

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



***Annual School Report
2011***

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 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 2012.

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

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School
Bundaroo St
Bowral NSW 2576

Ph: (02) 4861 1768
Fax: (02) 4862 1941
Email: info@stabdow.woll.catholic.edu.au
Website: www.stabdow.woll.catholic.edu.au

Parish Priest: Fr Sean Cullen

Principal: Mr Gary Norris

Date: 28th November 2011

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

I am pleased to present this annual report for the 2011 Academic School Year. Once again it has been a very productive year with many successes and a great sense of achievement for all involved with the school. The many and varied achievements of our students are testament to the vibrant learning community which we have nurtured throughout the year.

It was pleasing to see the Building Education Revolution (BER) Project come to fruition and we are very pleased to have such a high quality venue for all the activities which take place in the general routine of school life.

My thanks, as always to the hardworking parents who continually turn up to support the school. This involvement through the Parents and Friends Association is vital to the future well-being of the school and it is through these efforts that we are able to provide all those resources which are needed to help the school run efficiently.

I thank the Parish Priest for his continual support of our school as well as the staff who work so hard to provide the best education possible for your children.

Parent Involvement

The parents play such a vital role in the life of St Thomas Aquinas and they are always encouraged to become involved. This involvement takes many forms and it is always heartening to see parents in the classroom, school canteen, uniform shop, Parents and Friends meetings as well as on the sport's field.

This year the Parents and Friends made an ongoing effort to develop the relationships within the parent community. To this end there have been many social events organised and it is good to see that they are beginning to attract a larger number of parents.

The support of the P&F with the technology requirements of the school has been enormous, particularly their support with the technology loan and the purchase of over 19 ipads for use across the school K-6.

The Parents and Friends received the ongoing support of the Parish Priest, as well as the School Principal and the staff of the school.

Parents and Friends Association, President

Student Leadership

It was a great honour to be chosen as the school captains of St Thomas Aquinas for 2011. We have had many opportunities to represent our peers both at school and community functions and we always felt great pride to be able to do so. We have had continual support from the principal and the teachers and have contributed in many ways to the life of the school. We have co-ordinated the peacekeepers, played our role at school assemblies and raised the school flag each day.

We are pleased that we have been able to assist the school by being good role models to all the younger students. It is our hope that they will strive to become good leaders when they get the opportunity in Year 6.

Thank you to our families and all those who offered their support throughout the year.

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 424 students organised into 14 class groups.

St Thomas Aquinas was established in 1903 by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. As the school is located directly opposite the parish church, St Thomas Aquinas School has enjoyed a close relationship within the life of the Parish. The children have been fortunate to attend whole school and stage masses throughout the year.

The school is also located centrally within the community and enjoys spacious grounds which typify the local area. There are considerable open spaces for playground and shade trees.

Our aim 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.

Student Enrolments

2011	Boys	Girls	Total	Indigenous	LBOTE
	228	196	424	6	32

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.woll.catholic.edu.au and the CEO website: www.dow.catholic.edu.au. No changes were made to this Diocesan Policy in 2011.

Student Attendance

2011	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
	91.9%	94.2%	96.1%	95.6%	95.3%	94.7%

Management of Student Non Attendance

All class rolls are marked each day at 9.30am by the class teachers and then sent to the office to be recorded on the 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 an absence 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 2011 was 98.56%. This does not include planned leave such as maternity or long service leave. The teacher retention rate from 2010 to 2011 was 100 %.

Professional Learning

During 2011, St Thomas Aquinas personnel undertook a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes, particularly through School Review & Improvement priorities.

These included:

A. St Thomas Aquinas whole school development days involving all staff. These days focused on:

- Australian Curriculum
- Spirituality

B. Other professional learning activities provided at school level including CEO run courses. These days provided Professional Development for 25 staff:

- David Langford Quality Learning Seminars
- School Review and Improvement (SRI) annual plan
- Speech development

The average expenditure by the school on professional learning per staff member was \$612. In addition, professional learning opportunities were provided by the Catholic Education Office (CEO) with an additional average expenditure per staff Member of \$290.

Catholic Life & Religious Education

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish Primary School is proud to proclaim its Catholic identity to the community. As a school St Thomas Aquinas regularly celebrated the Eucharist together. This year has been a very exciting and challenging year particularly working towards establishing and embedding the new mass setting into full use.

During the year, the school assemblies have become an integral means of communication with the parent community and an important time where the school shares time together in prayer. Each class has taken responsibility for leading the assembly in prayerful reflection. An important feature of these assemblies has been the introduction of guest speakers who have

inspired all members of the school community in their fundraising efforts. As a result of this children have been involved in raising funds for Moubara Orphanage, Catholic Earthcare, Kiribati, Queensland Flood appeal, Caritas, Catholic Missions and St Vincent De Paul as well as making donation to many needy families with in our own school community.

The Parish based Sacramental Program continued to develop and grow. The Parish has been fortunate to have the services of many Sacramental Associates who delivered the lessons to families as well as ensuring the program ran smoothly.

During the year the students in Year 6 have participated in the conversation with the Bishop. This was held at Picton, and it gave the students the opportunity to celebrate together as well as meet with and speaks to our Bishop Peter in an informal situation.

The staff has been involved once again with the other Catholic schools in the Highlands. At these gatherings Br Bill from the Marist Centre has led staff in prayer and reflection. These gatherings were an authentic way of showing our commitment as Catholic school educators to the mission of the Catholic Church.

Religious Literacy Assessment

The Religious Literacy Assessment Program for Year 4 students was successfully completed within schools across the diocese in 2011. The school cohort in 2011 consisted of 57 Year 4 students who sat the Religious Literacy Assessment Workbook (Part A) on 29 August 2011 and 57 completed the Extended Task (Part B). The Extended Task was based on the Unit: *Mary, Mother of God: First Among the Saints* and was completed during the first half of Term 3.

The performance of each student was described as developing, achieving or extending. Students showed a very high performance in their knowledge of the religious tradition. This high level of performance was particularly noticeable in their:

- Knowledge of Liturgical Seasons.
- Sacraments.
- Knowledge of Mary and the Annunciation.

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

- The Genesis story of creation.
- The Sacrament of Penance

For Part A, 2.1% of students were placed in the developing level, 59.6% in the achieving level and 38.3 % were in the extending level.

For Part B, 0% of students were placed in the developing level, 61.8% in the achieving level and 38.2% were in the extending level.

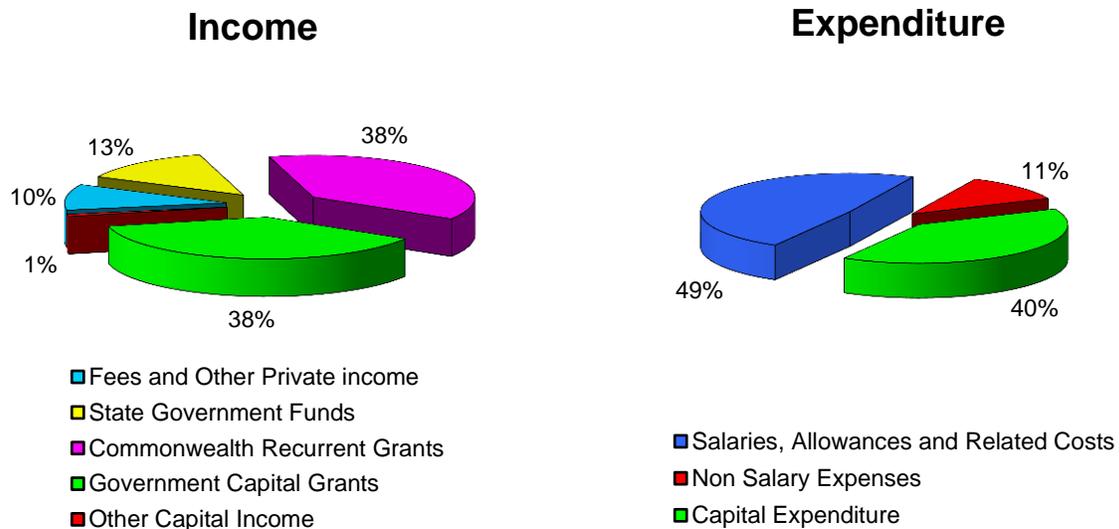
Combining Parts A and B, 2.2% of students were placed in the developing level, 54.3% in the achieving level and 43.5% were in the extending level for Religious Literacy.

Financial Summary

St Thomas Aquinas had the official opening of the new school hall (Fr Glynn Centre) on 10 June. This project began in September 2010 and through the generosity of the Federal Government and the BER grants, St Thomas Aquinas were able to achieve this much needed new space for the benefit of the children and the wider community.

The Parents and Friends have assisted the school once again to ensure that the resources and facilities are up to date and relevant to the educational need of all grades. Technology has been a focus for school funds and we have been able to purchase six new smartboards, as well as twenty ipads to be used throughout the school. Preliminary plans are in place to refurbish the School Technology and Information Centre in the coming year.

The following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St Thomas Aquinas, Catholic Primary School, Bowral for the year ended 31 December 2011. This data is taken from the 2011 financial return to the Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



Student Welfare

Introduction

The Seasons Program was reintroduced this year to aid children suffering grief. This program was administered by two staff members and was offered to all students across Years 1 to 6. Fourteen children took the opportunity to take part in the program this year.

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

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

Pastoral Care

The processes and procedures that are in place at St Thomas Aquinas continued to serve us well. The evidence gathered from the school safety survey, which was conducted several times throughout the year, show that there has been a decreasing incidence of bullying reported. When issues were identified, the Pastoral Care co-ordinator was the first to intervene in the process and in many cases was the only intervention that was required. This survey was supported by the record keeping of teachers on duty on a daily basis. These records also indicated that the children feel secure and protected in the playground environment.

St Thomas Aquinas has had the benefit of a school counsellor for five days per month. The counsellor worked with many individual children and their families, as well as having provided intervention in groups, where similar problems have been identified.

The school buddy system has been used for many years and continued to provide guidance, friendship and support for students. It has been particularly useful in helping Kindergarten students settle into the routine of school life. This program promoted a sense of responsibility in the older children, as well as having offered parents peace of mind, knowing their child has had a special friend watching out for their child.

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 2011.

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 has strived to implement our Vision and Mission to create a learning community where every individual is valued and encouraged to achieve their greatest potential in every aspect of life. Teachers endeavoured to challenge and empower each individual to be a reflective, analytical, independent life-long learner and thinker.

Curriculum & Pedagogy

The school developed a planned K-6 approach to teaching and learning based on David Langford's *Quality Learning* model. The curriculum focused on students and their needs, with teachers regularly assessing student's knowledge, skills and understandings to target learning experiences. The Enrichment team supported teachers in addressing individual learning needs by working with students in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Each Key Learning Area had a Scope & Sequence that was reviewed regularly to ensure curriculum outcomes were adequately covered.

This provided students, teachers and parents with ongoing information on a student's progress. The school has developed and continues to refine strategies for analysing data to better inform teaching and learning. The School Enrichment Team has monitored and tracked students who required additional support. St Thomas Aquinas teachers have developed strategies for 'assessment for learning' and 'assessment of learning'.

The school has been working for a number of years on developing skills for children to become independent and interdependent learners, critical and creative thinkers and effective problem solvers. The Inquiry approach to learning and Langford strategies has led to a consistent approach across the school.

Technology resources have increased significantly in the last year with the purchase of six Smartboards, twenty ipads and additional laptops and printers. Additional staffing facilitated the appointment of a technology coordinator for student, teacher and parent support, which resulted in the school's technology focused on supporting student learning.

Cross Curriculum

Literacy has been a particular focus in 2011. Teachers have developed their Literacy Block to offer a wider range of learning and teaching opportunities. As a response to the Australian study into the teaching of reading, teachers have worked on students understanding of phonemic and graphemic awareness. This has involved a K-6 approach with every class

explicitly teaching the sounds and spelling choices. Literacy across all curriculum areas has been a priority and gains have been made in student outcomes.

Numeracy strategies are continuing to be developed with the emphasis placed on problem solving steps; establishment of basic skills requirements for each grade level; daily mental teaching and learning experiences and working on the components of Mathematics lessons. Teachers have been committed to the numeracy block for one hour each day from Monday to Friday. This has provided students with explicit teaching, opportunities for practice and revision.

Indigenous education has been integrated throughout the curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 6. Students have studied Indigenous literature, history, music and art through integrated units of work and have learned an appreciation for their rich heritage.

Meeting the needs of all students

The Inquiry approach to learning and the strategies provided by David Langford's *Quality Learning* model have been implemented at St Thomas Aquinas School. This approach has allowed students to be engaged in their own learning and offered a differentiated curriculum that caters for the diverse needs of learners.

The Enrichment Team and School Support Officers have assisted teachers in catering for the diverse needs of learners. Review meetings provided opportunities to identify students with difficulties and Individual Program Meetings provided for planning and programming of appropriate strategies. Students were assessed, supported and monitored as they moved through the different grades. Support has been one-to-one, in small groups or with additional support teachers assisting in the classrooms. Strategies were adjusted to meet the needs of students. Parents were involved in the process of supporting students with additional learning needs and a team approach was encouraged.

Expanding Learning Opportunities

St Thomas Aquinas offered a broad range of opportunities that catered for all students. Competitions included the University of NSW in the areas English and Mathematics and were open to students from Years 3-6. The local and Diocesan Debating Competitions and Public Speaking involved many of our Primary students. The Kindergarten to Year 6 students had the opportunity to enter Art Competitions in local and diocesan events. Gifted and Talented students in Years 5 and 6 were involved in academic gala days.

Students have been offered a wide variety of musical opportunities, including instrumental groups, choirs and a liturgy group that have contributed significantly to our parish and sacramental life.

Sport has been well catered for at St Thomas Aquinas with school, local, diocesan and state competitions available to students. There have been opportunities to participate in non-competitive gala days and sporting groups have offered clinics in a wide range of activities including tennis, AFL, and cricket.

Student Achievement

The school used a variety of assessment strategies at key points in the learning framework. These included teacher observation, projects and presentations. The school also participated 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 was communicated on a regular basis and external assessment results were discussed with parents on an individual basis.

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 provided valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of the results was used at school level to support the enhancement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

Student Achievement in Bands

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessed aspects of literacy and numeracy in Years 3 and 5. It provided valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of the results was used at school level to support the enhancement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. Year 3 results were reported in Bands 1 to 6 with Band 6 representing the highest achievement and Year 5 results were 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 2011: % 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	7%	42%	51%	11%	55%	34%
	National	15%	39%	45%	21%	49%	29%
Writing	School	2%	14%	84%	0%	57%	43%
	National	8%	44%	46%	18%	57%	23%
Spelling	School	11%	53%	37%	2%	61%	37%
	National	15%	42%	41%	20%	53%	26%
Grammar & Punctuation	School	10%	44%	46%	0%	37%	63%
	National	14%	36%	48%	17%	46%	35%
Numeracy	School	9%	42%	49%	8%	58%	34%
	National	14%	51%	33%	17%	56%	25%

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) represents students who are achieving AT the NMS. Students in all other Bands are achieving ABOVE the NMS.

NAPLAN 2011: % AT or ABOVE NMS		YEAR 3	YEAR 5
Reading	School	97%	97%
	National	94%	92%
Writing	School	97%	100%
	National	95%	92%
Spelling	School	95%	100%
	National	93%	91%
Grammar & Punctuation	School	92%	100%
	National	93%	92%
Numeracy	School	95%	98%
	National	96%	94%

Parent, Student and Staff Satisfaction

Each year parents, students and staff are encouraged to make comment on the various aspects of the school that most affect them. The principal has an 'open door' policy which many take advantage of when they feel that issues need to be discussed and some form of action/policy needs to be formed.

Feedback in 2011 indicated that all stakeholders at St Thomas Aquinas feel that the school provided an excellent education, which supported the Catholic tradition and feedback also showed teachers are genuinely interested in the welfare of the children. Overall parents indicated that their children were being challenged to achieve the best outcomes and there was general consensus that the school strived to meet the individual needs of each student.

The information taken from the staff satisfaction survey, which was conducted during Term 3, indicated that there is a high level of satisfaction in the workplace and that staff members would be prepared to 'go the extra mile' to support the school and the students. Staff members indicated that they felt proud to work at St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School and valued the opportunities that they were offered throughout the year.

Students have indicated that they feel proud of their school and that the resources and equipment offered was very much appreciated. The new school hall was a great addition to St Thomas Aquinas school and students indicated that they enjoyed the opportunities they had to use all of these new facilities.

School Review and Improvement

School Review and Improvement has been an ongoing process of self evaluation measured against a commonly agreed set of criteria. It informed action plans 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 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 provision
- 3.6 School climate, learning environment and relationships

Key Area 4 Human Resources, Leadership and Management

- 4.1 Recruitment , selection and retention of staff
- 4.4 Succession Planning

Key Area 5 Resources, Finance and facilities

- 5.4 Financial Planning

School Review and Improvement components to be reviewed and rated in 2012:

Key Area 1 Catholic Life and Religious Education

- 2.5 Pastoral care

Key Area 3 Pedagogy

- 3.7 Professional Learning

Key Area 4 Human Resources, Leadership and Management

- 4.2 Professional Development of staff
- 4.5 Overall compliance with legislation and other requirements

Key Area 6 Parents, Partnership, Consultation and Communication

- 6.3 Linkage with the wider community

Key Area 7 Strategic Leadership and Management

- 7.2 Innovation, development and change

