

St Thomas' Catholic School Willoughby

2007 Annual Report



Principal: Mrs Dianne Burgham

Address: 2 Horsley Avenue
WILLOUGHBY NSW 2068

Phone: (02) 9958 7308

Fax: (02) 9967 2143



1. Message from Key Groups in Our School Community

1.1 Message from the Principal

This year has been a full and rewarding one, with a range of developments and achievements. The most significant of these was our participation in a rigorous Review and Development Process which involved consultation with all major stakeholders in the school community. It is with pleasure that I begin my report on the 2007 school year at St Thomas' Catholic Primary School with two quotes from the report of the Review panel.

'Panel Members found ample evidence to verify the claim that St Thomas' is a dynamic, generous and welcoming community. People affirmed this often, and it was evident to the panel when it was working in the school over two days. The children love the school and obviously feel safe and secure in the environment. Parents support school events very strongly, are very interested in their children and demonstrate this by their attendance and involvement.'

'The panel validated, from the evidence, the following strengths of St Thomas':

- The liturgical life of the school is vital and healthy.
- A pastoral spirit and strong connection with the mission of the parish is evident.
- Teachers are committed and caring in their vocation in Catholic education.
- Staff are open, welcoming and talk freely and proudly about their school.
- Students are effectively engaged in their learning and can articulate clearly what they are doing, whilst at the same time they describe this engagement as 'fun'.
- Good work in co-operative planning has begun.
- Student leadership is clearly evident amongst the senior students.
- A strong tradition of nurturing and pastoral care is evident in the caring

outreach of many members of this ecclesial community.'

In 2007, St Thomas' became a split campus school with both the Year 5/6 composite class relocated across the road from the main school. (Music, Band and gymnastics classes have been held across the road in previous years.) Staff and children affected by this relocation responded to the challenges and advantages with a positive attitude.

There were a number of celebratory events during the year and these included our Beginning of the Year Mass, our Holy Week Presentation, and the annual Art and Craft Show. Curriculum development and professional learning continued to focus on enquiry-based learning through an integrated curriculum using the lens of the Quality Teaching Framework. There has also been renewed attention to literacy in the Infant Years with a more individualised approach to support and development.

We look forward to a successful 2008 year building on the recommendations of the review process and bringing to fulfilment some of the initiatives of 2007, such as setting up a second e-learning centre, establishing a Before and After School facility, and launching our school website.

The Principal

1.2 Message from the Parent Body

2007 was about setting a platform to enable St Thomas' to meet the challenges of the future. The ground work that was done in 2007 will start to show benefits to the school in 2008 and beyond. Some of the key achievements and changes included:

- improved levels of consultation between the P&F Executive, parents and the school executive
- development of a new constitution for the P&F which more clearly outlines roles and responsibilities
- establishment of a before and after school care program to commence in 2008



- support of a second technology centre to be established in 2008
- funding support for the development of a school internet site
- a grant application for a major water recycling project for the school and parish.

It is impossible to achieve anything without the support of the entire parent community. Our annual Art and Craft Show was a great success. It was a great weekend and it really had a wonderful community feel. The organising committee really outdid themselves with the quality of merchandise on offer and the professional way it was presented. The funds raised from the show are used to support the school's priorities.

The highlight of the year, for me, was the work that a sub-committee performed in setting up a Before and After School Care facility. The tireless work by a small group of parents is finally reaching an end, with the school community eagerly awaiting its commencement on 2008.

These achievements are only possible through the hard work and dedication of the parents of this school. I am very proud of what the parent body of the school has achieved and thank them for the opportunity to lead the Parents' & Friends' Association (P&F) for 2007.

I would like to wish the incoming President and his team all the best for the next year.

P&F President 2007

1.3 Message from the Student Body

2007 was a great year for the students of St Thomas' Catholic School. Throughout the year there were many inspiring events and uplifting celebrations. Our favourite celebration was our graduation mass at the end of the year. After mass we had a supper in the parish hall and everyone in the school was invited to share this special time with us. Our families were happy and proud. Although we were happy we were also a bit sad because we were leaving St Thomas' where we had learned so much.

One of the highlights of Year 6 was when we went to Canberra for two days. There, we learnt a lot about our Parliament, about voting systems and the electoral commission. It was a very enjoyable experience.

In 2007 our classroom was on the opposite side of the road from the main school. Our teacher called it the 'Northside Campus' and we soon adapted to moving across the road at the beginning and end of breaks. One of the advantages of being across the road was that we were closer to the Library, and the hall.

As leaders in the school the Year 6 students carried out a number of responsibilities and these included:

- running the fortnightly Friday school assemblies
- supporting and assisting the new Kindergarten children through the school Buddy program
- encouraging our Colour House team mates at school carnivals
- representing our school at special events in the local community
- welcoming and thanking school visitors.

In Terms 2 and 3 we had fortnightly sport with the Year 5 and 6 students from St Philip Neri Catholic School, Northbridge. It was great fun and gave us the chance to meet students from another school. Some of them we will meet again when we move on to high school.



2. School Profile

2.1 Introduction

St Thomas' Catholic School is a co-educational primary school catering for students from Kindergarten to Year 6. It is situated on the lower North Shore of Sydney in the parish of Willoughby in the Diocese of Broken Bay. Students are drawn from the suburbs of Willoughby, Artarmon, Northbridge, Chatswood, Roseville, Naremburn, Middle Cove and Castlecrag.

The school enjoys a positive profile in the local community with a high demand for places. A comment often heard is that St Thomas' retains the feeling of a local village school despite the increasing numbers. An outstanding feature of the school is the willingness of the parent community to support the teaching and learning at St Thomas'.

2.2 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2007:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
140	132	20	0	272

This data reflects an increase in the school's enrolment figures, despite a significant number of students from Years 3 and 4 leaving at the end of 2006 to take up places at private schools. The school had a healthy Kindergarten enrolment of 60 students.

2.3 Enrolment Policy

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established an [Enrolment Policy](#)† which is implemented by all systemic schools in the Diocese.

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

†Copies of this policy and other policies in this report may be obtained from the Catholic Schools Office website at: <http://www.cso.brokenbay.catholic.edu.au/resources/index.html> or by contacting the Catholic Schools Office.

2.4 Staff Profile

The school executive consists of the Principal, the Assistant Principal, the

Religious Education Co-ordinator and two Co-ordinators with curriculum responsibilities.

The NSW government requires that this report details the number of teachers in each of the following categories:

- have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines
- have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications
- do not have qualifications as described in (a) or (b) but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context. Such teachers must have been employed:
 - to 'teach' in NSW before 1 October 2004 (either on a permanent, casual or temporary basis), and
 - as a 'teacher' during the last five (5) years in a permanent, casual or temporary capacity.

a	b	c	Total
16	0	0	16

2.5 Teacher Attendance and Retention Rates

The average teacher attendance rate during 2007 was 94.9%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2006 to 2007 was 94.7%.

2.6 Teacher Satisfaction

The high retention rate of teachers and willing participation in professional learning indicate a high degree of teacher satisfaction.



2.7 Student Attendance

The average student attendance rate for 2007 was 94.5%.

2.8 Student Satisfaction

The positive atmosphere in the school and the energetic involvement of student leaders in the life of the school are an indication of the high degree of satisfaction.



3. Catholic Life and Mission

3.1 Catholic Heritage

St Thomas' Catholic School commenced in 1928 when the Sisters of St Joseph from Mount Street, North Sydney were invited to staff the new school in Horsley Avenue. They responded to the call and were a vital presence at the school until 1979. The Sisters received their teacher training at Mount Street Teachers' College, North Sydney and St Thomas' later became one of the demonstration schools for College students.

When the school opened in 1928, a building at 1 Horsley Avenue was used as both a school and a church. As numbers grew, plans were developed to build a new school and provide more classrooms. The new building was opened in 1941.

The Sisters of St Joseph continued to be a presence in the school and the parish until 1979, and their charism has endured throughout the years with St Thomas' Catholic School renowned for the pastoral care and sense of hospitality which exists within the school community.

In 2005 the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart moved into the parish and established a Formation House in the former convent in High St. This brought a renewed energy and has enhanced the strong partnership between school and parish.

3.2 Liturgical Life

The community gathered to celebrate on many occasions throughout the 2007 school year. For example:

- Class Masses for Years 3-6 were celebrated most Fridays throughout each term.
- Years K-2 celebrated Liturgies of the Word throughout each term. These were led by priests of the parish and parents attended in large numbers.
- On a number of occasions throughout the year a class took responsibility for participating in a special way in the 9.30am Sunday parish mass. This was

followed by a shared morning tea provided by the parents of that class.

- The feast of the school's patron saint, St Thomas, was celebrated with Mass followed by morning tea, a sausage sizzle and special activities, at the school. Planned activities, including a visit to Willoughby Park, were cancelled because of wet weather.

Families were invited to Masses, Liturgies of the Word and presentations on a number of occasions throughout the year to mark significant dates and events in the lives of the community. These included:

- Holy Week Presentations
- Liturgies of the Word celebrating the Seasons of the Church's Year
- Liturgies of the Word for the whole school (St Joseph's Day, The Annunciation, Mission Week, Our Lady Help of Christians)
- Whole school focus on the Rosary during October
- School Masses (St Thomas' Day, St Patrick's Day, Blessed Mary MacKillop Day, Sacred Heart, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents' Day, Beginning and End of Term Masses).

As the year drew to a close the graduation of the Year 6 students was celebrated with the community at a special Graduation Mass. This was preceded by a Year 6 Retreat Day during which the children collaboratively prepared parts of their Graduation Mass. The year ended with the annual Carol Evening where Year 6 students were each presented with a Graduation Candle. A special Advent Mass at which all school leavers were acknowledged and farewelled was celebrated on the last day of the academic school year.

The school prayer is recited each week at the Monday morning assembly, fortnightly assemblies and during class prayers. The National Anthem is also sung at all school assemblies.



3.3 The School in the Life of the Parish and Diocese

The students and teachers joined with the parishioners of St Thomas at the 9.30am Mass to celebrate the beginning of the school year on Sunday February 18.

On a number of occasions, usually during term time, a class took responsibility for preparing the 9.30am Sunday Mass.

The parish hall was used on a weekly basis for Music and for Friday assemblies. The Legion of Mary parish group met regularly in the front room of the school library so that the hall would be available for classes.

Children in Years 2 and 3 took part in parish programs to prepare them for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. This was supported by school Religious Education programs.

The school supported the parish in the collection of food, clothing and money to support the Lenten and Advent Appeals, and Sacred Heart Missions.

3.4 Religious Education Curriculum

In 2007 classroom teachers deepened their knowledge of the Diocesan Religious Education Modules. They were supported and supervised in this by Education Officers from the Mission Services team and the REC.

Resources were purchased to support the RE modules and teachers were released from class to plan for Religious Education with support from Catholic Schools Office personnel.

3.5 Catholic Worldview

With a view to developing an awareness of the needs of people in third world countries, children participated in a special Liturgy of the Word following Mission Week. The particular focus was on the work of Caritas and senior students held a Games Afternoon to raise money for this cause.

Year 5 students represented the school at the annual Diocesan Mission Mass.

A presentation on the work of the Mercy Sisters with the poor of Peru was followed by

a stall selling goods made by women of Peru. All monies raised was sent directly back to the community in Peru.

Year 6 students joined with Year 6 students from schools in the North Shore cluster to celebrate the annual Year 6 Cluster Mass.

All students and teachers participated in a School Clean Up to coincide with the Clean Up Australia project.

School families participated in St Vincent de Paul food and clothing appeals during the year.

3.6 Parent Participation

Parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school ensures that they are informed and included in various aspects of the Catholic life and mission of the school. In 2007 parents were kept informed through the following activities:

- invitations to participate in school and class liturgies and celebrations
- regular information in weekly newsletters
- Sunday class masses with the parish family during term
- invitations to school assemblies
- open afternoons in classrooms each term
- Information sessions for parents on 'Early Reading' and on 'Bully Busting'
- twice yearly written reports on student progress
- parent teacher interviews in Terms 1 and 2, and in Term 4 if required.

School parents were actively involved in preparing and co-ordinating a number of social events. For example: the Mother's Day Stall, the Father's Day Breakfast and the morning tea for Grandparents' Day. Throughout the year they also provided morning tea on Sunday mornings after each School and Class Mass. The Parents' and Friends' Association Pastoral Care Coordinator was very active throughout the



year organising the provision of meals, transport for those in need and constantly liaising with the principal and parish priest.

The parents of the Year 4 students organised and coordinated hospitality for the 2008 Kindergarten parents on the school's three Kindergarten Orientation mornings.

The parents of Year 1 and Kindergarten students organised the annual BBQ held after the St Thomas' Carol Evening.

3.7 Professional Learning in Catholic Life and Mission

In 2007 professional development activities in Religious Education included:

- participation in the Ministry for Teachers II course (two teachers)
- Religious Education Certification (two teachers)
- full staff participation in the Adult Faith Formation Program. The staff covered the module of Spirituality.

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established a policy on the [Professional Requirements for the Accreditation of Teachers of Religious Education](#) which is implemented by all systemic schools in the Diocese.



4. Pastoral Care

4.1 Diocesan Policies

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established [Pastoral Care](#) and [Student Discipline](#) Policies which are implemented by all schools in the Diocese.

The implementation of these policies is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

4.2 School Implementation of Diocesan Policy

Diocesan policies on Pastoral Care, Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment underpin all attention and responses to pastoral care issues at St Thomas'. In 2007 all pastoral care matters related to student welfare were discussed in confidence with caregivers, appropriate responses decided on and action taken.

In Term 1 the St Thomas' School Rules were reviewed and amended in consultation with students, staff and parents. Immediate and direct communication with parents of students who re-offend continued and had the added benefit of greater parent support and involvement.

Further work on Bullying was done in Term 3. This incorporated two classes trialling an anti-bullying program, and the introduction of a regular student wellbeing survey.

Teaching staff worked with Catholic Schools Office personnel to formalise a shared approach to Positive Behaviour Management.

The school continued the 'Buddy' support program for Kindergarten, with Year 5/6 students providing support to the Kindergarten teachers in the first few months of the new school year and establishing relationships with Kindergarten students.

4.3 Pastoral Care of Families

A number of formal and informal structures exist to support families within the school community. In 2007 these included:

- access to student counselling

- co-ordination of practical community support through the Parents' and Friends' Pastoral Care Co-ordinator
- advice and referral to other support agencies such as Centacare.

4.4 2007 Initiatives

With the revision and amendment of the school rules that are established and known within the school community, the school continued using School Houses as a strategy for organisation in 2007. Each School House was named after a former parish priest. All students identify with their House and its Colour and work cooperatively towards being awarded house points.

A record of winning houses is kept on the House Shield and it is presented each week to the leaders of the house team with the most points. At the end of each term members of the overall winning house are rewarded with an extended play time on the last day.

4.5 Resolving Issues

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established a [Complaints Handling Policy](#) which is implemented by all schools in the Diocese.

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.



5. Excellence in Teaching and Learning

5.1 Curriculum Overview

Staff members continually seek to develop and improve the delivery of curriculum at St Thomas'.

In 2007 there was a professional development focus on maintaining and refining successful literacy practices and on developing teacher understanding and use of the Quality Teaching Framework.

The teachers continued to use an integrated enquiry-based approach to children's learning where outcomes for a number of Key Learning Areas are addressed in one unit of work. This approach reinforces student learning and enables them to construct meaning and deepen their understanding of concepts in an interconnected way. Parents continued to be informed about this through newsletters, displays and regular guided tours of classrooms.

In 2007 students with special needs continued to have their needs met through the provision of individual learning programs and intensive input from the school's special needs teacher. This was achieved with support from Educational Services at the Catholic Schools Office. Meetings were also held with Education Officers from the Catholic Schools Office who supported and guided teachers in providing for high achieving and gifted students.

5.2 Approach to Teaching and Learning

A professional approach to the responsibilities of teaching is an important element in the mission of all Catholic schools. In 2007 staff at St Thomas' committed to a review of current practices in preparation for the Diocesan School Review and Development Process.

5.3 Significant Initiatives

In 2007 the importance of literacy learning in Kindergarten and Years 1 and 2 was a focus and outside experts were engaged to work with teachers in small groups and also

on an individual basis. The focus for this work was on gathering and using assessment data so as to inform classroom practice in literacy. A further emphasis was placed on making best use of information provided by state-wide standardised testing in literacy.

5.4 Student Achievement

Literacy – Reading and Language

In **Year 3**, 2007 there were 34 students who sat for the Basic Skills test (BST).

The table below shows the percentage of students in Year 3 who achieved each band for overall literacy achievement both at the school and also in the state. Analysis of this data shows that 85% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands (Bands 4 and 5) as compared to 47% of the state.

	School	State
Band 5	42	19
Band 4	43	28
Band 3	12	26
Band 2	0	15
Band 1	0	11

Overall the 2007 Year 3 literacy scaled scores were consistent with a steady increase in scores recorded by Year 3 students at St Thomas' since 2001. The following table compares Year 3 student performance in literacy (reading and language) to statewide performance and illustrates trends in student performance over time. Since 2001 the average scaled score for Year 3 Literacy at St Thomas' Catholic School has been consistently above the state performance.

Year	School	State
2001	51.1	50.6
2002	54.9	50.6
2003	52.1	50.6
2004	55.4	50.5
2005	54.6	50.8
2006	55.2	50.7
2007	57.1	51.2



Writing

The table below shows the percentage of students in **Year 3** who achieved each band for writing both at the school and in the state.

94% of St Thomas' students achieved the top two bands compared to 48% across the state (Bands 4 & 5)

	School	State
Band 5	53	16
Band 4	41	32
Band 3	6	32
Band 2	0	12
Band 1	0	8

The following table compares Year 3 student performance in writing to statewide performance and illustrates trends in student performance over time. Since 2002 the average scaled score for St Thomas Catholic School has consistently been above the State performance.

Year	School	State
2001	47.7	49.0
2002	55.2	51.5
2003	52.4	51.1
2004	54.9	51.2
2005	52.6	50.1
2006	54.6	50.2
2007	56.9	50.8

Literacy - Reading and Language

In **Year 5**, 2007 there were 15 students who sat for the Basic Skills test (BST).

The table below shows the percentage of students in Year 5 who achieved each band for overall literacy achievement at the school and also in the state. Analysis of this data shows that 66 % of students scored in the top two bands as compared to 53% of the state.

	School	State
Band 6	33	27
Band 5	33	26
Band 4	20	26
Band 3	13	14
Band 2	0	5
Band 1	0	1

The following table compares Year 5 student performance in literacy to statewide performance and illustrates trends in student performance over time. Since 2004 the average scaled score for St Thomas' Catholic School has consistently been above the State performance.

Year	School	State
2001	58.6	57.1
2002	58.4	57.8
2003	56.0	57.5
2004	63.1	57.4
2005	59.9	57.0
2006	60.4	57.3
2007	59.2	57.5

Writing

The following table shows the percentage of **Year 5** students in each band for writing both at the school and statewide. Analysis of the data shows that 58% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands as compared with 55% of students in state schools.

	School	State
Band 6	8	23
Band 5	50	32
Band 4	42	28
Band 3	0	12
Band 2	0	2
Band 1	0	0

The following table compares Year 5 student performance in writing to statewide performance and illustrates trends in student performance over time. Since 2003 the average scaled score for St Thomas' Catholic



School has consistently been above the state.

Year	School	State
2001	57.6	56.3
2002	56.2	57.1
2003	57.2	56.4
2004	59.4	56.6
2005	58.4	56.2
2006	60.0	56.7
2007	58.1	57.2

Numeracy

The Basic Skills Test (BST) in numeracy is used to assess student achievement in aspects of number, space, measurement and working mathematically.

In **Year 3**, 2007 there were 34 students who completed the Basic Skills Test in numeracy.

The following table shows the percentage of Year 3 students who achieved in each band for overall numeracy achievement. Analysis of this data in numeracy shows that 76% of students scored in the top two skill bands as compared with 46% across the state.

	School	State
Band 5	24	19
Band 4	52	27
Band 3	18	26
Band 2	0	20
Band 1	6	9

The following table compares Year 3 student performance Numeracy to statewide performance and illustrates trends in student performance over time. Since 2001 the average scaled score for St Thomas' Catholic School has consistently been above the state.

Year	School	State
2001	55.2	52.4
2002	59.0	53.0
2003	53.8	52.8
2004	57.4	52.3
2005	59.4	53.6
2006	55.5	53.3
2007	57.5	53.1

In **Year 5**, 2007 there were 15 students who completed the Basic Skills Test in numeracy.

The following table shows the percentage of Year 5 students who achieved in each band for overall numeracy achievement. Analysis of this data shows that 60% of students were placed in the top two skill bands compared with 55% across the state (Bands 5 and 6).

	School	State
Band 6	20	33
Band 5	40	22
Band 4	27	24
Band 3	13	15
Band 2	0	6
Band 1	0	1

The following table compares Year 5 student performance in numeracy to state-wide performance and illustrates trends in student performance over time. Since 2003 the average scaled score for St Thomas' Catholic School has been above the state performance.

Year	School	State
2001	58.9	60.3
2002	59.8	60.2
2003	60.4	60.0
2004	65.3	60.7
2005	61.4	60.4
2006	67.5	61.5
2007	62.3	61.9



Learning Gain

The scores in the table below indicate the average growth achieved by students who sat for the BST in 2005 as Year 3 students and again in 2007 as Year 5 students, in literacy (reading and language), writing and numeracy at St Thomas' and for the same cohort of students in the state. The expected growth in BST scores is between 6-7. The following table indicates a lower than expected growth across the 2007 cohort.

Average Growth achieved by students who sat for the BST in 2005 as Year 3 students and again in 2007 as Year 5 students.

2007	School	State
Literacy (Reading and Language)	3.31	6.81
Writing	5.23	7.17
Numeracy	3.71	8.45

Examination of school rolls and anecdotal evidence has revealed that a large number of the students were ill the week of the Basic Skills testing, some being brought to school by parents to sit a test in the morning and then being taken home. This may explain the lower than expected growth shown on this test.

The Commonwealth Government has developed national benchmarks that describe the minimum acceptable standards for Year 3 and 5 students for reading, writing and numeracy.

The following two tables outline the:

Percentage of Students in Year 3 who have surpassed the National Benchmarks since the school has had access to this data.

	Reading %	Writing %	Numeracy %
2004	97	n/a	100
2005	97	97	100
2006	100	100	100
2007	100	100	94

Percentage of Students in Year 5 who have surpassed the National Benchmarks since the school has had access to this data.

	Reading %	Writing %	Numeracy %
2004	100	n/a	95
2005	100	100	100
2006	100	100	100
2007	100	100	100

5.5 Information, Communication and Learning Technologies (ICLT)

School commitment to enhancing learning through the use of information, communication and learning technologies continued throughout 2007 with the establishment of an integrated book and technology resource centre within the school library. This involved the purchase of five desktop computers, a ceiling mounted data projector, screen and a bank of ten laptop computers. This technology was purchased with the assistance of a grant from the Commonwealth Government.

This development allowed larger groups of students to use information technology simultaneously and provided enhanced opportunities for modelling and direct instruction.

A further five desktop computers were purchased in preparation for the establishment of an e-Learning Centre early in 2008.

During 2007 staff continued to use CEnet (an internet delivery system) and 'myinternet' (an online learning environment) to support teaching and learning.

Professional development included further tuition on development of class pages (which are accessible by students from home).

5.6 Professional Learning

All teachers participated in a range of professional learning activities in 2007.

Over the year, staff took part in a number of training projects and courses. These took the form of one-day inservices, after school seminars, conferences, staff development days, postgraduate study and ongoing projects. Professional learning covered a number of areas, and included:

- staff development days covering preparation for the Primary School Review, Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator, and the module of Spirituality in the Adult Faith Formation Program
- within-school support from visiting specialists in literacy, gifted education and



integrated curriculum, and assessment and reporting

- attendance at courses and conferences on spirituality; leadership; Athena library systems; information and communication; literacy; anaphylactic information and training; and first aid
- interschool training such as CPR updates
- attendance at inservices in teacher mentoring, basic skills analysis; assessment and reporting, the Labora RE Resource and OHS.

On a Diocesan level, staff were engaged in experiences such as:

- Athena library systems
- CEet and SINA training
- Participation in the CSO Masters in Educational Leadership program
- Ministry for Teachers.

The average expenditure on professional learning per teacher in 2007 was \$2,278.



6. Extracurricular Program

Teaching and learning at St Thomas' is supported by a number of outside the classroom events. As well as events related to our Catholic character, children had the opportunity to participate in the following:

Stage Three Debating

In Terms 1 and 2, two teams of Year 5 and 6 students represented St Thomas' in the ISDA Debating Competition, at Monte St Angelo's Junior school. The Year 5/6 teacher coached the teams who performed admirably, and demonstrated increased skill levels throughout the term.

Public Speaking

Public speaking was promoted in all stages across the school. In Term 3 all students from Kindergarten to Year 6 participated in the St Thomas' Catholic School Festival of Public Speaking. Two Year 6 students then participated in the cluster's Public Speaking Finals.

Sporting Gala Days

Students from St Thomas' participated in a number of Gala Days which included, netball, basketball and soccer

Diocesan Sport

A number of students represented St Thomas' in Diocesan sporting events such as swimming, cross country running and athletics.

Chess Club

With the help of willing parents and a qualified chess teacher, many students from Kindergarten to Year 6 participated in weekly chess activities. These were held during lunch time once a week and were eagerly received by the students, who spent their lunch hour learning the intricacies of, and the skill involved in, the game of chess.

Swimming

Students in Kindergarten to Year 2 participated in an eight day intensive swimming program at Lane Cove Aquatic Centre in Term 4. The program was conducted by Carlisle Swim School. Students in Years 3-6 who required extra support with

their swimming skills were also invited to participate.

Surf Skills Program

Years 3 to 6 participated in a beach and surf skills program conducted at Manly Beach. It was held over a two day period in late Term 4. The program builds on, and extends, the swimming skills the students gain during previous years' swimming lessons.

Band

In 2007 the school band performed at Grandparents' Day, Mother's Day Breakfast, Father's Day Breakfast, the Art/Craft Show, and at the annual Christmas Carol evening in December.

Small groups performed at various events throughout the year such as Open Day and Assembly.

Sports Club

In 2007 the school continued lunchtime Sports Club which was supervised by professional Sports Consultants and a classroom teacher. The focus of the Club in 2007 was to provide an opportunity for children to learn the skills of co-operation and sportsmanship within an informal, supervised setting. Seventy children regularly participated.

Italian

Throughout the year children in Years 2 to 6 participated in regular Italian lessons. This program was a collaborative initiative between the school and CoAsIt (Community Assisted Italian).



7. Strategic Initiatives

7.1 2007 Priorities and Achievements

Priorities for 2007 included:

- participation in a comprehensive review and development process led by the Catholic Schools Office leading to identification of strengths and areas for development in 2008
- embedding student reporting and tracking systems so that information gathered was used to improve student learning. This included a refinement of the system for collection and storage of annotated student work samples
- engagement of curriculum experts to work with teachers on a one to one basis identifying student needs and developing programs to cater to student needs, as identified in school wide tracking
- consolidation of established systems and effective induction of new staff and students
- organising further opportunities for senior students to meet and mix with senior students from neighbouring Catholic schools. In 2007 this included regular combined sporting activities with St Philip Neri, Northbridge; and joint participation in Mathematics Olympiad with students of St Philip Neri, Northbridge
- accommodation of the increased enrolments, and creative use of existing facilities. In 2007 this involved reallocation of spaces for support programs, redistribution of resources, upgrading of administration areas and the setting up of an integrated book and technology resource centre.

Whilst the above priorities were successfully achieved, further work will be needed to reorganise and upgrade school facilities so that they reflect the quality of the teaching and the learning at St Thomas'.

7.2 2008 Priorities and Challenges

A number of priorities have been identified for attention in 2008 and these include:

- continued upgrading and restructuring of facilities to provide:
 - space for a dedicated e-learning centre within the main school building
 - for installation of new and safer play equipment
 - enhanced outdoor learning areas
- focussed professional and curriculum development project in mathematics
- significant practical support for World Youth Day 2008
- improved and refined archival systems
- development and launch of a school webpage.



8. Parent Participation

8.1 Introduction

Catholic schools are a collaborative partnership between parish, school and parents. Parents at St Thomas' are an integral part of the school community and contribute to the life of the school in a variety of ways.

During 2007 many parents worked alongside teachers in the classrooms supporting student learning by helping with word processing, collaborative group work, hearing individual and group reading and helping students with editing and proof reading their work.

A small group of parents worked with the Assistant Principal on a regular basis reviewing and reorganising existing reading materials, so that suitable resources were always readily available to teachers and students.

Open classrooms were held one afternoon towards the end of each term, giving parents and carers the opportunity to spend time talking with their child about their learning for the term. In 2007 the students were able to articulate their learning in a positive manner that resulted in positive comments from the parents.

Parents also supported the teachers and students in a practical and pastoral way by organising morning teas held after the beginning of school mass and class Sunday masses.

Across the school, groups of parents worked to make school-wide activities a community success. These included the Mother's Day stall and Father's Day breakfast.

Large groups of parents volunteered to assist at the annual swimming and athletic carnivals, and Diocesan and cluster sporting events.

All parents continued to raise funds for the ongoing purchase of resources, payment of ancillary staff and upkeep of computers, as well as contributing to the upkeep of the playground. They did this through the

annual Art and Craft Show and activities associated with it.

Most families have strong identification with the school community and an authentic pastoral care system exists. This is continually demonstrated by the practical support parents and families give to each other, particularly during times of hardship. Assistance to families in need varies and can take the form of transport provision, child minding, house cleaning, provision of meals and regular friendly contact.

8.2 Parent Satisfaction

The high involvement of parents in a variety of school activities is evidence of their satisfaction and commitment to the school.



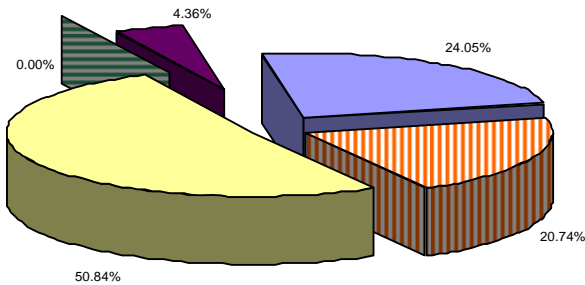
9. Financial Report

Consistent with Board of Studies requirements, financial income and expenditure for this school is shown in the graphs below.

Diocesan system financial reporting is found in the Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office Annual Report.

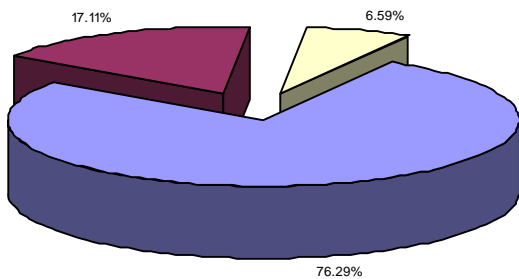
Income

- Fees and Other Private Income
- State Government Funds
- Commonwealth Recurrent Grants
- Government Capital Grants
- Other Capital Income



Expenditure

- Salaries, Allowances and Related Costs
- Non salary Expenses
- Capital Expenditure



The contents of this annual report have been validated by the School's consultant, Diann Hynes.