

TRUTH AND COURAGE

SFX NEWS

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Truth and Courage

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A message from the Principal

Dear parents and friends,

Our students have had a great start to Term 3 and I am delighted to see them so focussed and enthusiastically engaged in their courses of study and new electives this Semester. The energy of our school environment is a tribute to their confidence as learners, relationships with each other and most especially the dedication and generosity of the teaching faculty who are unfailingly committed to enhancing the learning and wellbeing of our young people.

In Week 1 our Year 12 students attended their Retreat at the Collaroy Retreat centre in Sydney. This was a very significant time for our Year 12 students and their teachers and I could not have been more impressed with this group of young adults. The dignity and respect Year 12 demonstrated toward each other and their teachers was emblematic of this year group and a tribute to their formation and maturity as young people. Year 12 are a credit to themselves, their teachers and their families!

It is during Term 3 that our Year 8, 9 and 10 students undertake course counselling and choose their junior electives and senior courses in preparation for 2027 and I am delighted with their interest in and enthusiasm for the range of new and contemporary courses and learning opportunities their teachers have developed and which are unique to Francis Xavier College. Last week we held our Year 8 and 9 Electives Information Evening at which over 450 parents were in attendance. Thank you to those parents who joined us for this occasion!

Last week we welcomed staff and students to the College from our sister school the Takafu Higashi school in Japan. They were very warmly welcomed into classes and into the families of their school buddies for their home stays. Our Japanese guests had a wonderful time exploring Canberra and its surrounds and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those families who opened their homes to our guests for their stay.



Our newest member of our school community has been a great hit with both staff and students. Monty our school dog is permitted to be at the College 3 days per week, after which he is required to have a rest period, and joins students in class, on the playground and in our reset area. Look out for news of Monty’s adventures, learning journey and exploits in Compass!

Finally I wish you and your families the very best for the weeks ahead. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if I can assist you in any way.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Sandra Darley
College Principal



Year 10 Report

Year 10 students have made a fantastic start to Semester 2 and have quickly settled back into their learning programs with enthusiasm and focus. It has been wonderful to see students approaching the semester with a positive attitude, demonstrating resilience, independence, and a willingness to challenge themselves across a range of subject areas.

A particular highlight this semester has been the students' engagement in their elective subjects. Whether pursuing interests in the arts, technologies, health and physical education, hospitality, or vocational pathways, students have embraced the opportunity to explore areas of personal interest while developing new skills and broadening their knowledge. Their commitment to learning and willingness to step outside their comfort zones has been encouraging to see, and many students are already demonstrating significant growth in both confidence and capability.

As students progress through Year 10, there is an increasing emphasis on preparing for the transition into senior studies. Throughout the semester, students have begun exploring future pathways, considering subject selections for Years 11 and 12, and reflecting on their strengths, interests, and long-term aspirations. These conversations are an important part of helping students make informed decisions about their educational journey and future career opportunities.

Looking ahead, excitement is building for Workplace Experience (WEX), which will take place next term. This valuable program provides students with the opportunity to step outside the classroom and gain first-hand insight into the world of work. Through WEX, students will develop important employability skills, build confidence in professional environments, and gain a greater understanding of potential career pathways. We encourage students to make the most of this experience by approaching it with enthusiasm, professionalism, and a willingness to learn.

Beyond their academic pursuits, many Year 10 students continue to contribute positively to the wider school community through participation in sporting, cultural, leadership, and extracurricular activities. Their involvement and school spirit play an important role in creating a positive and inclusive environment for all students.

We are proud of the way our Year 10 students have started the semester and commend them for their commitment to their learning and personal growth. We look forward to supporting them as they continue to develop their skills, explore future opportunities, and prepare for the exciting challenges and achievements that lie ahead in their senior years.

Christopher Webster
Year 10 Coordinator



NAIDOC MASS

St Christopher's Cathedral was filled with colour, ceremony and community last month as Catholic school communities from across the Archdiocese gathered for the annual NAIDOC Week Mass and Awards. Students and staff from schools across the Canberra region, including our own SFX community, joined Archbishop Christopher Prowse to honour the histories, cultures and enduring contributions of Australia's First Nations peoples.

The celebration opened with a Welcome to Country and a Smoking Ceremony led by Wiradjuri man Duncan Smith and his family, setting a powerful and reflective tone for the Mass that followed.

Welcoming everyone to the celebration, Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn Executive Director David de Carvalho spoke of the day as a chance to reflect honestly on Australia's shared history while celebrating the diversity of Aboriginal Nations represented across our schools.

In his homily, Archbishop Prowse encouraged students to meet cultural difference with openness rather than fear, telling the young people gathered, "We don't need to be frightened. We need to be curious." He reflected candidly on the ways earlier generations had often failed to truly understand First Nations peoples, and challenged students to help write a different chapter — one built on curiosity, learning and genuine connection.

Following the Mass, the annual NAIDOC Awards recognised First Nations students for their achievements across academics, leadership, sport and service — a proud moment celebrating excellence within our Catholic school communities.

Speaking about the significance of the day, Catholic Education's Faith in Learning Support Officer for Aboriginal Education, Libby Goodsell, noted that Catholic schools across the Archdiocese now support around 1,000 First Nations students. She highlighted that growth in this space isn't only about new enrolments, but about staff and Aboriginal Education Workers building genuinely safe spaces where students and families feel confident to embrace their identity. Her colleague, Faith in Learning Officer Laura Mudford, echoed this sentiment, describing the Mass as an important way for Catholic Education to connect with First Nations families and help them feel at home within the Catholic school system.

For SFX, the NAIDOC Week Mass is a meaningful reminder of our shared commitment to reconciliation, cultural respect and genuine belonging. It's a chance for our whole community to pause, listen and celebrate the gifts that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures bring to our faith, our school and our shared story.

English Department Update

This year, the SFX community has been alive with student voice, from speeches about the issues that matter, to stories our students create and share.

Amplifying student voice and empowering our students to speak with purpose has been a focus in 2026. The conclusion of Semester 1 saw our Year 9 Speaking for Leadership cohort deliver passionate speeches about the issues that drive them to agitate for change. From Aliya Chand’s insightful critique of the treatment of minorities to Millicent Fletcher’s observations about the pressure to perform, these speeches have evidenced exponential growth in our students.

In other, quieter classrooms, pens have been busy as students bring their inner authors to the fore. Our Pens Unleashed student’s writing skills reinforced the understanding that stories allow us to celebrate the often-intangible moments that capture meaning in our evolving world.

Excerpt of Amelia Arentsen’s Major Work

ELIAS
The first thing that I had noticed about Blackwater was that nobody listened to the adults.

The second was that everybody listened to Noah.

It was subtle, but it carried weight. People weren’t tripping over themselves to hear what Noah had to say, nor did they trail after him like a pack of stray dogs. It presented itself in smaller ways, in the ways their eyes drifted to him when they were uncertain, in the way they waited for his reaction before deciding on their own. They looked to him for guidance, for reassurance, and maybe for approval.



Poet Laureate

This year, the SFX search for our student Poet Laureate focused on the theme “The Good is Close at Hand”, inviting budding writers to submit pieces that focus on the power of hope to inspire growth and resilience, even when things seem difficult.

While the field was inundated by a record number of submissions, year 11 student Virginia Petrou’s poem ‘Just Like That’ earned her the title of SFX Poet Laureate 2026.

Jenna Hildebrand
Acting Head of English

Just Like That

Just like that,
It’s over.
I can breathe.
A shimmering cascade of colour
Relights my world.

Just like that,
I’m free.
My voice harnesses the clouds
Whilst I belt out in joy,
At the top of my lungs.

Just like that,
I’m finally home.
A smile once lost in denial
Finds its way back to me,
Even reaching my eyes.

Just like that,
I’m warm.
Even when the bitter wind
Licks at my skin,
The sun still manages to catch me.

Just like that,
There’s light.
I can see clearly.
That lazy, entitled fog
Left in my rearview mirror.



Encouraging Reading for Pleasure

In the hustle and bustle of life, getting your teenager to put down their phone and pick up a book may feel like a losing battle. Despite this, the data backs up why it's worth the fight. Recent data out of Cambridge reveals that young people who start reading for pleasure early in life go on to perform better on cognitive tests and report better mental wellbeing in adolescence.

Strategies to build reading culture at home:
Let go of "worthy" books. Sports biographies, fan fiction, magazines, graphic novels - anything they choose to read counts.

Audiobooks count too. The comprehension and vocabulary benefits are largely the same.

Keep the pressure off. Reading logs and forced silent reading time can kill motivation faster than screens ever will.

Remember – the SFX Learning Commons provides access to free audio and eBooks that students can access both at school and from home.



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Science Department Update

It has been an exciting start to Semester 2 as we have welcomed students back into our laboratories and learning spaces. The start of a new term allows for the start of new topics of study, and we look forward to helping our students discover more about the world around them. Science continues to be a fundamental area of study, fostering curiosity and critical thinking.

In Junior Science classes, students have been engaging with Physics & Chemistry units. Year 8 and 9 students have been learning about energy, with Year 8 learning about the different forms and how they transfer and transform, and Year 9 developing their understanding of waves and the uses of different forms of Electromagnetic Radiation in our modern society. Year 10 students are focussing their attention on the periodic table of elements, and using the information this provides to predict how elements will interact with each other.

Our Senior Science classes have returned from a successful Semester 1 to continue their studies of Biology, Chemistry, Earth & Environmental Science, Health Science, Physics and Psychology.

An exciting development for our department this year has been the introduction of new Elective subjects for Year 9 and 10, including Everyday Chemistry, Oceanography and Marine Science. These classes have been well received and enjoyed by our students.

In Term 3 we also look forward to Science Week (August 15-23). The theme for 2026 is "Seeds of Science: Nurturing knowledge for all". Students should be on the lookout for posters about the school events during Week 5.

Anna McFarland
Acting Head of Science







Year 12 Retreat

Our Year 12 students, together with their pastoral teachers, kicked off Term 3 in the best possible way — travelling to Sydney for a retreat at the stunning Collaroy Centre, perched right on the beachfront.

As our College leaders, Year 12 carry a special responsibility within our community, and the retreat offered a rare and valuable opportunity to step away from the everyday routine of school life and simply be present with one another. Over the course of the retreat, students took part in a rich mix of activities, quiet reflection and Mass, giving them space to reconnect with their faith, their friendships and their sense of purpose as they finish this final and most significant year of their schooling.

The change of scenery proved to be exactly what was needed. Away from timetables and assessments, students had the chance to slow down.

We are incredibly proud of how our Year 12 cohort conducted themselves throughout the retreat. They embraced every part of the experience with maturity, openness and genuine care for one another, representing our College and its values in the very best light. Feedback from staff and students alike has been overwhelmingly positive, with many describing it as a high-light of their year so far.

A huge thank you to the pastoral teachers who accompanied our students and helped make the retreat such a meaningful and memorable experience. Here's to a Term 3 built on the same spirit of reflection, connection and leadership that our Year 12 students carried home with them from Collaroy.





Takefu Higashi Sister School Visit

This week, SFX has had the pleasure of welcoming students from our sister school, Takefu Higashi, in Japan, as part of our ongoing exchange program. During their short stay, our visitors have jumped straight into life at SFX, joining our students in classes, taking part in activities and getting a genuine taste of what a week at an Australian Catholic school looks like.

Our Japanese classes have been a particular highlight, coming alive with the buzz of real, live conversation. It's one thing to learn a language from a textbook, and quite another to put it into practice with a new friend sitting right beside you. Our students have relished the chance to try out their Japanese in real conversations, while our visitors have enjoyed practising their English with equal enthusiasm, growing more confident by the day.

Even in such a short time, the visit has been about far more than language. Students have swapped stories, shared a laugh and shown real curiosity about one another's worlds, forming friendships in just a matter of days that have left a lasting impression on both sides. There was even time for a bit of classic Aussie culture, with our visiting students getting hands-on making fairy bread — a small, simple moment, but one that captured exactly what these visits are about: connection, fun and a genuine exchange of culture.

Though brief, the visit has been a wonderful and memorable experience for everyone involved, giving our students a window into the world beyond Canberra and our Japanese guests a warm taste of life at SFX. We're grateful for the opportunity to host Takefu Higashi and look forward to welcoming them back again in the future.



SFX Alumni Story

From SFX to the NBA.

Luke Roberts' journey from the classrooms of St Francis Xavier College to promoting the NBA around the world is proof that saying "yes" to opportunities can take you anywhere.

Today, Luke helps grow basketball globally through international partnerships, community programs and initiatives that create opportunities for the next generation.

Scan the QR Code below to read Luke's inspiring story and discover how a passion nurtured at SFX helped shape a remarkable career.



SCAN ME



PARENTS / CARERS

HAVE YOUR SAY!



Your voice plays a big part in helping us continue to **grow and support our strong school community.**

The survey takes about **10 minutes** and will close on the **31st of August 2026.**

Your feedback is **completely confidential.**

Notices



Save \$500 and we'll double it.

For every dollar you save, you'll receive
another dollar from ANZ to spend towards
educational costs, up to \$500.



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