

## **Board of Trustees Chair – Richard Spelman**

### **Senior Prizegiving Speech 2023**

Kia ora koutou katoa. This year has been another interesting and successful year for St John's College. I would like to start with an update on the refresh of the strategy that we commenced at the end of last year. We engaged with the community extensively over the latter part of 2022. The consultation was widespread, ensuring we captured the voice of the many parts of our school community. From this consultation we released a refreshed three year strategy earlier this year. Four key strategic goals were developed.

The first strategic goal is to *elevate the Catholic Character of the College and be the school of choice for Waikato Catholic boys*. Currently we are over-subscribed with enrollees and this year we have turned down applications from approximately 80 preference boys. The boys and families should not take it for granted the privilege of being at the school. To elevate Catholic Character within the school, we would like to have a dedicated chapel at the school. This is a long-term plan and over the three years we want to develop a detailed building plan and funding model. The school also endeavours to increase the number of boys being confirmed in the Catholic faith. This year we had 33 boys that had their first Holy Communion and were confirmed at the College Feast Day Mass. Last year the Marist Man award was introduced and this programme assists students in developing a sense of what it is to be a man of Faith, Integrity and Service. It is something the boys should aspire to.

The second strategic goal is to *develop a culture of excellence where all students aspire to fulfil their academic potential*. High quality teachers are a key aspect

to achieving this goal. This year, whilst the disruption of strikes was not ideal, it was good to see teachers being recognised and rewarded for their skills that they bring. It is important to keep on attracting high calibre people to the profession and the improvements to employment conditions certainly assists this. St John's does a fantastic job in NCEA Level 1 and 2 with 90% and 93% of the boys getting achieved or better respectively in 2022. We also have a very successful Careers and Gateway programme where the students are set up to progress to the workforce. We aspire to have more success in the number of students that reach merit and excellence endorsements. Students should be achieving to their potential and as a school we need to ensure that academic success is encouraged, valued and celebrated across the school. One key determinant of academic achievement is attendance. This year we have seen an improvement in attendance, so well done to the students and whanau who have positively contributed to higher attendance this year.

Our third strategic goal is to *enhance student and staff wellbeing through developing resilience, inclusiveness, a sense of self and belonging*. Society today is very different to when I was at school, with the external influences certainly greater for today's student. It is important that our Pastoral Care team is sufficiently resourced to cater for the needs of all students, staff and whānau. It is also important that our students and staff have a strong sense of identity and as a school we are inclusive of the diversity in the student population. This year the Board supported the Principal in undertaking a sabbatical where he researched the mental health and wellbeing of boys in New Zealand and Australian schools, particularly those that identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, or Māori and/or Pasifika. It is important that we keep learning and checking the approach that we are taking as a school. One of the highlights of

the year for me was attending the Māori and Pasifika awards evening in September. The performances that were delivered were fantastic and showed real pride and belonging for their cultural backgrounds.

The final goal is to *strengthen our community connections to provide more opportunities for our students*. Through these community connections our boys have the opportunity for mentoring, worksite visits and work experience with the business community. This is very important for the transition from school to work life and I thank those in the business community that support St John's College. The Foundation continues to play an important part in connecting the school with Alumni and assisting with scholarships within the school. This year it was fantastic to see the new seating on the school field being constructed through the efforts of the Foundation. Thanks to those involved. Our community plays a vital role in the success we experience, and we thank the large number of volunteers who dedicate their time to our sporting, culture and arts programmes. On any given day you will find 'Johnnies Boys' excelling at any number of activities and this simply wouldn't be possible without your help.

These four strategic goals

1. *Elevate the Catholic Character of the College and be the school of choice for Waikato Catholic boys.*
2. *Develop a culture of excellence where all students aspire to fulfil their academic potential.*
3. *Enhance student and staff wellbeing through developing resilience, inclusiveness, a sense of self and belonging.*
4. *Strengthen our community connections to provide more opportunities for our students.*

will guide the Board and school in objective setting and decision making in the coming years.

The opening of the Chanel block in the latter part of the year has transformed a large part of the teaching and learning area of the school. Externally the view of the school has significantly improved with the six wonderfully carved pou that display stories of St John the Apostle, and the illumination of them and the building is striking in the night light. Internally the classrooms are modern and are fantastic learning environments. The opening of the Chanel Block with Monsignor Frank and kaumatua from Tainui, was very special with the bringing together of the Catholic Faith and tangata whenua.

Thank you to the staff of St John's College that have continued to bring passion and skill to the education of the boys this year. Your contribution continues to enhance the lives of many and beyond the years that the boys attend at school. Thanks also to Shane and the leadership team for delivering another excellent year for the school. Thanks to Dom Tester who stepped up as Acting Principal in term two when Shane was on his sabbatical.

Finally, to our departing students we thank you for your immense contribution you have made over your time here. Please keep the connection to the school and the community as you embark on you new adventures.