

The Northholm Experience

Strategic Plan 2024–2026



Northholm
Grammar

Introduction

At Northholm Grammar, our commitment is based on our founding vision of a dynamic, caring school that fosters the worth of the individual, encourages academic and sporting excellence and promotes Christian values. It is a family-centred school which looks upon its students, parents and staff as part of a 'community' striving for a common goal. Northholm Grammar delivers a distinctive education that offers a level of care beyond that available at larger independent schools where each child is known, respected, cared for and cared about.

Our founders recognised that a fundamental element of a school's culture is defined by its vision and the values that are communicated within our community and promoted to students, staff and parents. A school's benchmark on how successfully the vision is embedded within our context is largely determined by the impact our values have on our students.

The values of a school provide a moral compass in establishing norms and behaviours with all key stakeholders. The School crest represents the 'Our School' values: *Learning through Scholarship, Caring for Others and Self, Living a Faithful Life and Contributing to the Community.* As we move beyond our 40th year, we have remained committed to these values and ethos and they are as important today as they were in 1983.

The Challenging Minds, Creating Futures Strategic Plan 2020–2023 launched our exciting journey of 'growth, renewal and excellence' which came down to the School's capacity to reimagine and renew our desired educational vision. Our focus was to establish aligned and financially sustainable school structures, roles and responsibilities that improved our organisational capacity to achieve the strategic vision for 'Our School' and deliver a whole education for 'Our Graduates'.

The Northholm Experience Strategic Plan 2024–2026 is the result of a comprehensive Stakeholder Consultation Process that included the voices of hundreds of stakeholders, giving generously of their wisdom, perspective and feedback, including areas of improvement and what they value most dearly about our wonderful School. Our next Strategic Plan serves to highlight to our community what we have discovered and the 'growth arenas' we seek to work on in continuing to build a rigorous and flourishing learning environment.

We gratefully acknowledge the support and generosity of the many who so readily collaborate in giving new expression to the Northholm Way.

Christopher Bradbury
Principal

Tony Parle
Chair of Council



Context

The Northholm Experience Strategic Plan 2024–2026 endeavours to build on the strong foundation of our School built over the past five years. It is evident that the purpose, core values and aspirations of the student character and achievement have been clearly defined, well communicated and known by everyone in our School community.

The mission and values of the School live in tangible and accountable ways across all programs, activities and interactions that impact upon all students' learning and development.

The effectiveness of the *Challenging Minds, Creating Futures Strategic Plan 2020–2023* is evidenced by:

- The implementation of the People and Culture: Cultural and Financial Audit 2019, leading to our significant academic and operational staff restructure to 'right size' the School, which has ultimately led to its financial turnaround, educational improvement and its future sustainability. The process was delivered with enormous care and transparency to ensure the success of our strategic and operational objectives, as well as to take the community on a journey of 'growth, renewal and excellence' through an inspiring vision and a new Strategic Plan.
- The achievement of outstanding HSC results and academic improvement. Northholm Grammar was previously ranked 306th (2018) in New South Wales; however, the success of our strategic vision is highlighted through our academic growth moving to rankings: 113th (2019), 61st (2020), 45th (2021), 117th (2022) and 45th (2023).

- The introduction of 'Our School Values' (The Aspiration) which includes *Learning through Scholarship, Caring for Others and Self, Living a Faithful Life and Contributing to the Community*, based on the School crest developed in 1983.
- The transformation of Northholm Grammar as an 'All-Through School' Kindergarten to Year 12 which has led to an aligned curricular and co-curricular program that is embodied in our educational philosophy based on *academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness*.
- The establishment of our K-12 Character Education Program focusing on the personal growth of each student. The introduction of an explicit curriculum was developed to lead these learning strategies through our Tutor Program.
- The establishment of The Northholm Institute to focus on professional learning, leadership development and community engagement through:
 - ▶ Professional Practice Initiative: Developing and growing excellence in teaching, especially curriculum expertise and pedagogical practice through evidence-based and research-driven professional reflection and continuous improvement including our Professional Practice and Growth Model (Appraisal through Reflection, Supervision, Evaluation), Professional Supervision and Support Model (Observation Program), Professional Reading Programs, Visiting Fellowships and the New Teacher Mentoring Program.
 - ▶ Leadership Development Initiative: Developing and growing excellence in instructional and organisational leadership through our professional leadership practice and growth model with the introduction of an Executive Coaching Model. An Executive Coach (Past Principal) working with middle and senior leaders.
- Building a strong strategic and operational approach to growing the School which has resulted in a 65% increase in student enrolments. Northholm Grammar enrolments were 390 students at the commencement of 2019 and we now have over 600 students.
- Development of our 'Marketing and Communications Strategy' by increasing the School's brand recognition and developing a content management strategy that was visible to our community needs and achieved through strong internal communication such as our website, social media and visual identity.
- Financial stewardship achieving five consecutive healthy operating surpluses and strong cash reserves which has seen a complete turnaround to where the School was previously positioned.
- Our academic and reputational growth leading to the acceleration of a new Master Plan. We have engaged in the development of a new educational precinct worth \$12 million to cater for the growth of enrolments.



The 'Our School' values

We are an independent, co-educational school, situated in a beautiful and inspiring semi-rural environment in Arcadia, in the north-west of Sydney.

Established in the broad Anglican tradition, we welcome families from different backgrounds and provide a holistic education for faith and life. As members of their Houses, our infants, Primary and Secondary Years students are known, respected and cared for through our distinctive educational framework. Northholm Grammar is unapologetic for acknowledging, catering for and celebrating achievement and excellence in all domains of School life, academic, cultural, sporting and beyond.

Our framework is built on:

- **Learning through Scholarship:** Represented by the open book, we are a school that challenges each student scholastically, by encouraging high academic standards and intellectual rigour, providing inspiring teaching committed to personalised learning, and designing and implementing our curriculum purposefully.
- **Caring for Others and Self:** Represented by the rod and staff of the shepherd, we are a school that goes out of its way to support, coach and fulfil the potential of each student. This is achieved through strong pastoral care that is characterised by our attentiveness to individual growth, social and emotional development and wellbeing.
- **Living a Faithful Life:** Represented by the compass of the cross, we are a school that develops the character of each student through inclusive Christian values that are enacted through Chapel services, chaplaincy and educational programs.
- **Contributing to the Community:** Represented by our motto, *Be Traist* (Be True), we are a school that promotes in each student a strong sense of belonging, and service to the community through our opportunities for representation, leadership and community engagement.

“

... we are a school that challenges each student scholastically, by encouraging high academic standards and intellectual rigour ... ”

The Northholm Way

Academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness

Northholm Grammar's educational philosophy is firmly based on the principle of *academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness*. We seek to challenge every student by raising academic expectations and celebrating their 'growth' because we value the importance of achieving one's potential.

At the same time, we value the maintenance of an inclusive pastoral character to an education, where children are engaged in the learning that will 'bring them joy' and our delivery attends to those with learning needs in a personalised way which achieves a holistic approach to their development. The student is viewed as both a 'learner' and a 'person', therefore a quality education must maintain both academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness.

We know that student achievement is largely attributed with a close connection to student wellbeing. Establishing a high performance culture within a school context is dependent on both challenging students to achieve their best academically, as well as providing

the care and support necessary for personal growth and development. We also know that education is about preparing our young men and women for life, therefore our core business is to grow and develop each student intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

The learning outcomes of ***academic intentionality (scholarship)*** includes the realisation of a child's potential, active encouragement to do one's best, the development of discipline to solve tricky problems, preparation for the real world and developing the capacity to make a valuable contribution.

The learning experiences of ***personalised pastoral attentiveness*** include the affirmation and understanding of the learner, attentiveness to the students' needs, development of personalised learning plans, a concern for the whole person and an awareness of the variety of skills, for example social and emotional, that are needed in real life.

Northholm Grammar is intentional and deliberate in establishing a learning environment that successfully incorporates the positive benefits of academic intentionality with pastoral attentiveness. We want our students to have the very best of both models in their experience of excellent teachers.

A superb, highly competent teacher will discern what a student requires in the moment, whether that is the forward momentum of a challenging assignment or the encouragement to explore an area of interest. A great teacher will be attentive to the personal circumstances of a child and will have a repertoire of skills that enables a child to experience the real world application of their learning.

The Northholm educator will both challenge and support our students in achieving their potential and valuing a love of learning. At the same time, we want to ensure that our learning environment mobilises academic intentionality to address pastoral problems and engage pastoral attentiveness to enable academic accomplishment.

“ We seek to challenge every student by raising academic expectations and celebrating their 'growth' ... ”





The Northholm Distinctive

Our five (genuine) **areas of distinctiveness:**

1. Investment in character

Evidenced by our unique Character Education Program to guide our students in becoming the best versions of themselves.

2. High performing 'value added' academic school

Evidenced by our HSC performances which tell of the strengths of a rigorous co-educational environment, where outstanding teaching is complemented by aspirational students.

3. Idyllic learning environment

Evidenced by our rural-urban fringe — the best of both worlds — in providing our students with the best possible opportunities to learn.

4. Personalised attention and great size

Evidenced by our student numbers promoting a customised school experience that best supports the academic, pastoral and co-curricular programs.

5. Emphasis on wellbeing and flourishing

Evidenced by our external and internal measures which highlight high wellbeing, self-regulation and autonomy in students.



The growth arenas

1. Curriculum and academic performance

- Deliver a rigorous academic program that inspires curiosity, develops critical thinking, fosters intellectual agility and prepares students to be socially conscious and responsible citizens in a culturally diverse world. Key outcomes include:
 - ▶ Maintain strong academic growth and performance.
 - ▶ Create and implement the Northholm Diploma of Education.
- Deliver a data analytics framework that enhances teaching, learning and operational optimisation.
- Launch a reimagined, personalised and data-driven High Potential Education Program for gifted and talented students.
- Develop a holistic strategy for the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that reinforces its capabilities to enhance pedagogical methodologies and the operational efficacy of the School.
- Establish a new School Management System rollout plan that supports stronger reporting, assessment and management structures.

2. Wellbeing, pastoral care and operations

- The development of the K-12 All-Through School Educational Framework through high performance wellbeing and pastoral care in our Houses and Primary classes, focusing on the efforts of our Pastoral Care System in building our personalised approach that helps students to:
 - ▶ be inspired, challenged and supported to find their voice.
 - ▶ forge a personal narrative for their growth in character during their time at School.
 - ▶ encourage each other to become the best versions of themselves.
 - ▶ learn and apply critical inquiry and creative problem-solving skills.
- Establish signature programs and associated strategic learning partnerships to support research, development and delivery of evidence-based programs in:
 - ▶ Character Education
 - ▶ Student Futures
 - ▶ Sport and Creative and Performing Arts.
- Develop a K-12 Service Learning Framework that reinforces a culture of service by ensuring students experience the impact of their agency in shaping a hopeful future. Building current programs with a moral sense of service locally, nationally and globally through engagement in meaningful and reflective service programs.
- Develop a comprehensive K-12 Student Leadership Program through opportunities, experiences and the Graduate Profile of the Northholm Leader.
- Foster outdoor, environmental and personal learning through our K-12 Experiential and Immersive Education Program.

“...prepares students to be socially conscious and responsible citizens in a culturally diverse world.”

3. Pedagogy and professional practice

- Support the recruitment, retention and growth of our staff in high performance teaching, learning, wellbeing and leadership practice through The Northholm Institute.
- Build signature programs and associated strategic learning partnerships with industry and universities to support research, development and delivery of evidence-based programs in:
 - ▶ Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education.
 - ▶ STEM and Innovation.
- Refine our commitment to staff wellbeing by further exploring benefits that make Northholm a career destination.
- Nurture partnerships with parents through parent education, voice and agency building our connection between professional learning and character education with parent masterclasses.
- Provide a workplace that is safe, stimulating and collegial for all staff and students, strengthening staff training in child protection and Work Health and Safety areas.

4. Development and community engagement

- Develop community relations which complement our vision and enhance our contribution to our world in which we live.
- Strengthen planning in enrolments, marketing and communications, events and community relations.
- Explore tangible ways of engaging and deepening our relationship with our alumni including mentoring programs, extra-curricular coaching and academic support roles and networking opportunities.
- Expand philanthropic initiatives across all segments of our community by implementing School and community capital campaigns.
- Clarify the purpose of, and engage with, key stakeholder groups in our Northholm community such as the Northholm Association, NOSU and support groups.

5. Governance, risk management and financial stewardship

- Develop flexible master planning in support of the School's strategy, vision and mission by engaging educational specialists in pursuit of our strategy and ensuring property management and acquisition is proactive and future-focused.
- Plan for short, medium and long-term financial stability and sustainability.
- Practise excellence in corporate governance and risk management by:
 - ▶ Continually elevating the risk appetite and embedding risk management through the School.
 - ▶ Develop sound risk management in all areas of the educational operations and experience (reputational, educational, human resources, technological, financial and environmental).
- Establish effective succession planning processes in School leadership and governance.



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