

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School Willoughby

2009 Annual Report



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1. Message from Key Groups in Our School Community

1.1 Message from the Principal

Our purpose as a Catholic school in the St Thomas Willoughby community is to provide an education which challenges all members of our community to reach for their full potential in an environment where all feel welcomed, accepted, loved and forgiven. This is how we demonstrate God's love and share in the teaching of Jesus.

St Thomas' is well regarded in the local community for providing an excellent, well balanced education for its students and for its sense of community and pastoral care. This report provides an overview of activities and events during the 2009 school year which contributed to the achievement of our goals and the continued development of our Catholic school community. 2009 has been a full and eventful year and we are proud of the broad range of our successes. These include excellent NAPLAN results, finalist placings in the Australian Independent Schools Debating Association Competitions, a Maths Olympiad medal, sports representation at Diocesan level, and an outstandingly successful Art and Craft Show.

1.2 Message from the Parent Body

The role of the Parents' and Friends' Association is to build and strengthen the partnership between home, school and parish, and to raise funds for the benefit of our children's overall development. In 2009 the P&F hosted a number of events and provided practical help and support to the principal and staff. Achievements in 2009 included initiation of a parent forum on Boys Education, purchase of additional playground equipment, installation of storage sheds for sporting equipment, and a very successful Art and Craft Show.

1.3 Message from the Student Body

There were so many things in 2009 to enjoy and celebrate. As Year 6 school leaders we took on special responsibilities. Some examples of these are:

- running Friday assemblies
- supporting and looking after Kindergarten children through the Buddy Program
- helping at the opening night for the Art and Craft Show
- organising and running a lunchtime games afternoon to raise money for Social Justice.

We enjoyed our leadership experiences and thank our teachers and parents for their support.

Year 6 School Leaders



2. School Profile

2.1 Introduction

St Thomas' Catholic Primary 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 2009:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
154	147	41	0	301

*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.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/about/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
18	0	1	19

Further information about the staff profile can be found in the School Facts section of the school's profile page on the *My School* website.



2.5 Teacher Attendance and Retention Rates

The average teacher attendance rate during 2009 was 93.1%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2008 to 2009 was 92.9%.

2.6 Teacher Satisfaction

While the high retention rate of teachers and their willingness to participate in professional learning indicates a high degree of teacher satisfaction, the physical layout of the school facilities has provided challenges through the year. Consequently the announcement of new building works, to start in 2010, was welcomed warmly. The introduction of interactive whiteboards in all classrooms from Year 1 to Year 6 provided stimulus for continued professional development and supported collegiality.

2.7 Student Attendance

YEAR	Average student attendance rate (%)
K	95
1	97
2	95
3	98
4	94
5	98
6	93

The average student attendance rate for the whole school for 2009 was 96%.

Management of non-attendance: In order for students to reach their full potential it is of paramount importance that they attend school regularly. While it is the parents' legal responsibility under the Education Act to ensure that their children attend school regularly, our staff as part of their duty of care, monitor all absences and work in partnership with parents to support and promote the regular attendance of students. In doing so the school, under the leadership of the principal:

- provides a caring environment which fosters in students, a sense of wellbeing and belonging
- maintains accurate records of student attendance
- implements policies and procedures to monitor student attendance and to address non-attendance issues as and when they arise
- communicates to parents and students, the school's expectations with regard to student attendance and the consequences of not meeting these expectations
- recognises and rewards excellent and improved student attendance.



School attendance records also contain information regarding student absences including reasons for absence and documentation to substantiate reasons for absences. Teachers are required to monitor non attendance diligently on a student by student basis and to bring to the attention of the principal immediately any unexplained absences, non attendance of a chronic nature, or reasons for non attendance that cause concern. Matters of concern are referred to the principal, the Catholic Schools Office and the relevant Department of Education and Training officer where appropriate.

Where a student is not able to attend school for a prolonged period of time due to a medical condition or illness, the school in collaboration with parents provides resources to contribute to the student's continuum of learning where possible.

The Catholic Schools Office monitors each school's compliance with student attendance and management of non attendance on an annual basis as a minimum, as part of the system's School Review and Development processes.

2.8 Student Satisfaction

Observations and anecdotal evidence suggest that the students of St Thomas' enjoy coming to school and value their learning. Their sense of belonging is fostered by a committed parent body and evidenced by the high level of family participation in all school activities. While there have been some student inquiries about the need for particular rules generally related to uniform, student support for the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning approach to student management indicates their commitment to accepting responsibility for the climate and tone of the school.

The students have been excited by the new resources available to them, particularly the interactive whiteboards and the classroom laptops.



3. Catholic Life and Mission

3.1 Catholic Heritage

The Sisters of St Joseph from Mount Street, North Sydney were the foundational teachers at St Thomas' Catholic Primary School. Their continued presence until 1979 gave the school a charism that has endured to the present day.

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart initial formation community, which moved to Willoughby in 2005, continue to inspire and influence our school community. Their motto, 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved! Forever!', complements the tradition of the Sisters of St Joseph and has continued to enhance the strong partnership between school and parish.

3.2 Religious Life of the School

St Thomas' liturgies are rich in tradition and are enhanced by the full and active participation of the children from Kindergarten to Year 6. Throughout the year the whole school gathers to celebrate feast days and special events in the tradition of our faith, usually in a mass or a Liturgy of the Word. Each class has a turn to prepare one of these celebrations and to participate in a special way. The celebration of whole school masses and class masses throughout the year has provided an opportunity for each child to contribute meaningfully and respond to the call to Catholic discipleship.

The parish based Sacramental program is fully supported by the school, with many parents volunteering to lead groups.

The school prayer is recited each week at Monday morning assembly.

The parent community is supported through reflections each week in the school newsletter.

3.3 The School in the Life of the Parish and the Diocese

The beginning of the school year mass is held on a Sunday early in the school year. It is a joint celebration of school and parish communities which highlights the collaborative relationship between school and parish.

The school fostered parish community ties through regular participation at parish masses, and the availability of school facilities and resources have encouraged wider parish participation at events such as the E- Conference on St Luke.

The ordination of a new priest which took place in St Thomas' Church, Willoughby saw parish and school communities become involved in the preparations for the ordination and the celebrations which followed.

3.4 Catholic Worldview

As a Catholic school, St Thomas' seeks to strengthen a shared understanding of the central purpose of Catholic education- to build a community of disciples of Jesus. The school has maintained a commitment both within and beyond school life through involvement in the Eucharist and the traditions of the Church. Continued involvement in issues of social justice has highlighted the dignity of all and respect for human rights. A range of fundraising and educational awareness activities have supported such projects as Caritas Project Compassion, World Missions, The Bushfire Appeal and our local St Vincent de Paul.

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 2009 the school continued to implement the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program through continued teaching of procedures to students, teachers and parents via staff meetings, newsletters, the establishment of the PBL committee and regular coaching sessions. An audit of practices in November confirmed the continuing successful implementation of the program.

4.3 Pastoral Care of Families

Both formal and informal support structures for families have been initiated where necessary throughout 2009. These have included referrals to individual counselling and group programs with a special focus (eg. Seasons For Growth, Rock and Water, Stop! Think! Do!),

Practical community help such as meal rosters, prayer circles, car pools, clothing and financial assistance has been coordinated by the designated Parents' and Friends' Pastoral Care Co-ordinator and the Principal. In some instances families were linked to other support agencies within the local community such as counsellors, paediatricians, psychologists and Centacare.

Parent Education programs on Effective Behaviour Management for Young Children, Cyber Bullying, Anti-Bullying Presentations, Supporting Your Child's Literacy Development have been well attended.

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.

4.5 Occupational Health and Safety

Each school is required to implement and comply with the Diocesan School System Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS). This system reflects the current statutory requirements for OHS and complies with the Australian Standard for OHS Management Systems. The OHSMS adopted by the Catholic Schools Office for Broken Bay Systemic Schools has been designed to address general health, safety and welfare matters and also to take account of specific issues that apply to school communities. The management system supports the provision of a 'safe and supportive' environment for all students as well as taking into account the health, safety and welfare of staff, visitors and contractors to the school site.

Principals, in consultation with the relevant Catholic Schools Office personnel, are responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with OHS legislation and for the implementation of the management system in keeping with the Catholic Schools Office's Annual OHS Plan. External OHS system audits are conducted across a sample of schools each year to validate the implementation of the management system.



5. Excellence in Teaching and Learning

5.1 Quality Teaching and Learning

The curriculum at St Thomas' is underpinned by the Religious Education Curriculum which is central to student learning. It is supported by a Positive Behaviour for Learning approach to student management.

In 2009 the focus for curriculum development was on mathematics with a visiting specialist regularly meeting with teachers and visiting their classrooms. This was supported by staff meetings which focussed on catering for gifted students in the area of mathematics.

The introduction of interactive whiteboards into all Year 1 to Year 6 classrooms had a significant impact on learning. Both students and teachers were keen to develop new skills and apply them to learning. Consequently the use of interactive whiteboards and the integration of technology into classrooms was the focus of significant professional development throughout the year.

5.2 Student Achievement

2009 was the second year of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy. Several points should be noted:

- **In Year 3** students in Band 1 are working below the national minimum standard. Students in Band 2 are working at the national minimum standard. Students in Bands 3 – 6 are working above the national minimum standard.
- **In Year 5** students in Band 3 are working below the national minimum standard. Students in Band 4 are working at the national minimum standard. Students in Bands 5 – 8 are working above the national minimum standard.
- In the 2009 cohort, there were 53 students in Year 3 and 14 students in Year 5.
- Students who were exempted from any test were deemed not to have met the National Minimum Standard in that test area.

Detail on school performance is provided in the following tables. Band distributions and percentages of students achieving at or above 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.



Band Distributions (%) – Year 3

			Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	2009	School	2	8	6	25	11	49	98
		State	3	9	17	22	21	26	96
		National	4	11	18	23	20	22	94
	2008	School	2	0	7	11	39	41	96
		State	4	10	17	24	23	21	95
		National	6	12	18	23	22	18	93
Writing	2009	School	0	0	4	13	43	40	100
		State	2	5	13	29	32	19	97
		National	3	6	15	30	29	16	96
	2008	School	2	0	9	7	45	36	96
		State	2	5	13	28	31	22	98
		National	3	6	16	29	27	17	95
Spelling	2009	School	0	2	13	21	38	26	100
		State	4	7	16	24	23	25	95
		National	6	9	19	25	20	19	92
	2008	School	2	2	7	23	36	30	96
		State	3	7	16	26	25	22	96
		National	6	10	19	26	22	16	93
Grammar & Punctuation	2009	School	2	4	6	19	26	43	98
		State	4	8	13	21	24	30	95
		National	6	9	14	21	23	26	93
	2008	School	0	5	9	14	30	43	100
		State	4	9	16	24	24	23	95
		National	7	11	17	23	21	19	91
Numeracy	2009	School	2	6	17	21	25	30	98
		State	3	10	20	27	22	16	96
		National	4	12	23	27	20	12	94
	2008	School	2	2	14	27	30	25	98
		State	2	9	20	28	23	17	97
		National	3	11	23	28	21	12	95

Consistent with past years, the performance of children at St Thomas' in Bands 5 and 6 was significantly higher than both the state and national results in all areas apart from Reading. A distinct increase in the proportion of students attaining Band 6 in Reading is to be celebrated. It should be noted that in Reading a larger than expected number of students achieved Band 4, subsequently reducing the number of students in Band 5. It is our aim to identify the cause of this and develop programs to remediate this situation for these students.

Professional development has been provided for all teachers focusing on Reading, especially the explicit teaching of comprehension through the use of the 3H strategy, reciprocal teaching and visualising and verbalising.

The whole school numeracy project has been refocused this year to better meet student needs as identified through NAPLAN data from 2008 and 2009.



Band Distributions (%) – Year 5

			Band 3 (-)	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	2009	School	0	7	7	57	21	7	100
		State	5	12	19	25	22	15	94
		National	7	13	21	25	21	13	92
	2008	School	0	4	17	52	9	17	100
		State	6	12	23	26	20	12	94
		National	8	14	24	26	18	9	91
Writing	2009	School	0	0	7	36	29	29	100
		State	4	10	26	33	19	8	95
		National	6	12	27	31	17	7	93
	2008	School	0	0	0	43	43	13	100
		State	4	10	24	31	20	9	95
		National	6	12	25	29	18	8	92
Spelling	2009	School	0	0	14	36	43	7	100
		State	4	10	22	26	21	15	95
		National	6	13	26	26	18	10	92
	2008	School	0	0	30	22	35	13	100
		State	5	10	22	29	22	12	95
		National	7	13	25	28	18	8	92
Grammar & Punctuation	2009	School	0	0	0	29	36	36	100
		State	5	10	18	25	22	19	94
		National	6	11	20	26	21	15	92
	2008	School	0	4	13	26	22	35	100
		State	5	10	20	26	21	16	94
		National	7	11	21	26	20	13	91
Numeracy	2009	School	0	0	7	36	43	14	100
		State	3	11	24	28	19	14	96
		National	4	14	27	28	17	8	94
	2008	School	0	9	13	43	26	9	100
		State	5	15	26	26	17	10	94
		National	6	17	29	26	14	7	93

Consistent with past years the performance of children at St Thomas' in Bands 7 and 8 was significantly higher than both the state and national scores. A distinct increase in the proportion of students attaining Bands 7 and 8 in Numeracy is to be celebrated. It should be noted that in Reading a larger than expected number of students achieved Band 6 which reduced the number of students in Band 7 and 8. It is our aim to identify the cause of this and develop programs to remediate this situation for these and future students.

All Year 5 students achieved at or above the national minimum in all test areas.

Professional development has been provided for all teachers focussing on Reading, especially the explicit teaching of comprehension through the use of the 3H strategy, reciprocal teaching and visualising and verbalising.

Despite a solid performance in Year 5 numeracy the whole school numeracy project has been refocussed this year to better meet the needs as identified through analysis of past NAPLAN data.

5.3 Extracurricular Activities

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



5.4 Professional Learning

Teachers at St Thomas' are committed to preparing students for the 21st century. With this focus they have attended courses in Leading School Wide Change, Boys' Education and Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL). An integrated inquiry-based approach to curriculum continues to support the latest research in providing outcomes.

Professional learning in 2009 has been embedded in mathematics.

Consultants have presented an alternate approach to differentiation and led teachers in reflecting on their current practice and pedagogy.



6. Strategic Initiatives

6.1 2009 Priorities and Achievements

A number of significant planned priorities were achieved in 2009.

The installation of interactive whiteboards in ten classrooms and the purchase of a portable interactive whiteboard provided a focus for professional development during the first part of the year. Continued professional learning in the current use of ICLT to support teaching and learning was available to staff throughout the year. This was facilitated through specialist trainers/consultants, CSO personnel, and the school's ICLT specialist teacher.

The school webpage was officially launched in mid June. This complements the intranet Parent Page on CEnet which is only accessible by password.

In Term 3 the engagement of a mathematics specialist re-energised professional development in the area of programming and differentiation for learning in mathematics, using the data provided by the NAPLAN results.

Further development of the play equipment was carried out at the beginning of the year.

Throughout 2009 parent workshops were held to enhance understanding of contemporary educational practices. These included afternoon and evening sessions on teaching literacy in the classroom, interactive whiteboard demonstrations, and Positive Behaviour for Learning policy and implementation procedures.

6.2 2010 Priorities and Challenges

Priorities for 2010 include:

- continuing development of mathematics programming to implement consistent approach to teaching and learning which has at its foundation the achievement of appropriate mathematical growth points by all children
- developing a consistent approach to Religious Education programming which makes explicit desired outcomes for students through high quality, rigorous assessment tasks
- continued development in integrating technology into the classroom, in particular interactive whiteboards and the use of Web 2.0 technologies.
- reviewing the school K-6 literacy plan to identify and meet the needs for professional development of staff in order to facilitate consistent implementation.



7. Parent Participation

7.1 Introduction

Parents are the first educators of children and this special role is acknowledged by the school as we build on the work of parents. There is a long tradition of parent involvement in the school community at St Thomas' and this is supported by frequent communication between staff and parents, both formally and informally.

Throughout 2009 parents gave generously of their time to support school initiatives, run functions, and assist teachers.

The P&F worked tirelessly to support the principal and the staff, organising a number of functions to encourage community building, including the annual Art and Craft Show which is the major fundraising event for the school.

Additional information can be found on our website at <http://www.stwdbb.catholic.edu.au>

7.2 Parent Satisfaction

From discussions and informal feedback it is evident that the St Thomas' parents value the cohesive and caring school community where clear boundaries are understood and shared. They have confidence in the leadership of the school and the quality of the teaching and learning.

In 2009 the limitations of available play space was a concern for a number of parents. This matter was discussed thoroughly and arrangements made with the local council for the school to use two large, green lawn areas nearby for lunchtime play in 2010.

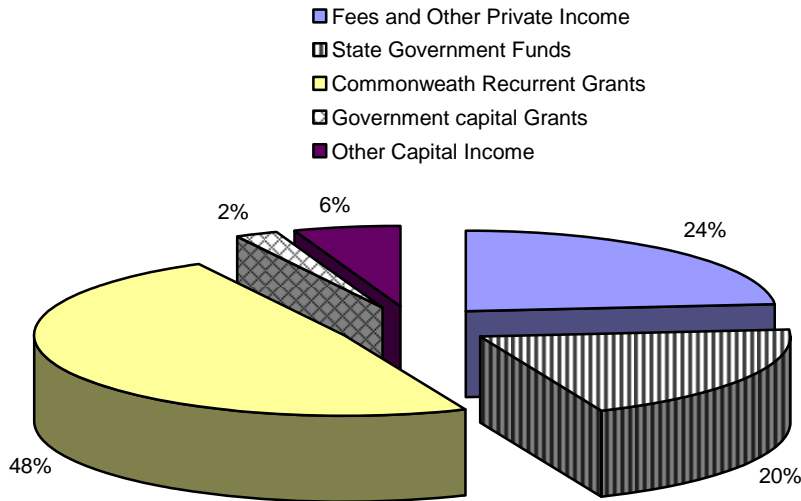


8. Financial Report

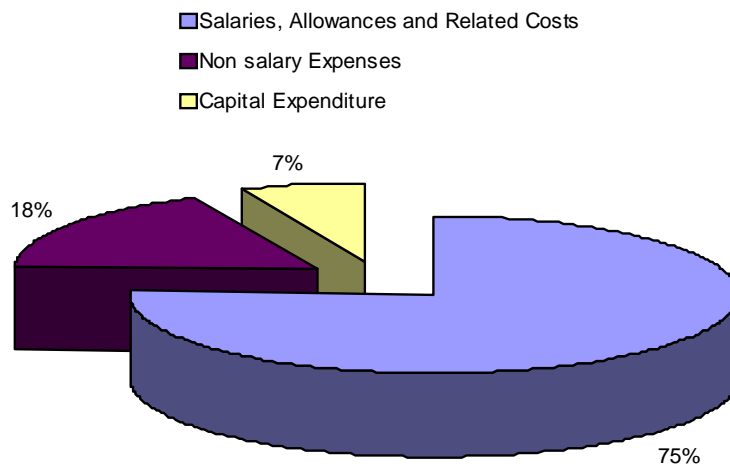
Consistent with Board of Studies requirements, financial income and expenditure for this school is shown in the graphs below.

Diocesan system financial reporting is found in the Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office Annual Report at <http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/resources/annrep.html>

Income



Expenditure



The contents of this annual report have been validated by the Schools Consultant, Diann Hynes.