

***St Thomas Aquinas
Catholic Primary School
Bowral***



***Annual School Report
2010***

About This Report

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, Bowral is registered by the NSW Board of Studies (BOS) and managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Diocese of Wollongong. The CEO is the 'approved authority' for the Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

The Annual School Report to the Community for this year provides the school community with fair, reliable and objective information about school performance measures and policies, as determined by the Minister for Education.

The Report also outlines information regarding School Review & Improvement initiatives and developments of major interest and importance to the school community during the year and the achievements arising from the implementation of the School's Annual Action Plan.

Accordingly, the Report demonstrates accountability to regulatory bodies, the school community and the Catholic Education Office (CEO). This Report has been approved by Wollongong CEO to ensure compliance with all NSW Board of Studies requirements for Registration and Accreditation.

This Report complements and is supplementary to school newsletters and other regular communications. Following its submission to the NSW Board of Studies, the Report will be presented to the Parent Body and be available on the school's website by 30 June 2010.

Further information about the school or this Report may be obtained by contacting the school:

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Parish Priest: Fr Sean Cullen

Principal: Mr Gary Norris

Date: 10 December 2010

Vision Statement

St Thomas Aquinas will be an authentically Catholic Parish Primary School, a learning community where every individual is valued and encouraged to achieve their greatest potential in every aspect of life.

Message from Key School Bodies

Principal's Message

As the 2010 School year draws to a close it is always important to take the time to reflect, acknowledge and celebrate our many achievements throughout the year. St Thomas Aquinas (STA) is held in high esteem within the community and the student results across all areas are a great testament to the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff, student and the parent community.

The school is also well supported by a very capable and hardworking Parents and Friends Association and the school community thanks them for their continued support in providing all those extra necessities for the children in our care.

St Thomas Aquinas is a vital part of the wider Parish Community and enjoys the full support and generous assistance of our Parish Priest. Our celebrations are always beautifully prepared and presented by a very talented and energetic group of young musicians. The school appreciates the generous support of the community which it serves.

Parent Involvement

This year has been another busy year for all involved with the Parents and Friends (P& F) Association. Whilst no major fundraising has taken place this year the Association has been able to keep up with the financial demands for resources and support to the school.

Our new school hall is well under way. The importance of this should not be underestimated as it will provide a valuable resource for the school community of STA for generations to come and a very special opening celebration will be planned on its completion.

The Parents and Friends along with the whole STA community once again has rallied to support those in need and I see this as just one of the wonderful attributes of our community and we look forward to continuing our efforts for the benefit of our children in 2011.

Parents and Friends Association, President

Student Leadership

Our final year at St Thomas Aquinas has been made all the more important because of the part that we have been able to play as leaders of our student community. All members of the

Year 6 class have been able to assist in various roles throughout the year and we have been honoured to have had this opportunity.

St Thomas Aquinas is a great school and has provided us with many memories and friendships which will last a lifetime.

School Captains

School Profile

School Context

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School is a Catholic Systemic co-educational school located in Bowral. The school caters for students in years K-6 and has a current enrolment of 422.

St Thomas Aquinas (STA) was begun by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) in 1903 and has been an integral part of the Bowral Parish and community for over 100 years. The aim at STA has always been to create a school where all stakeholders work together and support each other in establishing a learning community with the highest educational qualities possible.

St Thomas Aquinas is located adjacent to the Parish church and enjoys the full support of the Parish Priest. School grounds are spacious and are continually being improved to allow for optimum use of play space and shade trees.

Student Enrolments

| 2010 | Boys | Girls | Total | Indigenous | LBOTE |
|------|------|-------|-------|------------|-------|
| | 220 | 202 | 422 | 5 | 30 |

The Diocesan Enrolment Policy and Procedures exists to assist schools in the equitable prioritising of enrolment applications and in order to ensure that the requirements of State and Commonwealth legislation are met. This documentation can be found on both the school website www.stabdown.catholic.edu.au and the Catholic Education Office website: www.dow.catholic.edu.au. No changes were made to this Diocesan Policy in 2010.

Student Attendance

| 2010 | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 94.5% | 94.6% | 95.8% | 94.9% | 93.6% | 96.1% |

Management of Student Non Attendance

All class rolls are marked each day at 9.30am by class teachers and sent to the office to be recorded on the School Administration System (SAS) system. If any absence is unexplained a

request in writing is sent to families to notify them of the absence so that a note can be supplied.

Each family is supplied with a booklet at the beginning of the year which they simply need to fill out and sign as a record of non-attendance. These booklets are also available at the school office.

Staffing Profile

There are a total of 25 teachers and 9 support staff at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School. This number includes 16 full-time, 9 part-time teachers.

Teacher Standards

Teacher qualifications fall into 1 of 3 categories for all teaching staff responsible for delivering the curriculum:

| | |
|--|------|
| Teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by AEI - NOOSR* | 100% |
| Have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia within AEI-NOOSR* guidelines but lack formal teacher qualifications | 0% |
| Do not have qualifications as above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context | 0% |

*Australian Education Institution – National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition Staff Retention

Teacher Attendance and Retention

The average daily teacher attendance rate for 2010 was 97.82%. This does not include planned leave such as maternity or long service leave. The teacher retention rate from 2009 to 2010 was 100%.

Professional Learning

Professional learning opportunities are highly valued and sought by all members of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School staff. During 2010 school personnel undertook a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes.

These included:

- David Langford Quality Learning Seminar;
- Exploring the mind and its potential;
- Analysis of NAPLAN Data;
- First aid Training;
- School Review and Improvement; and

- Diocesan Learning and Teaching Framework.

School based expenditure on professional learning in 2009 was \$14,000. This is in addition to expenditure on professional learning opportunities provided by the Catholic Education Office.

Catholic Life & Religious Education

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School is an authentically Catholic, Parish school with very strong links with the Parish Priest, Father (Fr) Sean Cullen and the whole parish. It is fortunate that many of the families of the school are actively involved in the parish and a large proportion of Catholic students attend Mass each Sunday. The school strives to maintain the rich traditions of OLSH history and remind students of the rituals and traditions of the Catholic faith. St Thomas Aquinas Liturgy group is very involved in the life of the parish and widely recognised as a great strength of the school. The Catholic life and culture is very strong and is fostered by all staff.

There is a strong commitment to social justice initiatives with children involved in fund raising at different significant times in the year. This year there has been a scope and sequence developed to cover each grade level to ensure students are exposed to a comprehensive range that covers social justice and environmental stewardship issues. Donations made this year totalled \$5,415.

The school has been involved in many significant events including the celebration in Wollongong for the Canonisation of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop; hosting the Year 6 Prayer and Conversation with Bishop Peter and many liturgies and Sacramental celebrations.

Religious Literacy Assessment

The Religious Literacy Assessment Program for Year 4 students was successfully implemented within schools across the Diocese in 2010. In 2010 the school cohort consisted of 64 Year 4 students who sat the Religious Literacy Assessment Workbook (Part A) on 6 September 2010, and 64 completed the Extended Task (Part B). The Extended Task is based on the Unit: *One with God's Creation* and was completed during the first half of Term 3.

Students showed a high level of performance in their knowledge of the religious tradition. This high level of performance was particularly noticeable in their:

- knowledge of the key symbols, signs, and rituals of the Catholic Tradition; and
- knowledge of key Lenten practices.

The students' responses showed a need for them to develop their capacity to work with and apply the religious tradition especially in their ability to:

- recall the events of Holy Week.

Students in Part B displayed a very high standard in their ability to work with and apply their religious knowledge.

For Part A 10.30% of students were placed in the developing level, 62.10% in the achieving and 27.60% were in the extending level.

For Part B 1.60% of students were placed in the developing level, 69.80% in the achieving level and 28.60% were in the extending level.

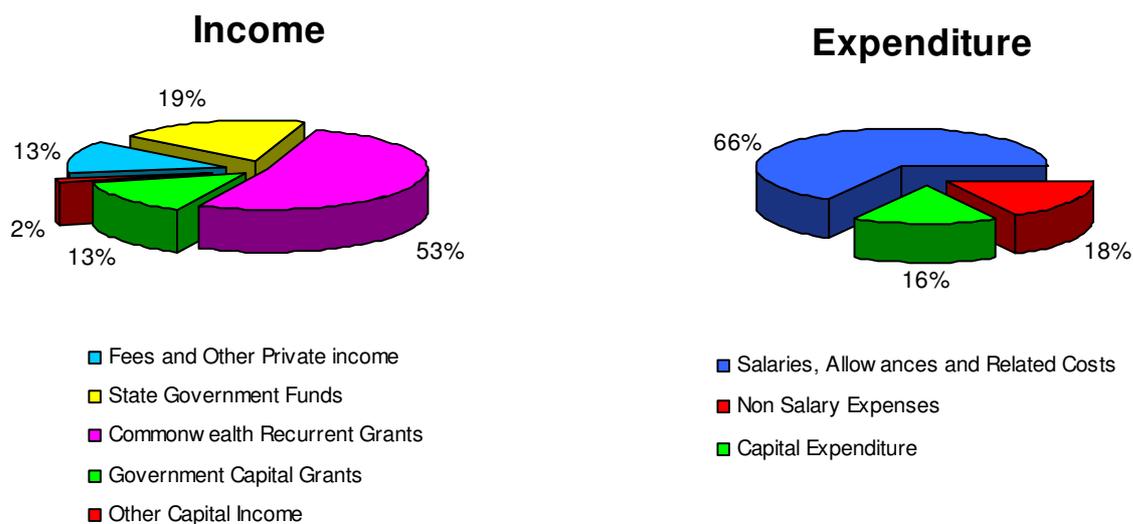
Combining Parts A and B, 1.80% of students were placed in the developing level, 71.90% in the achieving level and 26.30% were in the extending level for Religious Literacy.

Financial Summary

St Thomas Aquinas along with primary schools throughout the country have benefitted greatly by the 'Building the Education Revolution' grants. This money has allowed the community build a new all-purpose hall and learning space. Construction began in September 2010 and the building is due for completion by April 2011.

During 2010 with the assistance of the Parents and Friends and the continuation of a technology loan the school has been able to purchase a further 21 laptop computers, 9 data projectors for each primary class as well as new wide screen televisions for the infant classes. The purchase of technology is a priority for St Thomas Aquinas and the Parents and Friends support is crucial in maintaining up to date equipment.

The following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School for the year ended 31 December 2010. This data is taken from the 2010 financial return to the Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



Student Welfare

Introduction

St Thomas Aquinas has a strong emphasis on the welfare of students, parents and teachers. All are encouraged to live the Gospel values and treat each other with care and respect.

Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Program at St Thomas Aquinas functions particularly well. There is evidence from the Playground safety survey that students are experiencing less bullying in the school. This survey was modified this year so that students could suggest children that may be suffering bullying and this has allowed intervention more quickly in these situations.

The positive atmosphere of the school is also evident in the playground books with a minimal amount of incidents recorded by staff.

The Pastoral Care Program has been enhanced this year by the “Seasons for Growth” program. This program was re-introduced to meet a need identified by staff to help some children through the grieving process. The school counsellor has been having a great influence in helping many individual children, and also some small groups, cope with their difficulties.

During the year there have been several families suffering with severe illness. The school community’s response to these families has been outstanding by providing meals where appropriate, and any other assistance to help with financial burdens.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wollongong are committed to a safe and supportive environment. The principles, guidelines and procedures set out in the Policy documents ***Maintaining Right Relationships*** and ***Safe Work Environment*** are the framework for school leaders, students, staff, parents and the wider community to develop a safe and supportive environment. The Diocesan ***Complaints Handling Procedures*** forms an important element in the Diocese’s commitment to ensuring safe and supportive environments for school communities. These documents can be found on the Catholic Education Office website: www.dow.catholic.edu.au. No changes were made to these Diocesan documents in 2010.

In compliance with the ***NSW Reform Act 1990***, Corporal Punishment is banned in all schools within the Diocese of Wollongong.

Access to all policies and guidelines can be obtained by contacting the school office.

Learning and Teaching

Introduction

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School is a learning community focused on providing a diverse range of educational experiences to ensure each student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The school is continuing to implement the Inquiry model of

learning and has adopted David Langford's strategies from the *Quality Learning* approach. The major focus is to develop a whole school approach to teaching and learning, so that students build on knowledge and skills throughout their primary schooling. There is a culture of a shared practice and commitment to improved child-centred learning.

Curriculum & Pedagogy

The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are implemented according to the school's scope and sequences in each KLA to ensure all curriculum areas are covered in a planned, consistent approach. Teachers program a challenging, exciting curriculum that motivates students to engage in the learning. Teachers have planning time each term with grade/stage partners and the Assistant Principal. This ensures consistency and allows for valuable professional dialogue about effective teaching/learning and how to improve the intellectual quality and rigor of educational programs.

St Thomas Aquinas teachers are continually developing the effectiveness of assessment and reporting practices to ensure students and their parents are well informed. Analysis of data has been a focus to better inform teaching and this will be an area of ongoing professional development. The Enrichment team monitor and track students who require additional support.

An Information Communication Learning Technology (ICLT) committee has been formed and through this committee a more planned approach to the use of technology in classrooms has been developed. Additional resources have been purchased, including \$50,000 worth of new laptops and fixed data projectors. These initiatives have greatly improved the flexibility of teaching and learning within classrooms.

Cross Curriculum

In Literacy, the School Review and Improvement (SRI) components have focused on *Teaching Practices* and *Planning, Programming and Evaluation* particularly developing a whole school approach to teaching Literacy Blocks. David Langford has provided a common language to work together on effective teaching practices and classroom practice is focused on student learning.

Spelling is an area of concern and there has been the development of a K-6 approach, with a Scope and Sequence to ensure a consistent, comprehensive program providing students with appropriate strategies. A number of teachers and School Support Officers have attended the training course for the MULTILIT program and the school has introduced a graphemic/phonemic awareness program across the school.

In numeracy, teachers are using ongoing assessment tasks to address key concepts students have not fully grasped. There has been an emphasis on regular revision to give students the opportunity to consolidate their understanding. This will be a continuous area for development with professional development planned for 2011. Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA) testing has been conducted to assist with explicit teaching in appropriate groups.

Meeting the needs of all students

The Inquiry Model allows for the diversification of learning with students working at the

appropriate levels in their Inquiry tasks. Many of the research projects provide opportunities for self directed learning with Bloom's Taxonomy/Gardner's Multiple Intelligence tasks encouraging students to expand their thinking.

In literacy and numeracy, students work at their level of ability with many grades grouping children to provide explicit teaching to each specific level. School Support Officers and Enrichment teachers provide support and scaffolds so that tasks are diversified. Gifted students are challenged within the classroom setting, as well as time provided for them to work on Personal Interest Projects (PIPs) on a Friday in the Library.

The Enrichment team has worked closely with class teachers to ensure students receive any additional assistance they require. Students with disabilities have Individual Plans (IP) developed each term to address areas that require support and regular meetings are held with parents and teachers to monitor progress.

Expanding Learning Opportunities

Children have had many opportunities to develop their gifts and talents particularly in:

- Music: with a specialist teacher providing Liturgy Group; Boy's Choir; Girl's Choir; Senior Choir in the Wollongong Eisteddfod; Guitar Group; Ensemble and the many diverse experiences in Music lessons;
- Sport: with opportunities to participate in the different levels of competition from school to Diocesan and State; Gala Days and STA Sports Days;
- Chess: between local schools in the Highlands;
- Art/craft: through competitions and the entries into the Moss Vale Show and exhibitions in the local Art Society;
- Super Skippers organised by the Heart Foundation;
- Public Speaking competition;
- University of NSW competitions in English and Mathematics; and,
- Drama club.

Professional Learning

This year several more teachers attended the David Langford *Quality Learning* workshops during the Easter holidays. This ongoing professional development continually updates the staff as a whole. Staff meetings, professional dialogue and sharing means there is a developing a whole school culture based on Langford's principles.

Teachers have also attended technology workshops; literacy and numeracy courses and information sessions on analysing the NAPLAN data.

As a whole staff, teachers have been inserviced on graphemic/phonemic awareness to develop an ongoing, systemic approach to assist students with their decoding and spelling strategies. Work on this area of literacy will continue into next year.

Student Achievement

The school uses a variety of assessment strategies at key points in the learning framework. These include teacher observation, projects and presentations. The school also participates in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for the purposes of diagnosing individual learning needs and reviewing whole class teaching programs. Information on student progress is communicated on a regular basis and external assessment results are discussed with parents on an individual basis annually.

NAPLAN

The NAPLAN was introduced for students in Years 3 and 5 in May 2008. NAPLAN replaces the previous State-based Basic Skills Test and the results provide valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of the results is used at school level to support the enhancement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

Results show that the students at STA are achieving at a high level with very few students below the minimum standard. These students are closely monitored and supported by their class teacher and an enrichment teacher.

The 2010 results demonstrate that in many Key Learning Areas the school percentage was well above the state population. Some areas to focus on as a school include:

- Year 5 Grammar & Punctuation: correct use of an apostrophe and conjunctions and conjunctions;
- Years 5 Numeracy: Fractions & Decimals; number sentence and place value; two dimensional symmetry;
- Year 3 Reading: Purpose of the text; character's attitude; and
- Year 3 Numeracy: estimating Length and 2D-quarter turns clockwise.

The Year 3-Year 5 learning gain is an area the school is examining more closely, particularly working with critical literacy skills. The Year 3 students achieve at a very high level so the challenge is to provide higher order opportunities to continue the growth.

Student Achievement in Bands

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assesses aspects of literacy and numeracy in Years 3 and 5. It provides valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of the results is used at school level to support the enhancement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. Year 3 results are reported in Bands 1 to 6 with Band 6 representing the highest achievement and Year 5 results are reported in Bands 3 to 8 with Band 8 representing the highest achievement. **Please Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

| NAPLAN % in Bands | | YEAR 3 | | | YEAR 5 | | |
|--------------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | Bands 1 and 2 | Bands 3 and 4 | Bands 5 and 6 | Bands 3 and 4 | Bands 5 and 6 | Bands 7 and 8 |
| Reading | School | 0% | 41% | 59% | 5% | 44% | 52% |
| | National | 14% | 40% | 44% | 21% | 48% | 28% |
| Writing | School | 0% | 23% | 78% | 2% | 68% | 31% |
| | National | 7% | 43% | 47% | 16% | 58% | 24% |
| Spelling | School | 2% | 59% | 40% | 7% | 57% | 36% |
| | National | 17% | 42% | 38% | 18% | 52% | 27% |
| Grammar & Punctuation | School | 8% | 15% | 77% | 5% | 41% | 54% |
| | National | 15% | 36% | 47% | 17% | 46% | 35% |
| Numeracy | School | 2% | 46% | 53% | 4% | 57% | 40% |
| | National | 15% | 51% | 32% | 18% | 54% | 26% |

Student Achievement of National Minimum Standard

Students are considered to be achieving BELOW the National Minimum Standard (NMS) if they are in the lowest Band for each year (Band 1 in Year 3 and Band 3 in Year 5) or if they have been exempt from NAPLAN. Students in the second Band for each year (Band 2 in Year 3 and Band 4 in Year 5) represent students who are achieving AT the NMS. Students in all other Bands are achieving ABOVE the NMS.

| NAPLAN % AT or ABOVE NMS | | YEAR 3 | YEAR 5 |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| Reading | School | 100% | 100% |
| | National | 94% | 91% |
| Writing | School | 100% | 100% |
| | National | 95% | 93% |
| Spelling | School | 100% | 100% |
| | National | 91% | 92% |
| Grammar & Punctuation | School | 98% | 100% |
| | National | 92% | 92% |
| Numeracy | School | 100% | 98% |
| | National | 94% | 94% |

Parent, Student and Staff Satisfaction

At the end of each year parents, staff and students are given the opportunity to comment on their level of satisfaction with the school and how well they feel the school has achieved the goals set for the year. This is done through a variety of means including survey, meetings, parent forums and general anecdotal observations.

There has been overwhelming support received from both the staff and the student body who acknowledged the effort that is put into creating an educational atmosphere that is conducive to achieving high quality educational results. The students in particular are continually praised for the way in which they conduct themselves outside the school and the staff are continually commended on the way in which they have been prepared for the activities in which they take part.

This year all families were given the opportunity to comment through an anonymous survey, which related to the key areas identified for focus during the year. Of the 280 families issued with a survey there were 30 returned to the school. This would indicate that the majority of families whole-heartedly support what the school is endeavouring to achieve.

Areas identified for focus during the coming year would include a review of the way in which the school reports student progress to parents, continuation of the development of the enrichment team throughout the school and a renewed look at the enquiry approach to teaching which will extend and challenge each child.

School Review and Improvement

School Review and Improvement is an ongoing process of self evaluation measured against a commonly agreed set of criteria. It informs action planning at the school level to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. Above all, Catholic schools must be good schools with a strong learning orientation and a strong sense of purpose. In all aspects of improving and developing, schools should be learning-centred, constantly striving for excellence and have the student as their primary focus.

School Review and Improvement components reviewed and rated in 2010:

- Key Area 1: Catholic Life and Religious Education
 - 1.3 Catholic Life and Culture
 - Prayer and Liturgical life of the school is continually highlighted and improved; and
 - The school continually investigates and trials new and innovative programs.
- Key Area 3: Students and their Learning
 - 3.3 Teaching Practices

- Renewal and replacement of resources, particularly Technology resources;
- Continuation of staff professional Development, particularly The Langford Seminars; and
- Students are actively encouraged to be in control of their own learning.
- Key Area 3: Students and their Learning
 - 3.4 Planning, Programming and Evaluation
 - A wide range of resources support teaching and learning programs;
 - Opportunities for professional dialogue are provided and encouraged; and
 - Collaborative planning is given high priority.
- Key Area 6: Parents, Partnerships, Consultation and Communication
 - 6.1 Parent involvement
 - Parents are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of school life. This invitation comes in the form of request via newsletter, Parent forums, personal invitations and questionnaires;
 - Parent contributions are regularly acknowledged and celebrated; and
 - Parent/teacher interviews are provided on two occasions during the year however parents are encouraged to make an appointment to discuss their children at any time.
- Key Area 7: Strategic Leadership and Management
 - 7.1 Planning for improvement
 - The formal process of School Review and improvement took place during 2010 which validated processes and procedures in place at St. Thomas Aquinas; and
 - The School Annual Plan (SIP) is a working document, which allows for flexibility throughout the year.

School Review and Improvement components to be reviewed and rated in 2011:

- Key Area 1: Catholic Life and Religious Education
 - 1.4 Parents, parishes and the broader Church.
- Key Area 2: Students and their Learning
 - 2.2 Rights and Responsibilities.
- Key Area 3: Pedagogy
 - 3.1 Curriculum Provisions; and,
 - 3.6 School Climate, learning environment and relationships.
- Key Area 4: Human Resources, Leadership and Management
 - 4.1 Recruitment, selection and retention of staff.

- Key Area 4: Human resources, Leadership and Management
 - 4.4 Succession planning.
- Key Area 5: Resources, Finances and Facilities
 - 5.4 Financial Management.

