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LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT

LEADERSHIP LENS

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*This month's
interview*

ADAM
BENNIE
OUR LADY
HELP OF CHRISTIANS
PRIMARY SCHOOL
HENDRA QLD

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CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE LEARNING CAN FLOURISH

"We're living in a world where problems are more complex, and the solutions are less obvious. Our students will need to think critically, adapt, and come up with creative solutions."

In the complex and evolving world of education, Adam Bennie is a leader committed to both the individual growth of students and the operational excellence of his school.

Currently serving as the principal of a Catholic primary school in Brisbane, Adam's journey to leadership is a testament to the importance of mentorship, lifelong learning, and a commitment to efficiency that allows educators to focus on what matters most: the children.

After starting as a classroom teacher, he took time out to play football overseas - a period that helped him develop resilience and a global perspective on education and leadership. Upon returning to Brisbane, Adam resumed his teaching career, where he quickly found himself under the mentorship of an experienced principal who recognised his potential.

This early mentor was pivotal in Adam's development, offering lessons in leadership that have remained central to his practice. "My first principal really taught me the importance of understanding people, and how far you can go just by listening and making people feel heard," Adam recalls. These relational skills would become the cornerstone of his leadership philosophy, as he learned to navigate the complex dynamics between staff, students, and parents.

The Role of Mentorship

Building a strong leadership foundation, Adam's journey has been shaped by the mentors he encountered throughout his career. His first mentor provided a model of relational leadership that emphasised empathy, transparency, and open communication. By prioritising these values, Adam learned to build trust among staff and foster a sense of community, which he continues to emphasise as a principal.

Another influential figure in Adam's career was a mentor who taught him the intricacies of school management - particularly budgeting and resource allocation. "It's easy to focus on the day-to-day running of a school and overlook the bigger picture. Managing resources effectively is essential to supporting learning outcomes," Adam notes. These lessons have informed his approach to running a school that not only functions efficiently but also maximises the impact of every dollar spent on student development.

Leadership Philosophy: Streamlining for Success

Today, Adam's leadership style is driven by a desire to streamline and innovate within school systems to alleviate the administrative burden on teachers. He is particularly focused on how to make processes more efficient, which in turn allows educators to concentrate on teaching and student engagement.

"The teachers don't need help figuring out why they're here - they know it's all about the students," Adam explains. "What we can do as school leaders is remove barriers, reduce unnecessary tasks, and give them the freedom to focus on the students' learning." This operational focus doesn't detract from his people-centred leadership. On the contrary, Adam sees efficiency as essential to relational leadership.



"You can't lead from behind a desk," Adam insists. "People need to see you, talk to you, and feel that you're approachable."

"Leadership isn't about waiting for a title; it's about stepping up and finding ways to improve the school in any role you're in."

This dual focus on operational excellence and community-building has become the hallmark of his leadership. At the same time, Adam acknowledges the challenges of working within a large diocesan school system. Balancing the need for compliance with systemic requirements, while maintaining flexibility and innovation at the school level, is a delicate task. However, Adam sees this as an opportunity rather than a limitation. "We are part of a much larger network, and that comes with immense resources and support," he says. "The challenge is in leveraging those resources effectively while staying agile enough to meet the unique needs of our school community."

Relational Leadership - Building Trust with Parents and Staff

In an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, Adam believes that relational leadership is more important than ever. For him, leadership is about visibility and presence - being in the classroom, walking through the playground, and engaging directly with students and staff. "You can't lead from behind a desk," Adam insists. "People need to see you, talk to you, and feel that you're approachable."

He applies this same philosophy to his relationships with parents. In a world where parents entrust their children to schools for a significant portion of their day, Adam understands the importance of fostering strong relationships with families. He regularly meets with parents, not just to address issues, but to celebrate student successes and ensure that families feel connected to the school community.

These efforts to maintain open, honest communication have helped Adam build a culture of trust and mutual respect. Parents feel confident that their children are not only receiving a quality education but are also being cared for by a leadership team that prioritises their well-being.

Hiring and Developing Future Leaders A People-First Approach.

Adam's approach to hiring staff is deeply rooted in his belief that schools are communities first and foremost. While curriculum knowledge and teaching pedagogy are essential, Adam places high importance on a candidate's ability to build meaningful relationships with students and parents. "The first few days in the classroom are critical," Adam explains. "That's when you set the tone, build trust, and create the environment where learning can flourish."

He looks for teachers who not only understand their subject matter but who also have a natural affinity for creating connections. In Adam's view, great teaching starts with strong relationships. "If a student feels seen and understood, they're much more likely to engage in learning," he says.

In terms of leadership development, Adam is passionate about creating opportunities for aspiring leaders within the school. Whilst acknowledging there are often limited middle leadership opportunities in a primary setting, he encourages those to take initiative, identify challenges, and present solutions. "Leadership isn't about waiting for a title; it's about stepping up and finding ways to improve the school in any role you're in," Adam advises.

For middle leaders and teachers with leadership aspirations, Adam recommends actively collaborating with school leaders and being open to taking on new responsibilities that showcase their leadership potential.

Looking to the Future: Critical Thinking and Creativity in Education

As the educational landscape continues to evolve, Adam is focused on preparing students not just for academic success but for the challenges of an unpredictable future. In partnership with the University of Queensland, his school has implemented a "Teaching for Thinking" program aimed at fostering critical thinking and creativity among upper primary students.

Adam believes that while literacy and numeracy will always be foundational, the future will demand more. "We're living in a world where problems are more complex, and the solutions are less obvious.

Our students will need to think critically, adapt, and come up with creative solutions," he says. By instilling these skills early, Adam hopes to give his students the tools they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



“Learning doesn’t always have to be formal. It can happen through mentorship or observing others.”

Balancing Leadership and Personal Life: A Holistic Approach

Despite the demands of school leadership, Adam strives to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. He views this balance as essential not only for his well-being but for his effectiveness as a leader.

"If I'm not looking after myself, I can't lead at my best," Adam reflects. He prioritises family time and ensures that he models a healthy work-life balance for his staff, knowing that a sustainable approach to leadership benefits everyone in the school community.

Adam's ability to juggle the myriad responsibilities of a school principal while maintaining a personal and professional equilibrium is one of the many things that make him a respected leader.

His dedication to creating a supportive, efficient, and engaging learning environment - coupled with his people-first leadership style, ensures that Adam Bennie remains a transformative figure in education.

What are you most proud of?

"I'm most proud of striving to be an example of balance between work and family life.

Education is incredibly important work, and the responsibility we carry as educators is significant, but I make it a priority to dedicate quality time to my family alongside my commitment to my role.

I also take pride in building genuine, meaningful relationships with everyone I meet, creating connections that truly matter."



Our Lady Help of Christians School
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