learning.

Mentor groups provide valuable opportunities for young people to work towards their individual goals. Whether they are obtaining a learner's licence, creating a résumé, applying for part-time work, developing interview skills, researching career pathways, improving their digital skills or working towards academic milestones, our team is there to provide personalised support every step of the way.

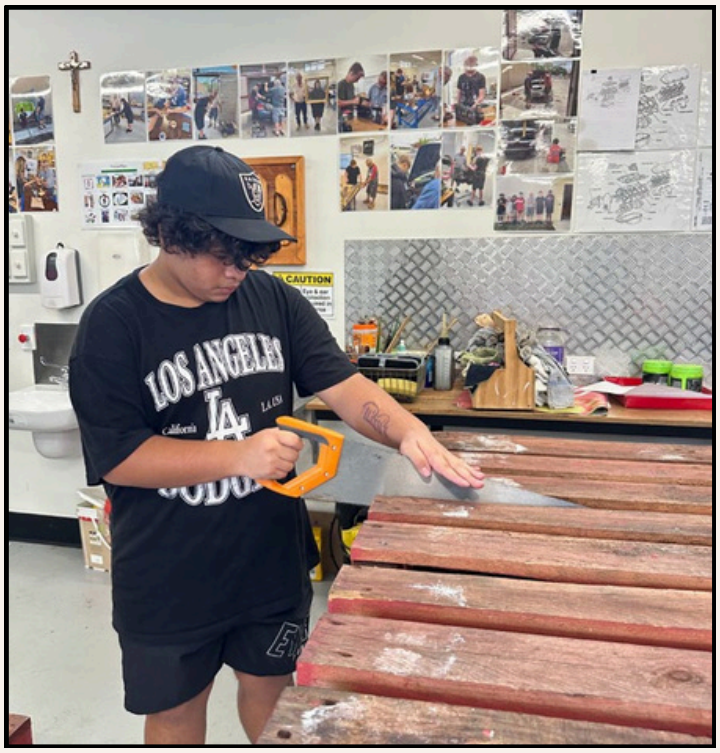
Last term, we established a partnership with Project Booyah, which delivers a weekly RESPECT program for our students. Tash also launched Café Connect, a community-focused initiative held every few weeks that brings together staff, students, families and community partners. We have been pleased to welcome regular visitors from Hambledon House, Project Booyah and Queensland Health, and we would love to see even more families join us for a coffee and a chat. Another exciting addition this year has been our Values Wall, an initiative introduced by Yaz to celebrate and promote the values that are important to our campus community.

Young people have also participated in a range of personal development and community engagement opportunities. Highlights included presentations from Katy at TRUE Relationships and Reproductive Health, a fishing experience with the Bori Muy Organisation, and work experience through Australian Training Works, where students developed practical skills in small motor maintenance and repair.

We are looking forward to a fantastic Term 4 as we prepare for our end-of-year celebrations, led by our young people and featuring some wonderful music performances. If you have not yet had the opportunity to visit, we warmly invite you to drop in and say hello and keep an eye out for our next Café Connect coffee catch-up. We would love to show you around our campus, introduce you to our incredible young people and share the many things that make Edmonton such a special place. And who knows, there might even be a coffee waiting for you! ☕😊🎵

Toni Jones





Deputy Principal – Head of Campus Manoora



A Warm Welcome from Holy Spirit College Manoora

Welcome to the start of Term 4 2026. I can't believe how quickly my first year at the College is fast approaching but I have been very proud of what we have achieved and the progress of our young people.

Throughout my career I have always been a big believer that education is about building strong relationships, creating opportunities and helping young people discover their strengths, passions and purpose. During the year, I have been continually inspired by the resilience, humour, creativity and potential of our students, and I am proud to be part of a college that places young people at the centre of everything we do.

While Holy Spirit College is a small school, we have a big vision. With 60 students enrolled and a capacity of 60, we are able to provide highly personalised support and meaningful relationships with every young person who walks through our doors. Our dedicated team is made up of many people who and work together each day to ensure every student feels safe, supported, valued and connected.

Celebrating Learning, Culture and Community

Term 3 was filled with opportunities for our young people to learn, grow and connect. Highlights included NAIDOC Week celebrations, student artwork displayed at St Monica's Cathedral, a community Kup Murri, an educational Green Island excursion, Woodwork, Cooking, Pottery, Beach Art as a longer timetabled session and creative projects that showcased student talent and culture. These opportunities strengthened friendships, built confidence and brought learning to life in meaningful and engaging ways.

Building Strong Community Connections

Students visited Bupa Aged Care, sharing stories and forming genuine connections across generations. We also continued strengthening our relationship with Cairns West Police, helping students build trust, understanding and a stronger sense of belonging within the community. These relationships will continue throughout term 4 and beyond.

Supporting Wellbeing and Faith

Students participated in Catholic Education Week Mass, NAIDOC Week, R U OK? Day and wellbeing activities that encouraged reflection, compassion and care for one another. This term we are in planning for our All Souls and All Saints Liturgy at the college where staff and young people will come together and share our faith journey.

Looking Ahead

As I reflect on my time at Holy Spirit College Manoora, I am filled with optimism and gratitude. Most importantly, I see a community that feels like family. Thank you for welcoming my family and me so warmly. Together, we will continue creating opportunities, celebrating achievements and supporting our young people to become confident, capable and compassionate members of our community.

Steve Hamm



First Nations Community Connection Coordinator



Dear Families/Carers, Community Members and Service providers,

It is my pleasure to let you know that I am here to provide a service on behalf of Holy Spirit College in relation to the holistic needs of our Young People.

I have been at the College since it began in 2015 and it has been a very rewarding experience. I also work for the College Office and work across our three Campuses.

Should you wish to have a yarn, do not hesitate to contact me.

Cheers,

Aunty Patsy.

A **free** webinar session for parents/carers,
Join education researcher and author Dr Simon Breakspear for a calm, evidence-informed session on what AI really means for how children learn and grow.

Date: Monday 26th October 2026
Time: 12 - 12:45pm
Register now with the QR code below.



Register here:

Term 4 Key Dates

TERM 4	(8 Weeks)
King’s Birthday Public Holiday	Monday 5 October
School Starts	Tuesday 6 October
World Mental Health Day	Saturday 10 October
College Board Meeting (HSM)	Tuesday 27 October
World Teachers Day	Friday 30 October
All Souls School Liturgy	Monday 2 November
Remembrance Day	Wednesday 11 November
College Board Meeting Dinner	Tuesday 24 November
Edmonton Northern Outlook Day	Wednesday 25 November
All Sites Last Day - End of year celebration	Thursday 26 November
HSC office closes	Friday 4 December

Get In Touch

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