

From suitcase to system – BCE celebrates its 146 faith filled schooling communities this Catholic Education Week

The origin of Brisbane Catholic Education dates back to the 1950s when Fr Bernard O'Shea began imagining a connected Catholic school system from the St Ita's Presbytery in Dutton Park, seated on a veranda with his suitcase.

Today, his vision is a thriving system of schools, supporting more than 80,000 students and 14,000 staff across South East Queensland. Yet the history of many of our schools is also enduring, spanning more than 160 years.

During Catholic Education Week, these historic moments will be celebrated with an exhibition, highlighting some of the moments that make our schools special throughout history.

Schools celebrating milestones this year include St James Catholic Primary School, Coorparoo Principal Rachelle Gibson said the primary school was established by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in 1916, opening to 200 students at the time.

"Even in those early years, the school quickly outgrew the church as enrolments grew, with the youngest students taught underneath the building," she said.

"In saying this, our school is just as popular today as it was 110 years ago.

"We are still a thriving inner-city school, with a vibrant community overlooking Brisbane City.

"While much has changed over time, from our facilities to our expansive playgrounds and broad learning opportunities, the heart of our school has remained the same, our students.

"We are proud to have a community of learners who love learning and strive to learn and act with hearts and minds."

St Joseph's School, Nundah Principal Renae Collier said, The Sisters of St Joseph opened the school in 1916, bringing with them the traditions and spirituality of Mary MacKillop.

"Today our school is blessed to be a community where our staff and families work in partnership with enthusiasm and commitment to ensure that our students receive a high quality, inclusive Catholic education, founded in the Josephite tradition," she said.

Students at St Joseph's School also benefit from a diverse range of co-curricular opportunities that enrich their learning and support personal growth. These include an Art Extension Program, Chess Club, Gardening Club, inter-school and district sport, tennis, and a variety of lunchtime clubs.

"As a Parish school, we enjoy a positive partnership with the Banyo Nundah Catholic Parish and are delighted to have Father Daniel Redhead as a welcome presence in our school.

"Our students attend the Corpus Christi Church to celebrate the Eucharist and prayer liturgies. We also continue to foster a strong connection and partnership with Mary MacKillop College, Nundah."

BCE media release



Sts Peter and Paul's School, Bulimba Principal Lisa McCormick said the school was opened by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan with 200 students in 1916.

"Just as it was 110 years ago, our school remains a central part of the Bulimba community," she said.

"Looking ahead, we hope to serve the Bulimba community and surrounding communities for another 110 years, providing exceptional learning and teaching for young people."

Sts Peter and Paul's School has been celebrating its 110th anniversary throughout June. The school gathered for a liturgy last week with representatives from the Good Samaritan Sisters, the Parish, School Board and Parents and Friends Association and Brisbane Catholic Education in attendance. Classes also celebrated with special activities, including a Colour Run. Students have also been learning about the work of the Good Samaritan Sisters in the Philippines and are raising money to support their work.

BCE schools celebrating significant milestones in 2026 include:

125 Years	St Mary's School, Beaudesert
100 Years	St Augustine's Parish Primary School, Currumbin Waters
100 Years	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Childers
95 Years	Sacred Heart Parish School, Booval
90 Years	St Ambrose's Primary School, Newmarket
85 Years	Our Lady of Mt Carmel Catholic Primary School, Coorparoo
85 Years	St John Vianney's Primary School, Manly
75 Years	Mater Dei Catholic Primary School, Ashgrove West
75 Years	Our Lady of Dolours Catholic Primary School, Mitchelton
75 Years	St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Caboolture
70 Years	All Saints' School, Boonah
65 Years	San Sisto College, Carina
50 Years	St Peter Claver College, Riverview
50 Years	St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Rochedale
45 Years	St John Fisher College, Bracken Ridge
30 Years	St Bernard's School, Upper Mount Gravatt
25 Years	Jubilee Primary School, Pacific Pines
20 Years	Unity College, Caloundra West
15 Years	Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School, Ormeau

Looking ahead

As BCE reflects on growth across recent years, its newest schools stand as powerful examples of both achievement and future-focused vision.

In 2026, both Sophia College, Plainland and San Damiano College, Yarrabilba mark significant milestones, celebrating five years since opening their doors.

BCE media release



This spirit of growth continues with St Bonaventure's College, Flagstone which welcomed its first students this year, and Notre Dame College, Bells Creek now entering its third year of operation.

Looking ahead BCE is also shaping the future of learning through the proposed Windsor Inner North Secondary School (WINSS). Planned to open in 2029, the school is being designed with students' futures at its core, integrating innovation, sustainability and wellbeing into every aspect of the campus.

With more than 146 Catholic schools across South East Queensland, Brisbane Catholic Education offers families a wide choice of primary and secondary schools for students from Prep to Year 12. Find a school near you today! [Click here.](#)

About Catholic Education Week (CEW) 2026

CEW (26 July to 1 August) celebrations will centre around a new theme, 'Share your light, inspire others.' Calling for students, staff and school communities to recognise their gifts and share them generously.

It captures both the personal and communal dimension of Catholic education: nurturing individual talents and faith, and inspiring others through service, compassion and example.