ST THOMAS AQUINAS PRIMARY SCHOOL
West Belconnen, ACT

2014 Annual Report

St Thomas Aquinas
West Belconnen
SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>Lhotsky Street CHARNWOOD A.C.T. 2615</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal:</td>
<td>Mr Cameron Johns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Priest / School Chaplain:</td>
<td>Fr Neville Drinkwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board / Council Chair:</td>
<td>Mrs Anita Agett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
<td>6258 4077</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fax:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:office.staquinas@cg.catholic.edu.au">office.staquinas@cg.catholic.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td><a href="http://staquinas.act.edu.au/">http://staquinas.act.edu.au/</a></td>
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This report was prepared by:

Mr Cameron Johns

PRINCIPAL
MESSAGE FROM OUR SCHOOL 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 2014 we increased from ten to eleven classes. 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.

School Board Message
The Parish Education Board (the Board) at St Thomas Aquinas Primary School has proudly supported the school community for many years. The Board’s role is to work collaboratively and serve the school community by providing leadership, guidance and advice for our parish priest, principal and the school leadership team. The Board is comprised of a number of representatives from our parent community, staff and parish. It provides an opportunity for members to support the mission of Catholic education at the school. In addition, the Board has responsibility for providing advice in relation to curriculum, educational and student welfare policies and parental engagement.

Student Representative’s Message
St Thomas Aquinas is a friendly school and all the teachers take good care of the students. We get to do a lot of good things. The older students in Years 5 and 6 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.

SCHOOL FEATURES
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 275 students. Students attending this school come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities consisting of 163 male and 112 female students; 5 Indigenous students; and 39 with a Language Background other than English (LBOTE). The school employs 34 staff comprising 21 teachers and 13 non-teaching staff, the latter being employed in a variety of capacities including Learning Support Assistants, Early Learning Centre assistants, front office staff, a canteen manager and School Welfare Officer. 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 revisioning 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. 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/

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 for forty extraordinary years served the parish and the school. His contributions have been enormous and we are very lucky to have him as our Parish 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 their 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.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT - NAPLAN

Students in Years 3 and 5 sat the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in May this year. 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.

School and National Mean Scale Scores

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>415</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 5</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>468</td>
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Proportion of students at or above the National Minimum Standard

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The above tables show that there have been some very pleasing results in Year 3. In particular, the Year 3 reading results are very impressive, with almost two-thirds of the year being at Band 5 or 6 – well above the expected grade level. Similarly, the Maths results in Year 3 were very impressive, with almost half of the year being at either Band 5 or 6. Attention needs to be given to Grade 5, as the results, particularly in writing and numeracy need improvement. A priority for next year will be developing strategies for extension so that students can achieve in the higher bands.

**SCHOOL POLICIES**

**Enrolment Policy**
St Thomas Aquinas follows the standard Archdiocesan procedures when enrolling students, and as such, priority is given to Catholic students who live in area and who have siblings at the school, followed by Catholic students who live in the area.
The enrolment process consists of the lodging of an application form, followed by an interview with the principal and other teaching staff if deemed necessary. The family have a tour of the school, often conducted by Year 6 students, and typically the new student has at least one orientation day in his or her new classroom. Every effort is made to ensure that the student is transitioned smoothly into school life at St Thomas Aquinas. The policy is available from the front office.

**Attendance Policy**
The roll is marked each day and any unexplained absences are followed up by contacting parents. If children are absent for unexplained periods of time their teacher calls the parents and informs the principal who will contact the family if absences persist after the initial contact has been made.

If attendance becomes a challenge for a student or family, teachers are committed to working closely with appropriate individuals, parents and community organizations having regard for social, cultural and religious factors associated with Indigenous students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and socially disadvantaged students. The Principal informs the Catholic Education Office of serious attendance issues.

When school procedures are not successful, the Principal writes to parents, requesting that they and the student meet with an authorized person for the purposes of working together to resolve issues that may be hindering the child’s regular attendance. Parents must comply with this written request. The role of the authorized person will vary in each case, depending on individual circumstances.

**Behaviour Management Policy**
St Thomas Aquinas' Behaviour Management 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 Behaviour Management Policy is available on the school website or from the Front Office.

**Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy**
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.
PRIORITIES AND TARGETS

The school has set some important targets to achieve in relation to our NAPLAN results. We are committed to reaching the ACT average in the top two bands in 2015. The staff have identified areas of need in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. In so doing, we are committing to growing as a school in data literacy, and using it more effectively to inform our practice.

The school is also hoping to gain a grant to extend its premises. Much work and planning has already gone into the design in the hope that building will commence in 2015. Further priorities include the writing of a new school prayer and the professional development of the staff in the area of providing good liturgical experiences for the students.

The school will continue to refine its use of its Principles of Learning, both in its application in teacher feedback and in the guiding programming.

The ongoing use of data and assessment, and refining its use, will also be a feature of 2015.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

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.

The school held 5 whole staff days in 2014. The content of these days was as follows:
- goal setting and peer relationships,
- administration and code of conduct,
- the Enneagram (2 days)
- Using data and programming.

Teacher Qualifications
All teachers are qualified as required by the relevant State and Territory bodies.

TEACHER ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

The average teacher attendance rate during 2014 was 94%.
The teacher retention rate from 2013 to 2014 was 74%.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The average student attendance for the school during 2014 was 94%.
School attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.
Attendance rates by Year group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year group</th>
<th>Attendance Rate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
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PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION

The staff survey was very positive and many respondents noted the inclusive and supportive nature of the school. In terms of areas to work on, some staff felt that greater improvement was needed in terms of communication. This was the area that was identified as needing the greatest improvement. A further area for growth called for was consistency amongst the leadership team, in terms of decisions that are made and the process that underpins the communication.

Parents reported very high satisfaction levels in relation to what they see as a fair, caring and compassionate school. Parents felt that teachers went to a very large degree to meet them halfway and hear their concerns and they felt that the staff were very approachable. Areas of growth for parent satisfaction include communication and an expectation of higher standards of student behaviour. These areas were identified by the leadership team as well.

Students reported feeling very happy and valued in the classroom. They feel that St Thomas Aquinas is a safe and happy school, where their needs are met and catered for. Identifying ways to ensure that communication processes are smooth and effective between teachers and students is a priority for the school.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

St Thomas Aquinas West Belconnen - Income

- Fees and Private Income: 21%
- Commonwealth Recurrent Grants: 60%
- Other Capital: 2%
- Government Capital Grants: 0%
St Thomas Aquinas Charnwood - Expenditure

- Salaries, Allowances and Related Expenses: 69%
- Non-Salary Expenses: 29%
- Capital Expenditure: 2%