



# St Thomas' Catholic Primary School Willoughby

## 2011 Annual Report



Principal: Mrs Jenny McKeown

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## **1. Message from 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 to its students and for its sense of community and pastoral care. This report provides an overview of activities and events during the 2011 school year which contributed to the achievement of our goals and the continued development of our Catholic school community. 2011 was a full and eventful year and we are proud of the broad range of our successes. Our Project Based Learning in Year 5 and 6 created an inspiring and motivating learning environment rich with technology. These included excellent NAPLAN results, successful debating teams in the Australian Independent Schools Debating Association Competition, 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 family, school, parish and the wider community and to raise funds for the benefit of our children's overall development and learning. In 2011 the P&F hosted a number of events for all of its members with the aim of building a friendly and faith filled community; providing practical help and support to the Principal and staff; and supporting parents and friends with their parental and pastoral care responsibilities. Achievements in 2011 included the continued funding of Athletics membership for all students, contributions to the cost of lunchtime clubs and co-curricular activities, reading resources, representative uniforms, the purchase of a school branded marquee and a very successful Art and Craft Show.

#### **St Thomas' Parents & Friends President**

### **1.3 Message from the Student Body**

As Year 6 school leaders in 2011 we have assisted the smooth running of the school, leading school liturgies and supporting Kindergarten Buddies in their first year at school.

During the year we held a St Vincent de Paul Winter Sleep-in in our Parish Hall, a Great Shave Day and a coloured hair day to raise money for community causes.

A major fund-raising function held annually at St Thomas' is the St Thomas' Art and Craft Show. As leaders we were able to assist the caterers serving the guests.

#### **St Thomas' Year 6 School Leaders**



## 2. School Profile

### 2.1 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2011:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
160	149	28	0	309

\*Language background other than English

### 2.2 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.

### 2.3 Staff Profile

The NSW government requires that this report detail 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
20	0	0	20

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.

### 2.4 Teacher Attendance and Retention Rates

The average teacher attendance rate during 2011 was 95%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2010 to 2011 was 100%.

### 2.5 Teacher Satisfaction

During the 2011 school year the staff were surveyed about the well-being of the student body. This survey rated the school environment in terms of social and emotional well-being. It allowed staff to rate the degree to which they felt the St Thomas' environment was supportive of students and staff.



Overall the survey indicated that staff rated very highly the work they do in working with the students and families in order to promote a safe, supportive and respectful school.

The areas of need were related to the leadership roles in this area not being clearly defined and the nature or quality of the collaborative partnership between the school and parents or carers. Bullying was identified as sometimes occurring by 63% of staff. This is a significant result and will be specifically surveyed to gain more detail in 2012.

Staff expressed satisfaction with the professional development opportunities offered in 2011.

## 2.6 Student Attendance and Retention Rates

Year	Average student attendance rate (%)
K	93
1	96
2	91
3	93
4	91
5	96
6	93

The average student attendance rate for 2011 was 93%.

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.

## **2.7 Student Satisfaction**

In 2011 Project Based Learning was trialled in Stage 3 at St Thomas'. The senior students expressed very positive feelings towards the content of their learning, the mode of curriculum delivery (largely technology based) and the public audience for their finished projects.

Leadership roles for the Year 6 students were trialled in 2011 with efforts made to encourage student voice in the development process. At the conclusion of 2011 the Year 6 students were able to formally write the role descriptions for their own roles and include ideas for future development.



### **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 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 the Willoughby Parish in 2005, continue to inspire and influence our school community. Their motto 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved! Forever!' compliments 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 Grade 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. Attendance at Friday morning Mass along with the parish community has fostered closer ties with the broader community this year. Each grade attends a Sunday Mass as a grade once a year and is actively involved in the preparation, participation and celebration of that Mass.

The parish based Sacramental program is fully supported by the school, with many parents volunteering to lead groups. The school prayer is prayed each week at Monday morning assembly.

The parent community are supported through reflections each week in the school newsletter. <http://www.dbb.org.au/schools/StThomaswilloughby/>

#### **3.3 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, Catholic Mission, Mini-Missionaries, the Greatest Shave, St Vincent de Paul Christmas hampers and winter appeals. In 2011 a special outreach program was established with Wadeye, a remote Aboriginal community. Teachers, parents and staff and our priests have been able to visit Wadeye and both the school and local businesses have been able to fundraise to support the Children's centre and the Women's centre in Wadeye.

#### **3.4 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. All teachers are currently fully accredited to teach RE. During 2011 one staff member completed a Master of Theology (RE) through the Broken Bay Institute. One staff member attended an information evening for prospective Religious Education Co-ordinators.

All staff attended a staff development day run by Fr Peter Hendricks msc focusing on the spirituality and charism of the school. Part of this day included all staff being trained as Eucharistic Ministers. This will enable them to participate more fully in school and Grade Masses. Several staff meetings have focused on sacred space and prayer.



## 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 2011 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 and the PBL committee which includes parents and staff.

### 4.3 Pastoral Care of Families

Both formal and informal support structures for families have been implemented where necessary throughout 2011. These have included referrals to individual counselling, group programs with a special focus (eg. the school's Language Project {The Language of Pragmatics – small group sessions}).

Practical community help such as meal rosters, prayer circles, car pools, clothing and financial assistance has been co-ordinated 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.

Surveying of staff, parents and children in the area of well-being was carried out in 2011 and the data generated has been used to identify the areas of need for our School Improvement Goal in this area.

### 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 CSO 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 CSO 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 and is supported by a Positive Behaviour for Learning approach to student management.

In 2011, the focus on improving teaching and learning was aligned with the Annual Goals of the St Thomas' School Improvement Plan. The focus for curriculum development was on Numeracy with a visiting specialist regularly meeting with the Mathematics co-ordinator to plan professional development meetings which focused on identifying the needs of students using an individual clinical interview in the area of Number in Mathematics. Over a series of staff meetings, follow up training in conducting Diagnostic Interviews in the Number Strand of Mathematics was provided to each teacher together with training in plotting students on growth points. Guidance was also provided in programming to assist the students to progress to the next growth point through differentiated tasks.

A second major professional development focus was in Literacy, in particular Writing (Grammar) and inferential comprehension in Reading.

### 5.2 Student Achievement

Students in Years 3 and 5 sat the *National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) in May this year. NAPLAN assessment results provide valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of these results assists school planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs.

Several points should be noted:

- **In Year 3**, students placed in Band 1 are achieving below the national minimum standard. Students in Band 2 are achieving at the national minimum standard. Students in Bands 3 – 6 are performing at a standard deemed to be above the national minimum standard. Students in Bands 5 and 6 are "at proficiency".
- **In Year 5** students in Band 3 are achieving below the national minimum standard. Students in Band 4 are achieving at the national minimum standard. Students in Bands 5 – 8 are performing above the national minimum standard. Students in Bands 7 and 8 are "at proficiency".
- Students who were exempted from any test were deemed not to have met the national minimum standard in that test area and are not included in band distributions.
- State data for band distributions is sourced from the School Measurement and Reporting Toolkit (SMART2), developed by NSW Department of Education and Training. All national data and state figures for the percentage at or above national minimum are sourced from the NAPLAN preliminary summary report published by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). All school data is sourced from SMART2. Because figures are rounded and exempted students are not included in Band distributions, percentages may not add up to 100.
- In the 2011 cohort, there were 45 students in Year 3 and 23 students in Year 5.





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 shown separately for Years 3 and 5. Additional information can also be accessed from the My School website (<http://www.myschool.edu.au/>).

### Band Distributions (%) – Year 3

		Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 (+)	% at or above national minimum
<b>Reading</b>	State	3.7	10.5	18.2	21.2	17.5	29.0	95.4
	National	4.1	10.4	17.3	21.2	20.8	24.2	93.9
	School	0.0	0.0	2.4	11.9	21.4	64.3	100
<b>Writing</b>	State	2.0	4.0	12.4	20.7	43.0	17.8	96.4
	National	3.0	5.3	14.5	29.1	30.2	15.9	95.0
	School	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.8	52.4	42.9	100
<b>Spelling</b>	State	3.6	6.9	18.3	20.6	25.9	24.6	94.6
	National	5.2	9.7	17.7	24.7	22.6	18.1	92.8
	School	0.0	0.0	2.4	16.7	38.1	42.9	100
<b>Gr. &amp; Punct.</b>	State	4.5	6.7	15.1	24.2	21.9	27.6	94.6
	National	5.0	8.8	15.0	21.0	21.6	26.7	93.0
	School	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.0	26.2	54.8	100
<b>Numeracy</b>	State	2.8	11.8	19.7	26.5	21.5	17.6	96.7
	National	2.4	11.4	23.8	27.3	19.9	13.3	95.7
	School	0.0	0.0	11.6	14.0	32.6	41.9	100

Consistent with past years the performance of Year 3 children at St Thomas' in Bands 5 and 6 was significantly higher than both the State and National results in all areas. A distinct increase in the proportion of students attaining Band 6 in all areas other than Writing and Grammar & Punctuation, where our performance was already strong, is to be celebrated. It should be noted that in Reading a larger than expected number of students (64.3%) achieved Band 6. It is our aim to identify the needs of students in Bands 3 and 4 and continue to increase students' representation in Bands 5 and 6 in 2012.

A major professional development focus during 2011 was in the area of Writing. The Writing results were outstanding with 95.3% of the Year 3 cohort achieving Bands 5 and 6. Professional development has also been provided for all teachers focusing on Reading, especially the explicit teaching of inferential comprehension. With 85.7% of the Year 3 cohort achieving in the top two bands this strategy would appear to have been successful.

Outstanding gains have been made in Numeracy this year with no students being represented in the bottom two bands and a significant decrease in Bands 3 and 4. During 2010/2011 significant emphasis has been placed on identifying student needs in Numeracy using a clinical interview which was in response to previous years' student performance. Last year's goal, in line with the School Improvement Plan and the Diocesan Numeracy focus has resulted in an increased number of students in Bands 5 and 6 with 74.5% of the Year 3 students attaining the top two bands in overall Numeracy. We will identify the needs of the students in Bands 3, 4 and 5 and endeavour to keep raising our baseline performance for 2012.



### Band Distributions (%) – Year 5

		Band 3 (-)	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 (+)	% at or above national minimum
<b>Reading</b>	State	7.2	11.0	26.0	21.0	19.2	15.6	93.1
	National	6.7	13.8	23.2	25.7	18.1	10.7	91.5
	School	4.5	9.1	9.1	9.1	22.7	45.5	95
<b>Writing</b>	State	4.5	7.2	30.9	30.7	17.4	9.3	94.8
	National	6.0	11.9	26.5	30.7	16.3	6.6	92.1
	School	0.0	0.0	9.5	23.8	28.6	38.1	100
<b>Spelling</b>	State	4.8	8.9	24.4	26.8	21.6	13.6	93.8
	National	6.8	12.7	24.7	28.0	17.9	8.1	91.3
	School	0.0	0.0	19.0	38.1	23.8	19.0	100
<b>Gr. &amp; Punct.</b>	State	6.5	8.7	20.7	23.0	24.8	16.3	93.5
	National	6.3	11.0	20.5	25.3	20.1	15.0	91.9
	School	0.0	0.0	14.3	9.5	19.0	57.1	100
<b>Numeracy</b>	State	4.1	9.8	27.7	29.3	13.7	15.4	95.4
	National	3.8	13.5	27.8	28.2	16.1	8.8	94.4
	School	0.0	9.1	13.6	31.8	27.3	18.2	100

The performance of Year 5 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 Band 8 in Reading, Writing, Grammar and Punctuation and Numeracy is to be celebrated. Grammar and Punctuation, Reading and Writing are shown to be the strong strands in Literacy with 76%, 68.2% and 66.7% respectively of students performing in the top two bands. This trend will hopefully continue due to the professional development emphasis on explicit teaching of the twelve comprehension skill areas. Whilst these results are pleasing we will continue to use the analysis of the NAPLAN results to inform programming in order to target areas of weakness. Whilst only one student is represented in Band 3 (in Reading), there is also a small representation in Band 4. These students will be monitored and supported in their learning.

During 2010/2011 significant emphasis has been placed on identifying student needs in Numeracy using a clinical interview. It is anticipated that this will continue to result in a reduction in students' performances in Bands 4 and 5 and a subsequent increase in students in Bands 6 – 8. The strategic focus to improve consistency of practice in Numeracy will target students at risk while enhancing the learning and skill development of all students. Students in the top band will be given enrichment opportunities through the Australian Mathematics Olympiad.

The NAPLAN results for Year 5 indicate the current teaching programs and intervention strategies are working effectively to support students' skills and knowledge across all facets of Literacy and Numeracy. These approaches will be continued in 2012 with the expectation that students will continue to develop and extend their skills and understandings in these crucial Key Learning Areas.

### 5.3 Extra Curricula 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 whole school professional development has covered assessment of number skills in Numeracy, planning learning for differentiated needs in Numeracy and teaching for improved inferential comprehension.



## **6. Strategic Initiatives**

### **6.1 2011 Priorities and Achievements**

The school priorities for 2011 were to:

- Increase the range of student leadership roles and initiatives within the school.
- Develop a whole school approach to student well-being.
- Inform the learning and teaching of Numeracy through teacher and support staff understanding and use of clinical interviews to identify learning needs of students.

The development of student leadership roles at St Thomas' has had a significant impact on retention of boys in Years 5 and 6. The informal leadership displayed by Upper primary students has also been very impressive.

Work in the area of well-being has focused on re-establishing the Positive Behaviour for Learning Program (PBL) during 2011.

In the area of teaching and learning the professional development provided for staff and the dedication in the implementation of change by staff has reaped great results for the students across the school.

### **6.2 2012 Priorities and Challenges**

The school priorities for 2012 are to:

- Unpack the Charism of our founding Order on which to build student leadership.
- Improve the performance of students K – 6 in the Number strand.
- Develop a whole school approach to student well-being in line with the CSO Pastoral Policy.



## **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 2011 parents gave generously of their time to support school initiatives, run functions, and to 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.

Parent Numeracy helpers were trained through participation in a four week input and practical experience course in Term 1. Literacy helpers were trained through participation in a four week course in Term 2, 2011.

### **7.2 Parent Satisfaction**

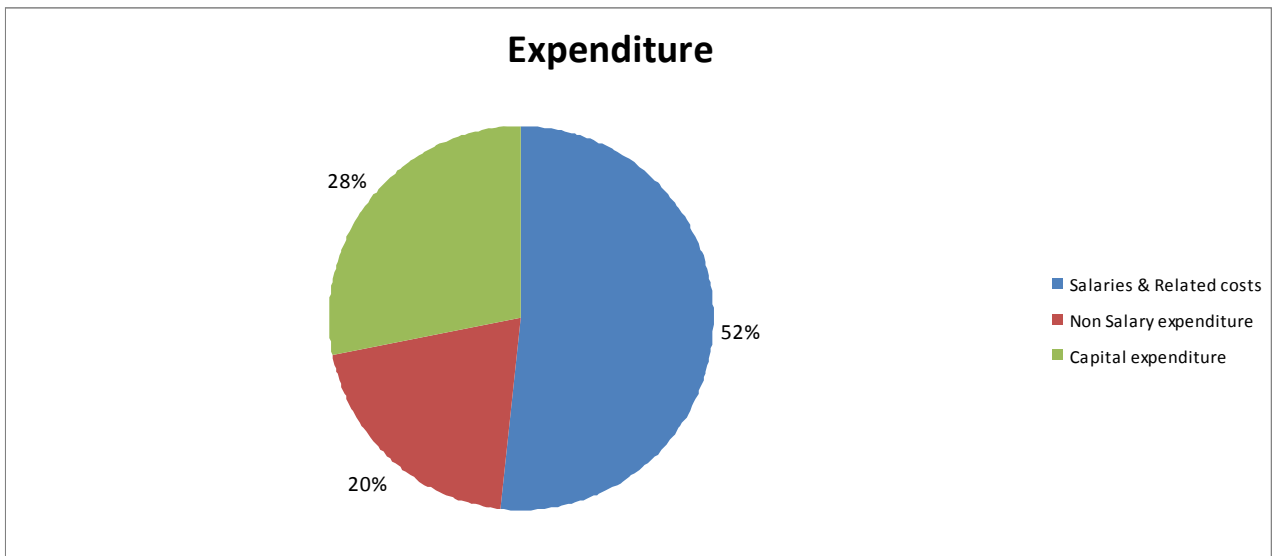
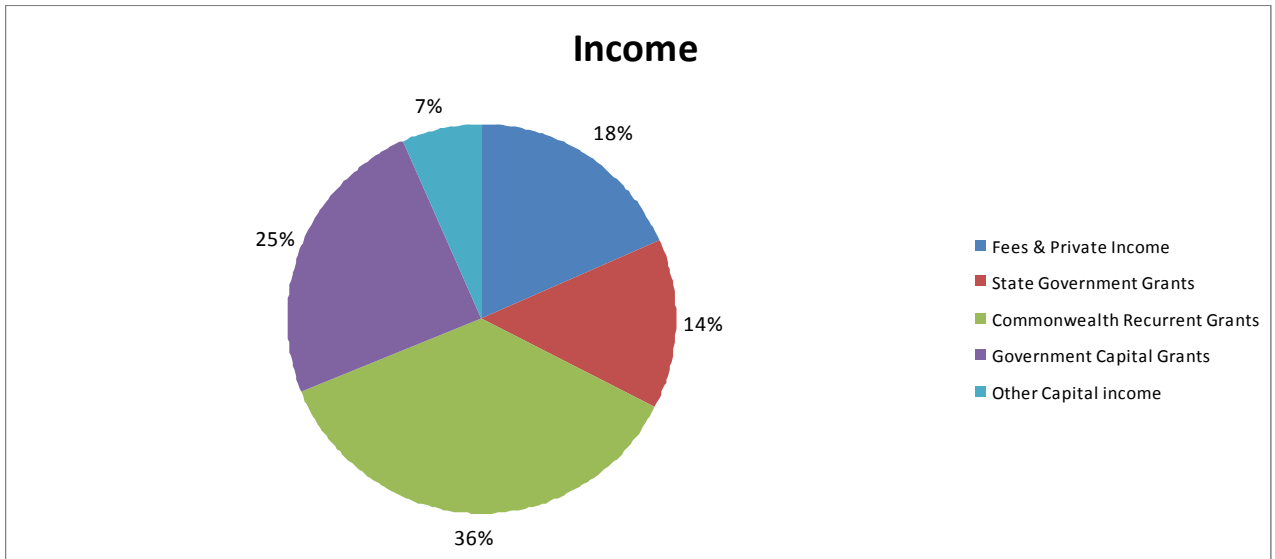
There has been a distinct increase in the positive feedback to the school from parents regarding the nature of change in the Teaching and Learning area. This feedback has been received by email, letter and verbal comments during impromptu or formal meetings.

The change in curriculum delivery in Stage 3 has resulted in significant positive feedback from parents and students alike. The high use of technology for all students has been commented on regularly.



## 8. Financial Report

Consistent with Board of Studies requirements, financial income and expenditure for this school is shown in the graphs below. More detailed financial data is available on the "myschool" website at <http://www.myschool.edu.au>. 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>



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