

OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH-School

A BRIEF HISTORY

- We recognise the indigenous people who walked, hunted, lived and cared for this land for thousands of years.
- The Name of the suburb came from the Acacia tree which grew thickly in the area first named in 1898.
- The history of Our Lady of Fatima begins in April 1949, when Father Flanagan, Parish Priest of Moorooka, purchased a property consisting of a house and five acres of land on the corner of Beaudesert and Mortimer Roads, Coopers Plains for 2250.00 pound. The previous owner was Arthur Harper.
- Later in the same year, Father Flanagan was able to purchase and arrange for the removal of a building from Archerfield Airport.
- This building, purchased from the army, had originally been a military hut, part of which had been used as a PRISON.
- The purchase, re-erection, painting and alterations to the building cost 720.00 pound.
- On Sunday, 26th March 1950, the church of Our Lady of Fatima was dedicated by Archbishop Duhig in the presence of about 150 people. Before this time, the congregation used to travel to Moorooka to hear Mass.
- The building was described as “a handsome little church erected on high blocks with porch and sanctuary.”
- Friends donated the altar, statues and furnishings costing about 80.00 pound, and the church was opened “free of debt.”
- For these first years, Our Lady of Fatima was still part of the Moorooka parish, and Mass was celebrated at 7 a.m. every Sunday.
- The first altar boy of the parish was Patrick O’Shea, and he trained two other boys. Only Latin was used in those days.
- As the parish grew, another army hut was added. In 1954 a third hut was incorporated and a school was then commenced in the same building.

- The school of Our Lady of Fatima was opened on 25th January, 1954, with a total enrolment of 78 pupils taught by two Sisters of St. Joseph. The first principal was Sister Ibar.
- In those days, the sisters had to travel by bus from Moorooka.
- The very first “First Holy Communion” was held in the parish on 3rd October 1954. The choir that day comprised Grade 5 girls from Acacia Ridge who attended Moorooka convent.
- The first Parish Priest at Our Lady of Fatima was Father Ganzer.
- The first presbytery was located in the original house on the property – this was later refurbished and it is now used as the venue for Meals on wheels.
- Another major event in the history of Our Lady of Fatima was the building of the new brick Church. This was blessed and opened by Archbishop O’Donnell on 5th June 1966. (*Celebrated the 50-year Jubilee on the same day in 2016*)
- During these years, the school was still located in the old timber buildings, and as the numbers of pupils continued to grow, an ever increasing strain was put on the facilities.
- A further step in the growth of the parish came on 5th January 1968, when the inaugural meeting of the Our Lady of Fatima Parents and Friends association was held. (Up to this time, it had been part of St. Brenden’s.) The first executive was composed of: President, Mr John Ryan; Vice-president, Mrs R. Sutcliffe; Secretary, Mrs McIllwain; Treasurer, Mr Mike Larkin.
- Sister Finbar was the school principal at this stage.
- In 1969, the school population had jumped from 96 to 130. Grade 4 commenced and the old school building was again divided to provide a fourth classroom.
- During all these years, the P & F organized many working bees, social events and sports days; these were always well supported.
- By 1970, the school had 180 pupils, and its first lay teacher – Mrs L Garrigan, who took Grade 3. Grade 5 commenced, and Mrs. D. Feeney made her appearance. The new principal was Sister Ann.
- A series of special meetings of the P&F took place in the first half of 1970, to plan for a new school building. Mr Phil Denman and Mr Col Davies were closely involved in drawing up the plans for the school (based on a

Townsville model). Then, Father Ganzer had an “unbelievable God sent offer” of an interest free loan of \$69000!!!!

- However, the P&F now had to find and repay \$250.00 per month for the next 5 years. This meant an increase in the number of fund raising activities, and the Ladies Auxiliary of the P&F helped greatly in this regard.
- One particular fund raising activity which really proved an enormous success (and lots of funny stories like the “friendly policeman”) was BINGO. In this sphere, the Sheppard, Davies and Finch families, along with many others, provided more help.
- Finally, on the 24th January 1971, the new school was officially opened by Bishop Kennedy. It comprised 8 classrooms, an office, a staff room and a sick room. The number of pupils rose to 260; and the staff numbered seven.
- In 1972, Sister Dymphna became principal and Year 7 began. The enrolment was up further to 275.
- Father B Dooley came to the parish on the 1st January 1975 and celebrated his silver jubilee with us in 1986. (Fr Dooley died in Holy week 2016)
- School sport was well catered for with the help of Mr Paul Feeney, Mrs Sargent, Mrs D Feeney, Mrs Lambert, Mrs Larkin and Mrs Crompton. The girls’ marching teams were especially famous at this time.
- As 1972 progressed, two classrooms in the old school had to be renovated for use by 2 Year 2 classes.
- 1973 saw 340 pupils at the school. There were 9 classes and 9 teachers, (38 students per class) including Sister Dymphna, Sister John and Sister Rosemary.
- Clearly, yet more accommodation was required, and this was provided in 1974, when another 2 classrooms were added, together with another block of 4 classrooms and a music room.
- In 1975, the school received a Commonwealth Government Grant of over \$1000 to start a school library.
- The development of the tuck shop over these years was also considerable, and many volunteers worked tirelessly for the school and its pupils in this way.
- Sister Therese became the new principal in 1980, and she was followed by Sister Genevieve in 1983.
- Sister Rita was appointed to the school in 1985, and 1987 saw the latest addition to the school with the building of the new library. The

administration block and staff room were completely refurbished at the same time.

- Over the past decades the grounds have been improved greatly. Originally scrub and rubbish had to be removed, turf laid, dust problems settled, basketball courts provided, trees planted and landscaping carried out. Many of these jobs were done by volunteers and the “working bee” tradition still continues.
- Our Lady of Fatima continues to grow see timeline