

AN END OF AN ERA



Principal Michael Kennedy with 2016 school captains Corey McEldrew and Matilda Denman.

Class was dismissed at St Michael's Primary School, Springbank forever when the school closed at the end of the 2016 school year after 146 years of service.

In a letter to the school community in June last year, Springbank and St Patrick's Gordon Principal Michael Kennedy said the size of the school, although providing a unique and intimate learning environment, had been a regular challenge in terms of its ongoing viability.

"As a school, we must meet strict criteria in order to remain viable," he wrote.

"Despite the very best efforts of staff and parents, we find ourselves on the very edge of the minimum required number of students (11) for 2017".

"This is certainly not a reflection of the work that current or past members of St Michael's school community have done and continue to do to ensure our ongoing viability; there simply aren't as many students or families attending our school as once was the case".

A review into the future of the school included careful consideration of the needs of current students and families, projected enrolments and the proximity of other Catholic schools.

Mr Kennedy, who joined the St Michael's team in 2006, said it had been a very emotional time.

"This is not something any person, principal or community wishes to go through; but in saying that, I've been feeling very supported by the whole community through this difficult time," he said.

"The decision to close the school was made early and the reason for this was that we needed to give enough time and support to the families and children of this school. Our first main aim was to make sure the children continued to have a great and happy year," he said.

"We also wanted to celebrate what is 146 years of Catholic education in the community of Springbank. There is just such a beautiful, rural feeling to this place. People have worked very hard for this school. Everyone knows everyone and it has been so easy to create strong, personal relationships with everyone in the community," Mr Kennedy said.

An End of an Era celebration was held over the weekend of December 3 and 4, 2016. It began with afternoon tea, followed by Mass after which over four hundred and fifty attendees enjoyed a spit roast tea and music. This celebration saw many teachers, students, families and friends return to commemorate the school. On Sunday, there was a final catch up for brunch. Although a sad occasion, it was a reunion that will be remembered for a long time to come and was thoroughly enjoyed by all that attended. Photos from the celebration can be viewed below and at <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/An-End-Of-An-Era-Celebration-At-St-Michaels-School-Springbank-1121803051227589/>

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