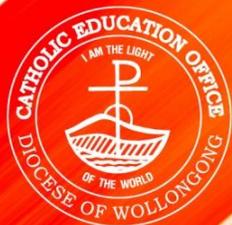


Annual School Report

2014



About This Report

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, Bowral is registered by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) 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 Action Plans.

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 BOSTES NSW requirements for Registration.

This Report complements and is supplementary to school newsletters and other regular communications. Following its submission to the BOSTES, the Report will be presented to the Parent Body and be available on the school's website by 30 June 2015.

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

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School
Bundaroo Street
Bowral NSW 2576

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

Parish Priest: Fr Sean Cullen

Acting Principal: Mary-Lynn Lane
Date: 12 December 2014

Vision Statement

At St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School we strive to provide quality learning and teaching in a welcoming, life-giving and authentic Catholic community.

Message from Key School Bodies

Principal's Message

This Annual School Report provides the opportunity to acknowledge the significant work of the school and the contribution of students, staff and parents during the 2014 school year. One major focus has been the implementation of the new Australian Curriculum in English and Mathematics. The staff focused on the pedagogical changes required to teach these Key Learning Areas and have provided many opportunities for parents to be involved.

Our School Review and Improvement (SRI) journey has also been significant with the launch of our revitalised Vision and Mission Statement and our external Cyclic Review. Both of these important events this year will form the framework for the work of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School into the future.

The school has worked closely with the Parish community celebrating many momentous occasions during the year, including the Sacramental Programs and the celebration of 30 years in the priesthood of Father Sean Cullen. The strong relationship the school has with the Parish is highly valued and we acknowledge the commitment and support of Father Sean.

Parent Involvement

It has been yet another fantastic year for the Parents and Friends Association (P&F), having once again provided some wonderful support to the school and helped to enhance our children's experience.

This year the P&F decided that its focus would shift towards the playground and improving the current environment by way of infrastructure. This included the commitment from the P&F to provide \$60,000 towards equipment made up of funds already raised from last year's fete being \$35,000, and a commitment to raise a further \$25,000 to complete the first stage of the equipment purchase.

It is so exciting to be part of an organisation that has contributed both financially and socially to the vibrancy, effectiveness and spirit of a great school. A highlight was the end of year Christmas event, which saw our biggest crowd yet! The Carols in the playground was also a

wonderful night enjoyed by all.

Thank you to the existing committee for your help and guidance, commitment and effort, I am sure the school community would join me in thanking you for your contribution.

Parents and Friends Association, President

Student Leadership

We were very proud to represent the school at many events and in a variety of situations. A great highlight was the visit by the Prime Minister, Mr Abbott to our school. All of Year 6 had the opportunity to talk to him about government during the study of our unit on democracy. St Thomas Aquinas is a great school and we have so many wonderful opportunities to learn.

School Leaders

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 an enrolment of 421.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School was established in 1903 by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and continues today to be an integral part of the Bowral Parish community as well as the wider community. The school aim is to create an educating community in which students, staff, parents and the Parish Priest support each other in pursuing the highest quality of education and developing life long learning.

St Thomas Aquinas is centrally located in Bowral. The school is a full two stream school and draws enrolments predominantly from the local area.

Student Enrolments

2014 enrolments	
Boys	216
Girls	205
Total	421
Indigenous	3
LBOTE	28

The Diocesan Primary 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.stabdow.catholic.edu.au and the CEO website: www.dow.catholic.edu.au. No changes were made to this Diocesan Policy in 2014.

Student Attendance

2014 Attendance	Male	Female
Kinder	96.0%	95.6%
Year 1	94.1%	94.2%
Year 2	96.5%	95.9%
Year 3	96.1%	95.6%
Year 4	94.7%	95.7%
Year 5	95.7%	95.4%
Year 6	95.4%	95.8%
Whole school	95.5%	95.4%

Management of Student Non Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff monitors all part or whole day absences.

All class rolls are marked each day at 9.30am by the class teachers using Real Time Roll, which is automatically linked to the School Accounting System. If any absence is unexplained a request in writing is sent to families to notify them of the absence, so that an explanation can be supplied. Notes can be given either by email, phone or by using the school app.

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.

If students are to be absent for an extended period of time an application must be submitted to the principal for approval of up to 50 days. Any application beyond this time should be submitted to the Diocese and the Minister of Education for approval.

Staffing Profile

There are a total of 24 teachers and 10 support staff at St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School. This number includes 16 full-time, 8 part-time teachers.

Teacher Standards

Teacher qualifications fall into 1 of 2 categories for all teaching staff responsible for delivering the curriculum:

Teacher education qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by AEI - NOOSR* guidelines	100%
A bachelor degree from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lacking formal teacher education	0%

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

Teacher Attendance and Retention

The average daily teacher attendance rate for 2014 was 98.7%. This does not include planned leave such as Maternity or Long Service Leave. The teacher retention rate from 2013 to 2014 was 96 %.

Professional Learning

During 2014 St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School 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 Catholic Primary School whole school development days involving 34 staff. These days focused on:

- The Diocesan Teaching and Learning Framework (DLTF); and
- Spirituality Day – Prayer & the different forms of Prayer.

B. Other professional learning activities provided at school level including CEO courses:

- School-wide Positive Behaviours for Learning (SPB₄L) (5 staff);
- Learning Technologies (2 staff);
- Lamplighters Program (Personal spiritual formation course) (4 staff);
- Shining Lights (Personal spiritual formation course) (2 staff);
- Slide To Learn-Technology Conference (4 staff);

- Setting up an Managing Student Pastoral & Educational Concerns team (MSPEC) (3 staff);
- Setting Up an Effective Reading Session (6 staff);
- Implementing the English K-10 syllabus in the primary classrooms (2 staff);
- Australian Curriculum – English Professional Learning sessions (20 staff);
- Australian Curriculum – Mathematics Professional Learning sessions (20 staff);
- Australian Curriculum - Science (2 staff); and
- School-based Technology professional learning sessions. (20 staff).

The average expenditure by the school on professional learning per staff member was \$601.

In addition, professional learning opportunities were provided by the Catholic Education Office with an additional average expenditure per staff member of \$752.

Catholic Life & Religious Education

There is a very strong association between the school and Parish with students, parents and staff actively involved in the life of the Parish. The Parish Priest, Fr Sean Cullen is closely involved with the school through weekly meetings with the Principal and the Religious Education Co-ordinator and is very supportive of the staff and families. Our liturgies are important celebrations in the life of the school and the Liturgy Group is highly regarded for their contribution to the liturgies.

Our Catholic Identity is a great strength of the school and is highly valued by the community. There has been a major focus on enhancing this significant strength of the school through the following initiatives:

- A revision of the Vision and Mission Statement, which was in need of a review (SRI target 2013-2014), so that the Catholic Identity of the school and our role as a part of the wider Parish remains strong and all the stakeholders are very clear about our purpose;
- participation in the Lamplighters Formation Program over the last three years (2012-2014) has added to the prayer life of the school and provided a structure for faith formation. Staff prayer has been restructured to include the whole staff and the Lamplighter participants are leading prayer experiences working through the formation stages each fortnight. This is now encouraging staff to provide a wider variety of prayer experiences for the students;
- parent spirituality days for faith formation of the parents each year, which have been enriching for the small number who have attended;
- Sacramental Associate program has been extended to include more teaching staff from the school with 8 teachers now involved;
- children’s Liturgy each Sunday morning is presented by a large number of staff and parents from the school and is well attended by children of the Parish;

- each grade leads prayer or liturgy at the beginning of the whole school assembly;
- Year 6 students are now leading our daily school prayer and morning assembly as part of their leadership role in the school;
- “G” day (grandparents and great people) has become a great highlight of our Catholic Schools Week celebration with Mass, classroom visits and picnic lunch together in the playground that is very well attended by the extended families in the school; and
- Year 6 nursing home visits each fortnight to entertain the residents.

Religious Literacy Assessment

The Religious Literacy Assessment Program for Year 4 students was successfully completed within schools across the diocese in 2014. The school cohort in 2014 consisted of 53 Year 4 students who sat the Religious Literacy Assessment Workbook (Part A) on 25 August 2014 and 53 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 high level of performance in their knowledge of the religious tradition. This high level of performance was particularly noticeable in their:

- understanding of Holy Week and Easter; and
- knowledge of liturgical seasons and feasts;

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 sequence of the birth of Jesus

For Part A, 18% of students were placed in the developing level, 67% in the achieving level and 15% were in the extending level.

For Part B, 8% of students were placed in the developing level, 65% in the achieving level and 27% were in the extending level.

Combining Parts A and B, 17% of students were placed in the developing level, 65% in the achieving level and 18% were in the extending level for Religious Literacy.

School Review and Improvement

School Review and Improvement (SRI) 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 2014:

- **Key Area 1: Catholic Life and Religious Education**

- 1.1 Vision and Mission

- Goal: to renew and revive the school Vision and Mission so it permeates all aspects of policy, planning and action in the school.

- **Key Area 2: Students and their learning**

- 2.2 Rights and Responsibilities

- Goal: to implement SPB4L framework, so that the school culture promotes & sustains a safe & supportive environment for all.

- 2.4 Integration of Information and communication Technology (ICT)

- Goal: for students to engage in a wide range of learning experiences which utilise ICT to improve their learning outcomes across the curriculum.

- **Key Area 3: Pedagogy**

- 3.1 Curriculum Provision

- Goal: to introduce innovative & sustainable approaches to the organisation of learning & timetabling to optimise teaching and learning time.

- 3.3 Teaching Practices

- Goal: to prepare the whole school staff for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in English and Mathematics.

- 3.5 Assessment

- Goal: to develop a whole school approach to gathering and using data effectively to inform teaching and learning.

3.7 Professional Learning

Goal: to develop an effective professional learning culture characterised by team learning, utilisation of the skills on staff and through accessing appropriate external PD to improve learning and teaching.

School Review and Improvement components to be reviewed and rated in 2015:

The Cyclic Review recommendations from August 2014 will be the key framework for the school's ongoing improvement journey. The school will continue to focus on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the NSW syllabuses. The revised Vision and Mission statements will provide the key direction of the school and will permeate every policy and procedure. The components to be developed in 2015 will be:

- **Key Area 2: Students and their learning**

- 2.2 Rights and Responsibilities

- 2.5 Pastoral Care

- **Key Area 3: Pedagogy**

- 3.1 Curriculum provision

- 3.3 Teaching practices

- 3.5 Assessment

- 3.7 Professional learning

- **Key Area 5: Resources, Finance and Facilities**

- 5.1 ICT resources

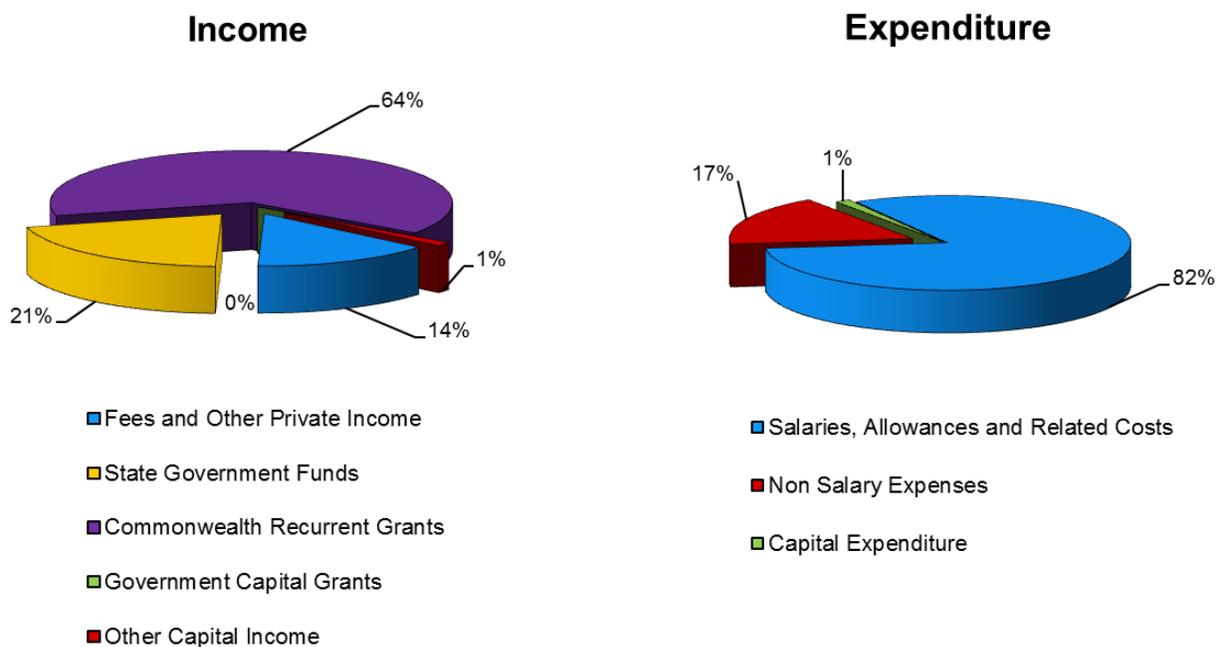
- 5.2 Use of resources and space

Financial Summary

The school has focused expenditure on the resourcing for the new Australian Curriculum to ensure that teaching materials were available as required. A major focus this year has been the improvements in the playground with a large sandpit and play equipment added for students to guide their play, as part of School-Wide Positive Behaviours for Learning (SPB4L). The P&F Association and KKKK (Kollege of Knowledge Kommittee for Kids) have donated significant funds to assist with many of the initiatives in 2014.

Maintenance continues to be a significant financial commitment, as the buildings and facilities require repair and improvement. Air conditioners have been replaced and additional storage added, as well as general maintenance of facilities, have all been financed by the School Enhancement and Debt Servicing Obligation (SEDSO) funding.

The following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, Bowral for the year ended 31 December 2014. This data is taken from the 2014 financial return to the Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



Student Welfare

During 2014, St Thomas Aquinas continued to implement SPB4L. Team members were involved in providing professional learning for all staff members in Active Supervision and implementing the three school rules (Stay Safe, Together We Learn and Act Respectfully) into the classrooms. Non-Classroom setting routines were prioritised and practised by the whole school on a fortnightly basis.

Behaviour Analysis Reporting Tool (BART) data was collected in the playground and other non-classroom settings e.g. buses, afternoon dismissal. Data was shared with the staff and children who were experienced difficulty were closely monitored. Those requiring extra assistance were given alternative play activities.

All students at STA continued to have access to our Catholic Care Counsellor 5 days per month. This has continued to be a valuable support service for the increased pastoral needs of students and their families.

Year 6 leadership groups were formed again in 2014 and students worked in their chosen area under the supervision of a nominated staff member. The Hospitality Group were involved in visiting a local nursing home on regular basis as well as all of Year 6.

Kindergarten took part in the Mindfulness Programme in Term 3 and the buddy program continued throughout the year on a regular basis.

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*** is 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 2014.

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 Bowral is committed to providing a quality learning and teaching environment catering for the needs of all students. The Diocesan Learning and Teaching Framework (DLTF) has provided a clear direction for the school to focus the ongoing curriculum work of the school.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

The school teaches the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) as required by the NSW Board of Studies. In addition Religious Education is taught in line with the Diocese of Wollongong Religious Education Program.

This year the school has implemented the new Australian curriculum in English and Mathematics using the New South Wales syllabuses. In English there has been an increased emphasis on the teaching of literature through clearly defined content and text requirements. Students have been actively engaged in the development of skills through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing texts. There has been a focus on the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies, which has provided students with an improved development of their reading skills. Writing has also had an increased emphasis, with the whole school explicitly teaching sentence structure, paragraphing and punctuation. Daily writing has ensured a significant improvement in the quality of texts.

In implementing the Mathematics syllabus, the staff at St Thomas, have focused on two main areas of professional development. Firstly, creating more effective number sense tasks that allow for improved fluency and secondly, creating tasks that encouraged the development of the working mathematical skills. The development of the number sense tasks included the use of technology has assisted in the differentiation the learning for the range of abilities of students. With the use of the Keynote program, teachers were able to create self-paced activities that focused on an area of need for their students. These tasks assisted improve fluency in areas such as number facts, numeral recognition, patterning and identification of 2D and 3D shapes.

Working mathematically involves communicating, reasoning and problem solving and the staff introduced a number of tasks that encouraged the students to work through these skills. The thinking processes that the students displayed from Kindergarten to Year 6 were extremely encouraging and showed that the students are capable of high levels of communicating, reasoning and problem solving. Working mathematically will continue as an area of priority for the staff in 2015 and is seen as one way of improving the numeracy learning gains for students.

A new Student Report was introduced to cater for the new Australian curriculum. This was a Diocesan format that provided parents and students with learning gains and areas for growth in English and Mathematics. Only learning gains were identified for religious education. Assessment has also been adjusted in line with the new curriculum areas.

This year we have made great advances with technology in line with the new Australian Curriculum and 21st Century Learning with the implementation of our first 1:1 iPad Learning Program. The model is a BYODD (Bring your own Designated Device) for the current Year 5 cohort, continuing next year into Year 6. The students have successfully used these devices to support their learning across all KLAs. The school's Technology Coordinator worked with all classes and teachers to support learning continuums using iPads in particular, with a range of integrated ICT learning experiences. This included a K-6 Digital Citizenship Program.

The introduction of a technology levy this year has helped to support and sustain the resources across the whole school. This enabled us to purchase MacBook's and additional iPads to have a more equitable resource bank for all our classrooms.

Cross Curriculum

Classes have a two-hour Literacy Block every day and have followed the guidelines for Quality English Practice from the Diocesan Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. There has been a greater focus on the modelled, guided and independent practice within classrooms to cater for the individual abilities of the students.

Numeracy continued to be a high priority throughout 2014. The development of effective numeracy practices was a focus and this was aligned with the guidelines from the CEO, Developing Effective Numeracy Strategies in a Mathematics Session. Staff continued to refine their practice and collaboratively share experiences and strategies to ensure quality learning and teaching across the school.

The new English Curriculum includes experience of contexts such as intercultural experiences, Aboriginal histories and cultures, Asian perspectives and environmental sustainability. The school has focused on each of these areas to deepen the student's awareness and understanding through literature and units of study.

Meeting the needs of all students

The Enrichment Team has worked with the class teachers in supporting students with additional needs. Individual Plans (IPs) have been developed with parents at the commencement of the school year and evaluation meetings at the end of Term 4. Adjustments are made to the learning and assessments of students, so that they can best access the curriculum.

The school has commenced a new process of supporting all students through the new Diocesan framework, Managing Student Pastoral Educational Concerns (MSPEC). The

Enrichment Team has participated in professional learning to assist with establishing a formal process of support. The new MSPEC Team includes the Enrichment teachers, as well as members of the Leadership Team to form a support network around students who experience academic, pastoral or behavioural difficulties. This is to be fully implemented in 2015 with a draft policy and procedures developed for the local context at St Thomas Aquinas.

Expanding Learning Opportunities

The school offered extensive opportunities for students to participate in extra curricula activities. Musical experiences were exceptional, with the K-6 Music Program offered by a specialist teacher utilising a variety of instruments, including a wide range of African drums. Students from K-6 were involved in the Musica Viva Program, which exposed them to a musical experience as a whole school concert.

Sporting opportunities were numerous and covered a wide variety of gala days, carnivals, cross country, Super Skippers and school, diocesan and state events. Students were able to be involved in competitive and non-competitive sporting events.

There were many different opportunities offered in 2014 including Chess, Liturgy Group, Public Speaking, Writing Competitions, Art Competitions, gymnastics and English & Mathematics Competitions.

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

NAPLAN is implemented for students in Years 3 and 5 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.

The 2014 NAPLAN results highlighted many areas of strength for the students in Years 3 and Year 5. In Year 3, over 50% of students were placed in Bands 5 and 6 in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation and Numeracy. In Year 5, over 50% of students were placed in Bands 7 and 8 in Reading and Grammar and Punctuation.

A continued priority from the analysis of the 2014 NAPLAN results is the focus on improving student learning gains from Year 3 to Year 5 in both Literacy and Numeracy. This area of focus will be strengthened in 2015 through the recently implemented use of the Literacy and Numeracy continuums. At the end of 2014, all students have been placed on the Literacy continuum highlighting their current areas of competence. This practice will be extended to the Numeracy continuum in 2015. These continuums will be used to assist staff track student learning gains and provide valuable information when targeted intervention is required.

Student Achievement in Bands

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assess 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 2014: % 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	9%	28%	64%	8%	42%	50%
	National	15%	39%	46%	15%	39%	46%
Writing	School	5%	39%	56%	8%	67%	25%
	National	13%	48%	39%	13%	48%	39%
Spelling	School	12%	33%	55%	3%	59%	38%
	National	17%	40%	44%	17%	40%	44%
Grammar & Punctuation	School	5%	24%	71%	5%	34%	61%
	National	14%	36%	50%	14%	36%	50%
Numeracy	School	5%	39%	56%	11%	60%	29%
	National	15%	48%	37%	20%	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) are achieving AT the NMS. Students in all other Bands are achieving ABOVE the NMS.

NAPLAN 2014: % AT or ABOVE NMS		YEAR 3	YEAR 5
Reading	School	97%	100%
	National	94%	93%
Writing	School	98%	95%
	National	94%	90%
Spelling	School	100%	98%
	National	93%	93%
Grammar & Punctuation	School	98%	97%
	National	94%	93%
Numeracy	School	97%	97%
	National	95%	93%

Parent Student and Staff Satisfaction

A number of surveys and focus groups have provided feedback throughout the year, including the information gathered during the Cyclic Review process in August. A final survey was provided for parents, staff and students at the end of Term 4.

There was overwhelming support for the school with parents, staff and students all indicating there has been a strong Catholic focus, there were many opportunities provided for students and the school provided a safe and supportive environment.

Feedback that has been provided throughout the year has contributed to many of the initiatives during 2014. The playground needs was one area that many parents and students have assisted with ideas and requirements. The community were very supportive of the improvements.

