



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

Annual School Report to the Community 2016



**St Thomas Aquinas
West Belconnen**

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School West Belconnen

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Principal

Mr Cameron Johns

Section One: Message from Key Groups in our Community

Principal's Message

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School is located in the heart of West Belconnen. It serves a diverse and expanding population, with many young families moving into the area. Our school has been expanding in recent years, and in the last four years we have grown in population, from 236 students in 2013 to 313 at the end of 2016. The school employs a part-time music teacher and a guitar teacher for the students in Years 5 and 6. The school also employs a Spanish teacher who teaches children from Kindergarten - Grade 6. In 2010, the Early Learning Centre (ELC) opened and the school now offers full time and part-time Preschool classes. We pride ourselves on being an inclusive and warm school community, whose teachers strive at all times to meet children in their journeys and to enable them to flourish as young human beings.

Parent Body Message

The St Thomas Aquinas School Community Council (SCC) has proudly been in existence for two years and prior to its inception, there was a School Board and a P & F. At the end of 2015, the parent community votes to dissolve the Board and P & F and form the SCC. The SCC's role is to serve the school community by providing advice where needed to the Principal and School Leadership Team. Examples of such advice may include input regarding uniform changes and advice in relation to certain school policies. The SCC prides itself on being able to offer guidance and assistance and thereby assist the school to be the best it can be. The SCC is comprised of parents and a small number of staff, including the Principal and the Assistant Principal. The SCC meets twice a term in a closed meeting and once a term in an open meeting format.

Student Body Message

St Thomas Aquinas is a friendly school and all the teachers take good care of the students. The children here make lots of friends. We got a 'Buddy Bench' this year and that was fun, and we also have lunchtime clubs. They started this year, for example, we have a Bike Riders club who get to ride the bikes at lunchtime. We get to do a lot of good things. The older students in Years 5 and 6 get to go on a school camp every year. Boys and girls in Years 3 and 6 also make their first Eucharist and Confirmation. We have fun each day and learn a lot at school. This year, we have a specialist Arts teacher. We all loved our Art Show in Term 3.

Section Two: School Features

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School is a Catholic systemic Co-educational School located in West Belconnen.

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School is a Catholic Primary School located in Charnwood, West Belconnen. The school caters for students in Preschool - Year 6, and has a current enrolment of 313 students.

Students attending this school come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities, including students from India, Sri Lanka, Croatia and the South Sudan.

The school employs 40 staff comprising of teachers and non-teaching staff, the latter being employed in a variety of capacities including Learning Support Assistants, Early Learning Centre assistants, front office staff. No staff identify as Indigenous.

The school has traditionally had a very stable teacher population. In recent years, however, there has been a large turnover of staff, with long serving staff members retiring and new teachers being employed by the school. This has led to a envisioning of the school's purpose and vision, which, when combined with the growth and subsequent building plans, means that the school is going through an exciting phase of growth and regeneration. This year, we opened our new extensions, which included 3 new classrooms, a break-out space, refurbished toilets and an extension of the library. The school also refurbished its courtyard and added two new sandpits. Next year, it is anticipated that we will extend the car park, to allow for the greater volume of cars that the school has see over the last few years. It is anticipated that the school will continue to grow and be two-stream from Kindergarten to Year 6 by 2018.

The school's website can be found at: <http://staquinas.act.edu.au/>

Section Three: Catholic Identity and Faith Formation

Our school follows the Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum, *Treasures New and Old*.

Religious Life & Religious Education

St Thomas Aquinas follows the Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum, *Treasures New and Old*. St Thomas Aquinas has a rich tradition of Catholic faith education. The school faithfully attends Mass every Thursday morning with the Parish. Fr Neville Drinkwater, the foundation Parish Priest, has served the parish and the school for forty-two extraordinary years. His contributions have been enormous and we are very lucky to have him as our Parish Priest. Sr Colleen Howe is the Parish associate and is also very involved in the school. The staff pray together every morning and spend some professional development time each year developing its spirituality and faith awareness. The school covers all the curriculum areas of *Treasures New and Old* and also provides opportunities for students to receive the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Section Four: Student Profile

Student Enrolment

The School caters for students in Kindergarten to Year 6. Students attending this School come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information describes the student profile for 2016:

| Girls | Boys | LBOTE* | Total Students |
|-------|------|--------|----------------|
| 134 | 182 | 51 | 316 |

* Language Background Other than English

Enrolment Policy

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn has established an *Enrolment Policy for Catholic Schools*. The Catholic Education Office monitors the implementation of this policy. The policy has been developed in the context of government and system requirements.

Information about enrolling in a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn may be accessed at the Catholic Education Office website.

Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2016 was 93.17%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

| Attendance rates by Year group | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Kindergarten | 93% |
| Year 1 | 94% |
| Year 2 | 94% |
| Year 3 | 94% |
| Year 4 | 92% |
| Year 5 | 92% |
| Year 6 | 94% |

Managing Student Non-attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. The School, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

School staff, under the Principal's leadership, support the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the School community;
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance;

- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance;
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

The Principal is responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by ensuring that:

- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance;
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented;
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern;
- the Catholic Education Office designated School Services Officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom School strategies have failed to restore regular attendance.

Section Five: Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2016:

| Total Teaching Staff* | Total Non-Teaching Staff | Combined Total |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 21 | 6 | 27 |

* This number includes 17 full-time teachers and 4 part-time teachers.

| | |
|--|----|
| Percentage of staff who are Indigenous | 0% |
|--|----|

Professional Learning

All teachers have been involved in professional learning during the year. These activities are designed to develop the skills and understandings of staff to improve student outcomes. Professional learning can take many forms including whole staff days, subject specific in-services, meetings and conferences.

At the beginning of the year, the staff held five PD days, including two days on Understanding by Design, a spirituality day led by the school's Religious Education Coordinator, a day at the 'Lead' Conference administered by CE staff, and an administration and code of conduct day.

Teacher Qualifications

All teachers are qualified as required by the relevant authorities.

Section Six: Academic Profile

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN assessment results provide valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. An analysis of these results assists School planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs.

The tables below show the percentages of students who achieved particular skill bands in numeracy and the aspects of literacy. The School results shown are compared to students nationally. Literacy is reported in four content strands (aspects): Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation. Numeracy is reported as a single content strand.

| NAPLAN RESULTS 2016 | | % of students in the top 2 bands | | % of students in the bottom 2 bands | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| | | School | Australia | School | Australia |
| Year 3 | Reading | 46% | 49% | 22% | 11% |
| | Writing | 22% | 49% | 17% | 6% |
| | Spelling | 28% | 46% | 21% | 12% |
| | Grammar and Punctuation | 34% | 52% | 17% | 10% |
| | Numeracy | 22% | 36% | 20% | 14% |

| NAPLAN RESULTS 2016 | | % of students in the top 2 bands | | % of students in the bottom 2 bands | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| | | School | Australia | School | Australia |
| Year 5 | Reading | 25% | 35% | 31% | 15% |
| | Writing | 16% | 17% | 19% | 18% |
| | Spelling | 22% | 30% | 22% | 18% |
| | Grammar and Punctuation | 31% | 36% | 25% | 15% |
| | Numeracy | 16% | 29% | 22% | 17% |

Section Seven: School Review and Improvement

Each year, the School develops an Annual Improvement Plan indicating the intended key improvements for student learning outcomes. The plan is drawn from the School's Strategic Plan and informed by the Internal School Review process. The School engages in an annual evidence-based evaluation of its effectiveness against these external standards in collaboration with the Regional Consultant.

Key Improvements Achieved in 2016

St Thomas Aquinas had three key improvement agenda items this year.

1. Leadership and Mentor Program: this program (known as LAMP), saw 5 teachers get trained as mentors by a coach with considerable expertise in the area. Each of the 5 mentors then had a number of teachers assigned to them, as mentees. The aim of the program was to ensure each teacher had a mentor, who would assist their mentee with their teacher goals throughout then year. A secondary aim was to help facilitate the leadership growth of teachers on staff.
2. The second improvement item for 2016 concerned the school's pedagogy and use of data in the subject area of teaching English. In 2016, the school participated in a CE initiative that sought to introduce an inquiry based approach to teaching English. It was based on the pioneering work of the academic Kaye Lowe and it proved to be very successful.
3. The third key improvement agenda was concerned with the Social and Emotional well being of our students. The school applied for, and was successful in getting, a Wellbeing grant from Catholic Education. The school was concerned to explore the well being of its students and introduced some programs to meet this need.

Priority Key Improvements for 2017

For the school year of 2017, St Thomas Aquinas is committed to deepening and bedding down the three key improvement agenda items from the previous year. That is, the school is concerned to further refine and deepen the LAMP program; to refine and perfect our new approach to teaching English; and to deepen our understanding of the field of social and emotional learning, and to apply that practice to school-wide positive behaviour programs.

In addition, the school is looking to explore an inquiry approach to teaching Mathematics, as part of an overall approach to changing our practice in the teaching of Mathematics.

Section Eight: School Policies

Student Welfare Policy

St Thomas Aquinas' Behaviour Management and Student Welfare Policy is designed to keep all students safe, deal with conflicts justly, and restore to health relationships that are troubled. All complaints made by children are taken very seriously by all members of staff and the school has no tolerance for any kind of violence. We believe that all students can live and work harmoniously. Where needed, the Assistant Principal or Principal will contact parents and arrange meetings in order to assist students to contribute positively to the school and its culture.

Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited in this school. In addition we do not sanction the administering of corporal punishment by non-school persons to enforce discipline at our school.

The full text of the School's Student Welfare Policy may be accessed on the School's website or at the Administration office.

Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy

The Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn Catholic Education Office has established a *Complaints Policy* which is implemented by our school and all systemic schools in the Archdiocese. The rationale for the policy is that within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world. The Catholic Education Office (CEO) monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the *Complaints Policy* may be accessed on the Catholic Education website at <https://cg.catholic.edu.au>.

The school policy is based on procedural fairness and recognises that parents and caregivers must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns in a supportive and conciliatory environment. Any concerns raised are responded to promptly and fairly and confidentiality is always maintained. A full text of the school policy is available on the school website or from the Front Office.

Section Nine: Community Satisfaction

The opinions and ideas of parents, students and teachers are valued and sought. Their suggestions are incorporated into planning for and achieving improved outcomes for students. This year, the School has used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the School from parents, students and teachers.

Parent Satisfaction

The parent survey revealed that the parent body, on the whole, were very satisfied with St Thomas Aquinas. Areas that parents were particularly happy with included the accessibility of all staff and the quality of the education provided for the children. Parents believed that the school was authentically Catholic and they appreciated the dedication and commitment of the staff.

There were three areas that the parent body identified as possible areas of improvement: The parent body felt that more attention could be given to resourcing of the school, in terms of equipment for outside play and shade structures. Secondly, while acknowledging that the school has made great inroads into the use of iPads in the school, it was felt that greater provision could be made for the use of technology. Thirdly, while certainly feeling that the school was a safe environment for their child or children, the parents also thought further development could be given to the Pastoral Care policy, in order to make it more effective.

Student Satisfaction

The student body generally reported very high levels of satisfaction with the school, stating, in particular, that they felt that the teachers cared a great deal for them, that the teachers were fair and that the lessons were informative and fun. They also felt that St Thomas Aquinas was a safe school and that children generally got on well with each other.

A major area of improvement was a desire to see more sporting activities and facilities at the school, for example, genuine soccer posts. Students also wish to see a greater variety of sporting opportunities.

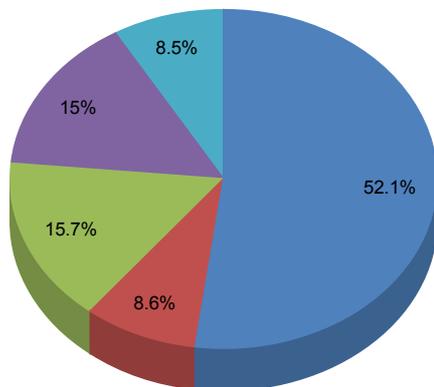
Teacher Satisfaction

Like the parent and student bodies, the teachers and staff at St Thomas Aquinas reported a high degree of satisfaction. They all feel very strongly that their work is of great importance and they value what they do for the children a great deal. Similarly, they feel that their work is appreciated and valued by the leadership of the school, their colleagues, the parent body and the students.

Areas of improvement might include finding ways to reduce the paperwork load for staff and finding new and more effective ways to communicate.

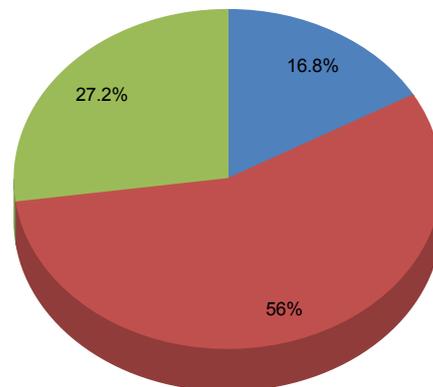
Section Ten: Financial Statement

Income



- Commonwealth Recurrent Grants (52.1%)
- Government Capital Grants (8.6%)
- State Recurrent Grants (15.7%)
- Fees and Private Income (15%)
- Other Capital Income (8.5%)

Expenditure



- Capital Expenditure (16.8%)
- Salaries and Related Expenses (56%)
- Non-Salary Expenses (27.2%)

| RECURRENT and CAPITAL INCOME | |
|--|--------------------|
| Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹ | \$2,215,238 |
| Government Capital Grants ² | \$366,689 |
| State Recurrent Grants ³ | \$669,219 |
| Fees and Private Income ⁴ | \$639,680 |
| Other Capital Income ⁵ | \$360,058 |
| Total Income | \$4,250,884 |

| RECURRENT and CAPITAL EXPENDITURE | |
|--|--------------------|
| Capital Expenditure ⁶ | \$726,747 |
| Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷ | \$2,430,592 |
| Non-Salary Expenses ⁸ | \$1,179,518 |
| Total Expenditure | \$4,336,857 |

Notes

1. Commonwealth Recurrent Grants includes recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.
2. Government Capital Grants includes all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State Governments.

3. State Recurrent Grants includes recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.
4. Fees and Private Income include Archdiocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income.
5. Other Capital Income includes building levy fees and capital donations used to fund Capital Expenditure.
6. Capital Expenditure includes expenditure on School Buildings, and Furniture and Equipment.
7. Salaries and Related Expenditure includes all salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.
8. Non-Salary Expenses include all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.