

St Thomas' Catholic School Willoughby

2008 Annual Report



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1. Message from Key Groups in Our School Community

1.1 Message from the Principal

It is with pleasure that I report on the 2008 school year at St Thomas' Catholic School. This year has been a full and rewarding one with continuing success in a range of areas. Successes in 2008 included excellent results in the National Assessment Program, third place in the Cluster Swimming Carnival, Diocesan representation in Cross Country Running and the installation of seven rain water tanks to help conserve water. As in the past we continue to endorse our commitment to educating and forming our students in Catholic discipleship and an outstanding feature of the school year was the willing participation of all members of the community in World Youth Day activities.

1.2 Message from the Parent Body

The year 2008 was about building on the wonderful structural and financial legacy afforded us by the previous executive, being ever-cognisant of the fact that we are here for the children, and it is their education, wellbeing, and enjoyment that is what brings us together. We have had a very productive year when it comes to activity in and around the school and this was aimed at improving the environment in which our children are educated, thanks to the great success of our annual Art and Craft Show.

1.3 Message from the Student Body

2008 was a year of many highlights for the students at St Thomas' Catholic School. Our school bands often played at school and parish gatherings including the Mothers' Day morning tea, the Fathers' Day breakfast, Open morning for pre-schoolers, and Grandparents' Day. We had lots of opportunities to represent the school, sometimes in sports teams and sometimes at civic ceremonies.

Other memorable highlights were the installation of our new playground equipment, the introduction of interactive whiteboards that make learning more interesting, the blessing of our new water tanks and having pilgrims for World Youth Day.





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.



2.2 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2008:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
148	140	41	0	288

*Language background other than English

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 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
17	0	1	18

2.5 Teacher Attendance and Retention Rates

The average teacher attendance rate during 2008 was 95.9%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2007 to 2008 was 80.0%.

2.6 Teacher Satisfaction

Staff commitment was highlighted by voluntary support of World Youth Day. A strong sense of collegiality was evident and staff participation in and evaluation of professional learning indicated a high degree of satisfaction.

2.7 Student Attendance

The average student attendance rate for 2008 was 94%.

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.

Senior students value the opportunities they have to lead Friday assemblies, to organise lunchtime fundraising for mission week, provide support and leadership to other students through the Buddy system and participate in sporting activities.

They appreciate extra curricular experiences including Year 6 Camp, and excursions to the local area.

Students look forward to their involvement in the annual Art and Craft Show where class artwork is highlighted and commended.





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.

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 Street. This brought a renewed energy and has enhanced the strong partnership between school and parish.

3.2 Religious Life of the School

The community gathered to celebrate on many occasions throughout the 2008 school year. These included whole school masses to celebrate special days, classroom masses, and liturgies of the word.

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 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 the Diocese

The close relationship between the school and the parish is evidenced on the many occasions when school families and parish families collaborate in sharing resources and facilities, work together on outreach projects and gather to celebrate together. The joyful preparation and celebration of World Youth day in 2008 was a wonderful demonstration of the generous and loving relationship that exists. Staff and students attended the Diocesan Schools Mass, the Year 6 Cluster Mass and the Diocesan Mission mass.

3.4 Catholic Worldview

St Thomas' Catholic School applies a Catholic worldview to all aspects of school life and those outside the school.

Throughout the year the community has been involved in mission and service activities which have included Project Compassion, St Vincent de Paul's Winter Appeal, parish outreach efforts to the community at Cobar, and clean up Australia.

3.5 Professional Learning in Catholic Life and Mission

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 2008 the school adopted a whole school approach to bring about positive behaviour using the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program. This was introduced and supported by the Education Officer-Behaviour Management from the Catholic Schools Office.

4.3 Pastoral Care of Families

A number of formal and informal structures exist to support families within the school community. In 2008 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
- buddy system to support new students to the school
- class parent support system.

4.4 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 Quality Teaching and Learning

Staff members continually seek to develop and improve the delivery of curriculum at St Thomas' and in 2008 development focussed on maintaining and refining successful literacy and numeracy practices and on developing teacher understanding and use of technology to enhance learning.

Visiting facilitators supported teachers in literacy and helped review the school literacy plan.

Staff attitudes and beliefs about mathematics were surveyed and discussed in preparation for ongoing support in mathematics.

Positive Behaviour for Learning was introduced to the school.

Provision was made for a one day a week teacher allocation to support ICLT, and training was provided in the use of interactive whiteboards.



5.2 Student Achievement

2008 was the first year of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). As a result of this new initiative, several points should be noted:

- A national minimum standard replaces the national benchmark of previous years.
- It is not possible in 2008 to provide comparisons with previous years' data.
- Students who were exempted from a test were deemed not to have met the national minimum standard.
- In the 2008 cohort, there were 44 students in Year 3 and 23 students in Year 5.

Detail on school performance is provided in the following tables where band distributions and percentages of students achieving the national minimum standard are outlined separately for Year 3



and Year 5. In Year 3, the highest band that a student can achieve is Band 6. In Year 5, the highest band that a student can achieve is Band 8.

Year 3 band distributions and % of students at or above national minimum:

		Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	School	2	0	7	11	39	41	95.5
	National	6.1	12	17.7	23	21.7	17.7	92.1
Writing	School	2	0	9	7	45	36	95.5
	National	2.9	6.5	15.6	28.7	27.4	17.2	95.4
Spelling	School	2	2	7	23	36	30	95.5
	National	5.9	10	19	25.9	21.9	15.5	92.4
Grammar & Punctuation	School	0	5	9	14	30	43	100
	National	6.6	10.7	17.3	23.3	21.3	19.1	91.7
Numeracy	School	2	2	14	27	30	25	98
	National	3.3	10.9	22.9	28	20.9	12.4	95.0

Analysis of this data shows that in reading 80% of students at St Thomas' scored in the top two bands (Bands 7 and 8) as compared to 39.4% of students nationally; in writing 81% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands as compared to 44.6% of students nationally; in spelling 66% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands as compared to 37.4% of students nationally; in grammar and punctuation 73% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands as compared to 40.4% of students nationally; and in numeracy 55% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands as compared to 33.3% of students nationally. All students achieved the national minimum or above in grammar and punctuation. 98% achieved the national minimum or above in numeracy, and 95.5% of students achieved the national minimum or above in reading, writing, and spelling.

Year 5 band distributions and % of students at or above national minimum:

		Band 3 (-)	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	School	0	4	17	52	9	17	100
	National	7.5	13.6	23.9	26	18.1	9.3	90.9
Writing	School	0	0	0	43	43	13	100
	National	5.9	11.8	25.3	29.3	17.9	8.3	92.5
Spelling	School	0	0	30	22	35	13	100
	National	6.8	12.8	24.9	28.2	18.2	7.6	91.7
Grammar & Punctuation	School	0	4	13	26	22	35	100
	National	6.6	11	21.2	26.4	19.9	13.4	91.9
Numeracy	School	0	9	13	43	26	9	100
	National	5.9	17.4	28.9	25.7	13.9	6.6	92.6

Analysis of this data shows that in reading 78% of students at St Thomas' scored in the top three bands (Bands 6, 7 and 8) as compared to 53.4% of students nationally; in writing 100% of St Thomas' students scored in the top three bands as compared to 55.5% of students nationally; in spelling 70% of St Thomas' students scored in the top two bands as compared to 54% of students nationally; in grammar and punctuation 83% of St Thomas' students scored in the top three bands as compared to 59.7% of students nationally; and in numeracy 78% of St Thomas' students scored in the top three bands as compared to 46.2% of students nationally. All students achieved the national minimum or above in all areas tested.



5.3 Extracurricular Activities

Teaching and learning at St Thomas' is supported by a number of outside the classroom events. These include debating, and public speaking, sporting events, and a variety of school based lunchtime clubs including infant games, gymnastics, choir, and chess.

5.4 Professional Learning

During 2008 staff members participated in a wide range of professional learning opportunities to address both individual and school needs. Throughout the year a number of new scheme teachers were mentored by experienced staff. All staff attended CPR and emergency care training.

Staff professional learning meetings focussed on a number of areas including mathematics, literacy Special Education, OHS, Child Protection, Workplace Bullying, Positive Behaviour for Learning and the introduction to the use of interactive whiteboards.

Individual participation in a number of courses including TESOL, Musica Viva, library management, ICLT facilitators, religious education, and leadership.

The average expenditure on professional learning, per teacher, in 2008 was \$906.



6. Strategic Initiatives

6.1 2008 Priorities and Achievements

Early in 2008 upgrading and restructuring of facilities was carried out to provide:

- space for a dedicated e-learning centre within the main school building in Room 5
- installation of new and safer play equipment in the forest area
- enhanced outdoor learning areas at the entrance to the school.

Professional development in mathematics led teachers to reflect on their current practice, and to review program documentation of mathematics.

Although preparations for World Youth Day were simultaneously energising and exhausting, it was a very worthwhile endeavour which built enduring community relationships.

Work continued on archival systems with preparation of files for storage off-site.

Preparatory work on the school webpage was completed.



6.2 2009 Priorities and Challenges

Priorities for 2009 include:

- developing awareness of mission through the 'mini missionaries' group activities
- continuing to develop Religious education programming in line with other KLAs
- integrating technology, particularly interactive whiteboards, into the classroom curriculum, and concurrent professional development
- continuing development of mathematics based on data provided by NAPLAN and engagement of an outside facilitator.
- revising school numeracy plan
- embedding the school literacy plan
- continuing development of a whole school approach to Positive Behaviour for Learning
- developing capacity for leadership density in the school.





7. Parent Participation

7.1 Introduction

The parent community has a strong identification and sense of ownership of the school and are willing volunteers in many aspects of school life. In 2008 parent participation in school life covered a broad range of activities including classroom support, resource administration, K-6 class social events, school social events such as the New Parent Dinner Dance, Art and Craft Show, community pastoral care and fundraising.

7.2 Parent Satisfaction

St Thomas' has a tradition of strong parental support. Parents are welcome and valued as partners in the education of the children. The high involvement of parents in a variety of school activities is evidence of their satisfaction and commitment to the school.

Parents value the commitment of the staff to the pastoral care and learning needs of each child and the social interaction that the community affords.

Fathers' Day Breakfast



Grandparent's day



Open Classrooms during Book Week



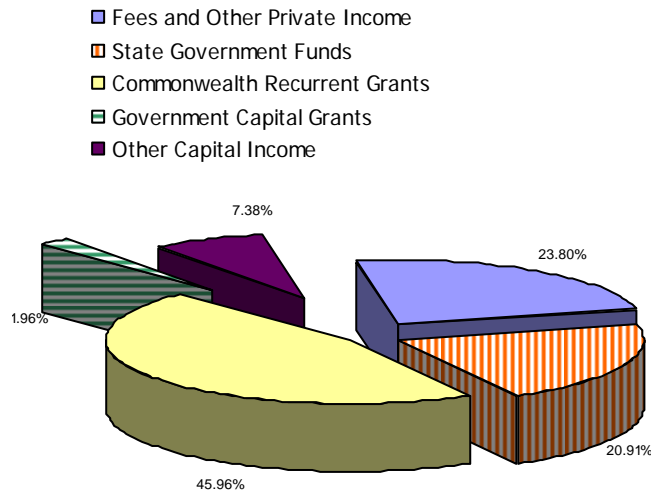


8. Financial Report

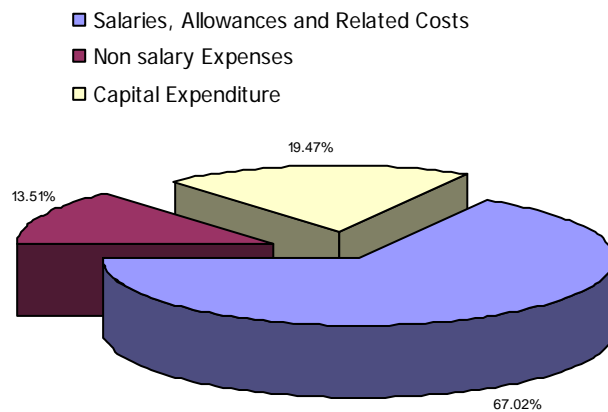
Consistent with Board of Studies requirements, financial income and expenditure for this school is shown in the graphs below.

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

Income



Expenditure



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