

**Statement from Tom Sexton, Executive Director, announcing closure
of St Brendan's Primary School, Dunnstown
19 June 2023**

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CATHOLIC EDUCATION BALLARAT

It is with a deep sense of sadness that Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL) has made the difficult decision to close St Brendan's Primary School, Dunnstown at the end of the 2023 school year.

Last week I met with staff and parents of St Brendan's school to discuss the best way to ensure the students of St Brendan's continue to receive the holistic and high-quality Catholic education they so richly deserve. This was in the context of a forecast 2024 enrolment of 8 students across Years 3 to 5, no new foundation enrolments for three consecutive years and a regulatory requirement for a minimum of 11 students.

Inez French, Principal, her staff and the families of St Brendan's have been tireless in their efforts to improve enrolments over the past few years.

Families will be supported in their preferred school choice for 2024 with a number of alternative Catholic schools within close proximity, ready to welcome and embrace the St Brendan's families.

Similarly, the staff of St Brendan's will be fully supported to understand their options and career opportunities, including redeployment within other Ballarat Catholic schools, if desired.

Catholic education has played a prominent role in the Bungaree Parish and the district of Dunnstown for over one hundred and sixty years.

St Brendan's had its origins in 1858 in a wooden building known as the Catholic School Shed, situated not far from its present site. Throughout its rich history, the school has been served by a combination of religious orders and lay teachers. A great deal is owed to the Josephite Sisters, who taught there for ten years, the Presentation Sisters for forty four years and the Sisters of Mercy for thirteen years, as well as the many dedicated lay teachers and Principals who have taught in the school under the leadership of successive parish priests.

Above all we must acknowledge the support from local families and the community that have enabled the school to endure and prosper for so many years.

Celebrations to recognise the rich contribution of the school and all who have played a part in its history will be planned during the remainder of the year.

DOBCEL continues to advocate for the important role that small Catholic schools play in rural and remote areas as they provide parental choice in education and make a valuable contribution to supporting vibrant local communities.

I take some comfort in the fact that Catholic education throughout the Diocese of Ballarat continues to grow, now educating more than 18,500 students across 64 schools.

I ask for your prayerful support and understanding as together we navigate this challenging time.

Tom Sexton
Executive Director