

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

TAKING FORWARD-THINKING TO A NEW LEVEL

While preparing students for the future workforce is a core challenge for school leaders, St Paul's School principal Paul Browning is going one step further and actively implementing a range of innovative programs that are crafting the next generation of innovators

LOCATED IN Bald Hills in Queensland, St Paul's School occupies a single 51-hectare campus, which includes the school's buildings as well as its sports fields and grazing land.

The school was founded in 1960 as a boys-only high school. It became co-ed in 1993 and added a junior school in the late 1990s. Today, St Paul's is a pre-prep to Year 12 school and includes an international school. The school enrolls 1,400 students overall on the one campus.

While the school's name, building and grounds are not radically unique, how it is preparing its students for tomorrow's world certainly is. Since taking the school's helm in 2008, Paul Browning and his executive have implemented a strategic planning process that stands out in ways that few others do.

"We established a vision to become leaders in educational thinking and practice. That vision really tells you to think very carefully about what you're doing, because you can't follow other people as a leader – you have to be out in front," he says.

Scenario planning in action

In 2014, Browning and his team undertook another strategic planning process, which

involved scenario planning. The plan they hatched was innovative and exciting: the school would look ahead to the world in 2028 when its youngest students – who were four years old at the time – would reach Year 12.

"Scenario planning is not about predicting the future; it's about looking at what possible futures could occur as a result of trends that we're seeing today," he says.

By researching, and interviewing 30

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thought leaders from around the world – including renowned education experts Pasi Sahlberg, Yong Zhao and Andy Hargreaves – St Paul's created four scenarios of possible

futures of the world in 2028.

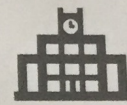
"Based on that, we realised that schools need to change dramatically as a result of what's happening in the area of technology



St Paul's principal Paul Browning with students



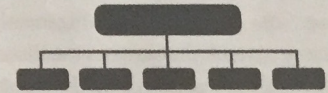
ST PAUL'S SCHOOL AT A GLANCE



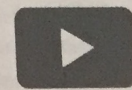
St Paul's School was founded in 1960



There are currently 1,400 enrolled students



St Paul's consists of **five subschools**, which include pre-prep and an international school.



The school's scenario-planning video, titled *Did you know that in 2028*, has been viewed more than **437,000 times on YouTube**

in particular – otherwise they face the risk of becoming redundant,” he says.

Schools require ‘big changes’

“One of the things you do in scenario planning is look for trends. Through our research, we identified 82 trends that have some implication for our school and, I would argue, for schooling in general,” Browning explains.

“We then categorised those trends and found two critical uncertainties. We couldn't really predict where they were going, because we weren't certain as to how they would play out.”

In 2014, St Paul's created a video, called *Did you know that in 2028*, about several of

these trends. The video, which has since been viewed more than 437,000 times, has been used by Ernst & Young in Switzerland and other major corporations for their strategic planning processes.

“The two critical uncertainties we found were employment and technology. The reality is that the employment landscape is changing dramatically, largely impacted by technology. There is a lot of rhetoric and research out there about the fact that 40% of the jobs we know of today will be replaced within the next decade by artificial intelligence and robotics,” he says.

“Even jobs like journalism, law and accountancy and medicine will not be immune to this change – but what will they be replaced

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

with exactly? We don't know the answers to this question yet."

The Foundation for Young Australians suggests that only 20% of the population will possess the skills for 60% of the new jobs that will emerge. Browning says his school is taking a proactive approach to this challenge by focusing on the skills that are likely to be most important when this reality takes shape.

"One of the key skills will be creativity; the ability to innovate and become an entrepreneur. These are the sorts of skills we are focused on developing in our students today," he says.

Technology was identified as the other uncertainty, and again, no one can predict where this is heading.

"Technology has the power to enhance life as we know it, but also the power to overwhelm life as we know it," Browning says. "Stephen Hawking said that artificial intelligence would be the last thing that the human race invents, and that's a scary prospect."

Browning adds that while humans will most certainly be engaging technology more in the years to come, this may be taken to a new level entirely – when people may be able to mentally connect to the Internet directly via surgical implants in their brains.

"We did find some evidence that it's possible we may, at some point in the not-too-distant future, be directly linked to the Internet by an implant to the neocortex, allowing us to download exactly what we want simply by thought. Pearson is even working on artificial intelligence-based learning programs that are personalised and allow students to learn without the assistance of a teacher."

Browning says it's possible that, in the near future, governments will deem the old model of educating young people as inefficient and expensive.

"The question will be how we can improve education, and the answer to that question could be that those technologies are the solution. If that does occur, and teachers are taken out of the equation, that's a frightening prospect, because where do they learn the skills of communication, or relationship-building, or developing purpose to their lives?" he says.

"So it's a challenge for teachers to think

about their role. It's not just about imparting knowledge and getting them through a test. It's about raising a human being, being a mentor and coach, and helping a young person realise their dream and their passion."

'Heads of learning' making a difference

In 2008, the school created five 'heads of learning' positions in the learning realms of creativity, entrepreneurialism, design thinking, enquiry-based learning and global sustainability.

"Each of the heads of learning has designed unique pedagogies to instil in young people the

"In the future, kids will need to create their own employment when they leave school, because many of today's jobs won't be there. They could well be competing for work online against people around the world"

skills they need to be successful in life, and those are embedded into the curriculum and into the classroom. It's not a question of either/or the national curriculum and NAPLAN, or creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking – it's both/and," he says.

St Paul's employs a head of learning for creativity who has spent the last six years doing research with a university to understand what creativity is and how to foster that inside the classroom.

"It's not just the domain of creative arts; it involves mathematics, history, English, science and other subjects, where we're encouraging students to think creatively," Browning says.

Browning shares that one of his teachers went through an appraisal process two years ago, and worked with the school's head of learning in creativity. He has since experienced a significant turnaround in student outcomes as a result of the coaching he received.

"He reviewed the design-based projects that he had rolled out for a Year 3 class, and he had assumed that he was asking kids to be creative. What he discovered was that he had asked

them to be creative, but within a box. He had put boundaries around them in terms of how creative they could be," Browning explains.

"As a result of the coaching he received, he has given his students control over their learning, which has allowed them to be creative within the framework of what he's teaching."

Browning adds that the teacher's Year 3 kids have since "leapfrogged" the learning that would normally occur in Year 4 by an entire year.

"He's now had to redesign the units of work in his Year 4 class because his Year 3 kids have gone way beyond them already. It's remarkable," Browning says.

An Entrepreneurs Club

This year, St Paul's School started the prototype of an Entrepreneurs Club – a partnership with River City Labs, the company owned and run by Steve Baxter, who is one of the 'sharks' on the Channel 10 show *Shark Tank*.

"Anyone who has an entrepreneurial idea can apply to be a part of this club, which occurs after school. We have mixed-age learning where kids as young as 11 and 12 are working with adults to learn about how to launch a start-up," Browning says.

"At the end of the year, the kids pitch their ideas to a panel of specialists. We have partnered with external coaches in the corporate world so that students can learn about marketing, finance, business modelling and business planning...all the tools they need to be successful entrepreneurs."

Going back to the school's scenario-planning program, Browning says the Entrepreneurs Club is a way of providing students with a head start to the careers that will already have been well established in the Australian – and global – workforce by the time they leave school.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR TOMORROW'S WORLD

- St Paul's has five heads of learning for each of its departments, who provide specialist mentoring for teachers.
- The school has established an Entrepreneurs Club, which allows students to develop, and pitch, an innovative idea to industry leaders.
- St Paul's School is looking to establish a 'vertical learning' program, in which older students mentor younger ones in groups.

Vertical learning breaking barriers

Next year, the school will roll out a vertical tutoring system which will involve each of its Year 7 and Year 12 students being placed in daily tutoring groups where they will engage in peer-to-peer mentoring.

"This will open the door to peer-to-peer mentoring and learning, which will be the stepping stone to vertical learning. In the next couple of years we will start looking at how we will restructure the school," Browning says.

"Instead of students learning in year levels and progressing through the school based on their age, they will not be constrained by their age. They will be in courses that are aligned to their passions and their abilities."

Browning says this will "break all of the boundaries" of contemporary education by allowing children of all age groups to jump ahead to more complex units in their chosen fields without the obstacle of age and grade levels holding them back. "For example, if Year 7 kids have a particular passion for physics,

why should they have to wait until they're 15 or 16 if they have the genuine interest, knowledge and skills to excel in the subject?"

"Our Entrepreneurs Club is an example of what we hope to achieve through this. We have kids who are 11 and 12 years old learning alongside older kids and adults who are up to 60 years old. The thing they have in common is that they all have a passion for an idea they've got which they want to see become a reality."

Browning says the world has reached a point in its history that is unlike any before it, and suggests that principals should recognise the trends taking shape so they can better prepare their students for the future.

"Principals must bring an acute awareness to the organisation of what is happening around us, and make sure we're agile as an organisation, preparing ourselves to be sustainable well into the future.

"If schools don't wake up to what's going on around them, they could find themselves redundant." 