



St Thomas' Catholic Primary School Willoughby

2013 Annual Report



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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 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 providing an excellent, well balanced education for students and for its sense of community and pastoral care. This report provides an overview of activities and events during the 2013 school year which contributed to the achievement of our goals and the continued development of our Catholic school community. 2013 was a full and eventful year and we are proud of the broad range of our successes. These included excellent NAPLAN results, successful debating teams in the Australian Independent Schools Debating Association Competition, sports representation at State level, and an outstandingly successful Art and Craft Show. The introduction of iPads across the school in Term 4 has seen a significant change in the use of technology across the school.

1.2 Message from the Parent Body

St Thomas Primary Parents & Friends (P&F) had another terrific year in 2013. It continued to nurture the friendly and welcoming community by way of hosting a number of functions, including the Welcome Party at the beginning of the year and the inaugural Family Fun day which was a resounding success. Mothers' Day Mass, Fathers' Day Mass and Grandparents' Day Mass were paired with breakfasts and morning teas, also hosted by the P&F.

Executive and general meetings were held each term, with a key topic and/or speaker presented at each general meeting to encourage greater attendance. In addition, the meeting times of the Winter Terms were moved to 9:00am to accommodate those parents finding it difficult to attend in the evening. Both initiatives proved popular and these will continue next year. At these meetings parents have the opportunity and are encouraged to raise any issues they may have. We are happy to report that minimal and minor issues were raised.

Once more, the annual Art and Craft Show held in October was a success, raising funds to provide resources and opportunities for enriching the learning environment of the school. The Pastoral Care committee continued its role to support parents and carers in need, with the assistance of members throughout the community. A dedicated executive member attended the Diocesan Parent Council meetings on the school's behalf and in turn provided feedback to the school that will allow the P&F to enhance its function moving forward.

President of the Parents and Friends Committee

1.3 Message from the Student Body

As Year 6 school captains we have shown great responsibility by being role models to the younger students in our Buddy programs, raising the flag each morning and handing out awards at assemblies. During the year we participated in the St Thomas' Art and Craft Show, Crazy days for charities, surf skills, visited Canberra, built Billy carts and visited Healthy Harold in Life Education. We have enjoyed being given many leadership opportunities this year including escorting visitors around our school, leading the first Student Representative Council (SRC) and performing in our Christmas Concert at the Chatswood Concourse. An amazing year!



2. School Profile

2.1 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2013:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
160	166	51	0	326

*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:

- a) have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines;
- b) 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;
- c) 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
21	0	0	21

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 2013 was 96%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2012 to 2013 was 95%.



2.5 Teacher Satisfaction

During Term 3 the staff were surveyed in preparation for School Review in 2014. The survey covered five key areas:

Staff Welfare	Goal Congruence	Leadership Support	Staff Morale & Attitude	Professional Learning & Development
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In each of these areas the staff scored the school in the top category of 'very high'. The report indicated the School is in 'good' overall health from a staff perspective.

Evaluation of the School Improvement Goals for 2013 by the whole staff indicated a high level of incorporation of new learning into professional practice and an increased involvement of each staff member in the corporate life of the school.

2.6 Student Attendance and Retention Rates

Year	Average student attendance rate (%)
K	98
1	97
2	99
3	97
4	97
5	98
6	98

The average student attendance rate for 2013 was 98%.

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; and
- 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

The senior students in Years 5 and 6 were surveyed in Term 3 across the following areas:

Overall Satisfaction	Catholic Practices, Philosophy & Faith	Teaching & Learning	Student Pastoral Care	Affinity
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The students scored the school as being 'very high' in in the areas of Teaching and Learning and Student Pastoral Care and 'high' in the remaining three areas.



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. They continued their presence until 1979. The school has initiated a revival of the charism left by the Sisters.

3.2 Religious Life of the School

St Thomas' holds liturgies that 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. The school prayer is prayed each week at Monday morning assembly.

The parent community is 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, St Vincent de Paul, Mini-Missionaries, the Greatest Shave, St Vincent de Paul Christmas hampers and Winter appeals. An outreach program with Wadeye, a remote Aboriginal community was continued. Products were sold at a special stall at the annual Arts and Crafts show. A new initiative was started with the Parish becoming involved in LETS (Letefoho East Timor Support). A teacher went with a group from the Parish to visit the area. Support in 2014 will be ongoing.

3.4 Professional Learning in Catholic Life and Mission

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established an [Accreditation Policy for Staff in the Diocesan School System in respect to the Mission of the Church](#) which is implemented by all systemic schools in the Diocese.

All staff attended a one day retreat at Mary MacKillop House in North Sydney. Following this, staff, parents and senior students worked to renew the school Mission Statement.

Three teachers are enrolled to complete the Graduate Certificate in Theology, while another teacher is completing the Masters in Theology (through Newcastle University).



4. Pastoral Care

4.1 Diocesan Policies

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established [Pastoral Care](#) and [Behaviour Management and Student Discipline](#) Policies including Student Welfare and Anti-Bullying, 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 2013 the school continued to implement the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program through 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 2013. These have included referrals to individual counselling and group programs with a special focus (e.g. 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 CatholicCare.

4.4 Resolving Issues

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

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

4.5 Work Health and Safety

Each school is required to implement and comply with the Diocesan School System Work Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS). This system reflects the current statutory requirements for WHS and complies with the Australian Standard for WHS Management Systems. The WHSMS 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 WHS legislation and for the implementation of the management system in keeping with the Catholic Schools Office's Annual WHS Plan. External WHS 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 (PBL) approach to student management.

In 2013, 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 the Mathematics co-ordinator, Principal and staff from the Catholic Schools Office planning and presenting professional learning which focused on identifying the needs of students using the Mathematics Assessment Interview (MAI) in the area of Number in Mathematics. The school trained two specialist teachers and two leaders to deliver the Extending Mathematical Understanding (EMU) intervention program. All children in the school were tested using the MAI, and vulnerable students in Year 1 were offered the EMU program 5 days per week for Terms 2 and 3. Guidance was also provided in programming, grouping students and sharing teaching and learning activities to assist conceptual understanding and progress to the next growth point for all students K - 6. The emphasis of our professional learning was on developing differentiated tasks with a strong emphasis on point of need teaching.

In 2013, 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 Literacy with the Assistant Principal, Principal and staff from the Catholic Schools Office planning and presenting professional learning which focused on identifying the needs of students in Writing in Year 3. Students were assessed and grouped according to demonstrated ability for each text type taught across the four terms. Five staff were allocated to a Writing Block every Monday allowing point of need small group instruction. Two staff development days provided teachers with in-depth knowledge of the content of the new K-6 English Syllabus in the teaching of Reading and Spelling.

5.2 Student Achievement

Students in Years 3 and 5 undertook tests as part of 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 Communities. All national data and state figures for the percentage at or above national minimum are sourced from the NAPLAN



Summary Report (Preliminary Results for Achievement) published by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). 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 2013 cohort, there were **(52)** students in Year 3 and **(21)** 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
Reading	State	2.8	9.7	16.3	24.6	18.7	27.9	96.3
	National	2.8	8.7	17.3	23.5	22.6	23.2	95.3
	School	0	3.7	11.1	11.1	35.2	38.9	100
Writing	State	2.0	5.5	15.2	23.1	37.0	17.2	96.1
	National	3.1	5.2	14.3	28.8	29.9	16.7	95.0
	School	0	0	1.9	3.7	44.4	50	100
Spelling	State	4.4	5.6	17.6	22.8	24.3	25.3	95.5
	National	4.2	9.2	17.2	24.9	23.0	19.5	93.9
	School	0	3.7	1.9	24.1	24.1	46.3	100
Gr. & Punct.	State	3.2	7.5	14.2	20.7	23.7	30.7	96.4
	National	2.8	7.2	14.8	22.3	24.0	27.1	95.3
	School	0	0	3.7	24.1	18.5	53.7	100
Numeracy	State	2.8	8.3	21.5	28.7	24.8	14.0	96.5
	National	2.3	9.9	23.9	30.4	20.6	11.0	95.8
	School	0	0	16.7	35.2	31.5	16.7	100

100% of students in Year 3 from St Thomas' achieved above the state and national minimums in all areas of NAPLAN. These results are indicative of the high levels of skills in these areas as well as the school's focus on ongoing assessment and ensuring that teaching and learning is planned to meet the specific needs of the students. Planning to meet specific need is clearly evident in the Writing results with the students in this cohort participating in Writing groups that specifically targeted their point of need in small groups.

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 Reading, Writing and Numeracy. There was a significant proportion of students attaining Bands 5 and 6 in all areas and students performance continues to be strong in comparison to state and national averages and these consistent results are to be celebrated and continue to be emulated. 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 2014 as well as building upon the knowledge and skills demonstrated by students in Bands 5 and 6 to ensure expected growth in the future.

A major professional learning focus in the area of Numeracy continued during 2013 with the introduction of the Mathematics Assessment Interview (MAI) as well as the Extending Mathematical Understanding (EMU) and related professional learning. The Numeracy results validated this strategic focus with the percentage of Year 3 students achieving Bands 4, 5 and 6 well above the national and state minimums. The focus on Numeracy continues in 2014 and the increased representation in the higher Bands should continue to rise.



Band Distributions (%) – Year 5

		Band 3 (-)	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	State	1.8	9.4	22.6	28.9	22.1	15.3	97.0
	National	1.9	9.9	23.4	30.0	21.9	10.9	96.2
	School	0	0	4.8	14.3	61.9	19	100
Writing	State	6.3	8.8	32.3	29.7	15.2	7.8	93.1
	National	6.4	11.8	28.1	31.8	15.0	5.1	91.7
	School	0	9.5	23.8	23.8	33.3	9.5	100
Spelling	State	5.5	8.1	21.1	27.3	24.7	13.2	94.4
	National	5.0	11.7	23.1	27.9	19.5	10.9	93.1
	School	0	4.8	9.5	47.6	19	19	100
Gr. & Punct.	State	4.6	9.3	21.8	22.3	23.1	19.0	95.8
	National	3.3	10.5	22.7	28.3	21.2	12.0	94.8
	School	4.8	0	4.8	14.3	23.8	52.4	95
Numeracy	State	5.1	15.1	25.7	26.4	13.0	14.8	94.0
	National	4.7	15.4	26.4	26.7	15.7	9.3	93.4
	School	0	4.8	9.5	33.3	42.9	9.5	100

100% of students in Year 5 from St Thomas' achieved above the state and national minimums in the areas of Reading, Writing, Spelling and Numeracy. In the areas of Grammar and Punctuation 95% were above state and national minimums. These results are indicative of the high levels of skills in these areas as well as the school's focus on ongoing assessment and ensuring that teaching and learning is planned to meet each student's point of need.

Even though there is a very small representation of students in Bands 3 or 4, this representation is well below the state and national minimums with the greater proportion of students in Bands 5 to 8. These students will continue to be monitored and supported in their learning.

Whilst these results are pleasing and place the school in a strong position when compared to like schools, as a school community we are committed to the ongoing analysis of NAPLAN results as well as other relevant data to build upon successful strategies, as well as inform areas of specific need for individual students.

The data gathered in the Mathematics Assessment Interview (MAI), implemented at St Thomas' in 2013 from Kindergarten to Year 6, will inform teachers of each child's conceptual understanding of Mathematical concepts as well as providing a clear focus for the students' next step in developing their understanding of the concepts taught.

Trends in student growth and strategies to facilitate this growth are a focus for data gathering for school improvement.

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, Junior and Senior Band, Junior and Senior Choir, 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 learning has included assessment of number skills in Numeracy, planning learning for differentiated needs in Numeracy, and teaching for improved inferential skills in Comprehension and Spelling.

Implementing Information Technology across the key learning areas has been a professional learning and mentoring focus this year, with iPads introduced along with an extensive program of teacher learning.





6. Strategic Initiatives

6.1 2013 Priorities and Achievements

The school Priorities for 2013 are to:

- Improve the students understanding of the Charism of our founding Order to build student leadership;

St Thomas now has an updated Mission Statement and increased staff knowledge of the Josephite charism flowing from the school community wide process.

- Improve student wellbeing through embedding, as cultural practice, class meetings to discuss matters and act upon issues of student well-being through the lens of 'KidsMatter';

The Student Representative Council was formally commenced in Term 4 using the new Mission Statement for each to reflect upon in order to distil issues to bring to the wider SRC meetings.

Pastoral Care is an agenda item at every weekly staff briefing increasing the shared knowledge of student need and family needs.

Positive Behaviour for Learning processes have been refined including parents in the communication from the beginning.

- administer the Mathematical Assessment Interview and analyse class data in order to improve the performance of all children as measured on the MAI;

Whole school MAI data collected, analysed and used to inform teaching. Two intervention groups were commenced in Term 2 running five days per week for those identified as the most vulnerable.

- improve Spelling results in NAPLAN by an average of 10 points, as well as improve results in Reading Comprehension in NAPLAN by an average of 10 points.

6.2 2014 Priorities and Challenges

The school priorities for 2014 are to:

- implement and embed KidsMatter to empower children to articulate their needs in the area of well-being;
- improve PBL through whole school understanding and alignment so that behaviour expectations are clear and consistent;
- develop Scope and Sequences for the new English and Mathematics Syllabi;
- improve the school average in the areas of Spelling and Reading / Comprehension;
- continue differentiated writing groups with the focus on point of need small group instruction;
- improve student understanding of church protocols;
- achieve a functioning SRC that identifies their mission with the school Mission and Vision statement; and
- establish four EMU intervention groups across Years 1 and Year 2.



7. Parent Participation

7.1 Introduction

Parents are the first educators of their 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 2013 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.

Parent Literacy helpers were trained through participation in a three week course in Term 1. Input was provided at a Term 2 Parents and Friends meeting on the Extending Mathematical Understanding Program at St Thomas'. This included take home advice for parents.

7.2 Parent Satisfaction

The parents in Years 5 and 6 were surveyed in Term 3 across the following areas:

Overall Satisfaction	Catholic Practices, Philosophy & Faith	Teaching & Learning	Student Pastoral Care	Affinity
Achieving School Mission	Facilities & Resources	Community Engagement	Leadership Direction	Communication

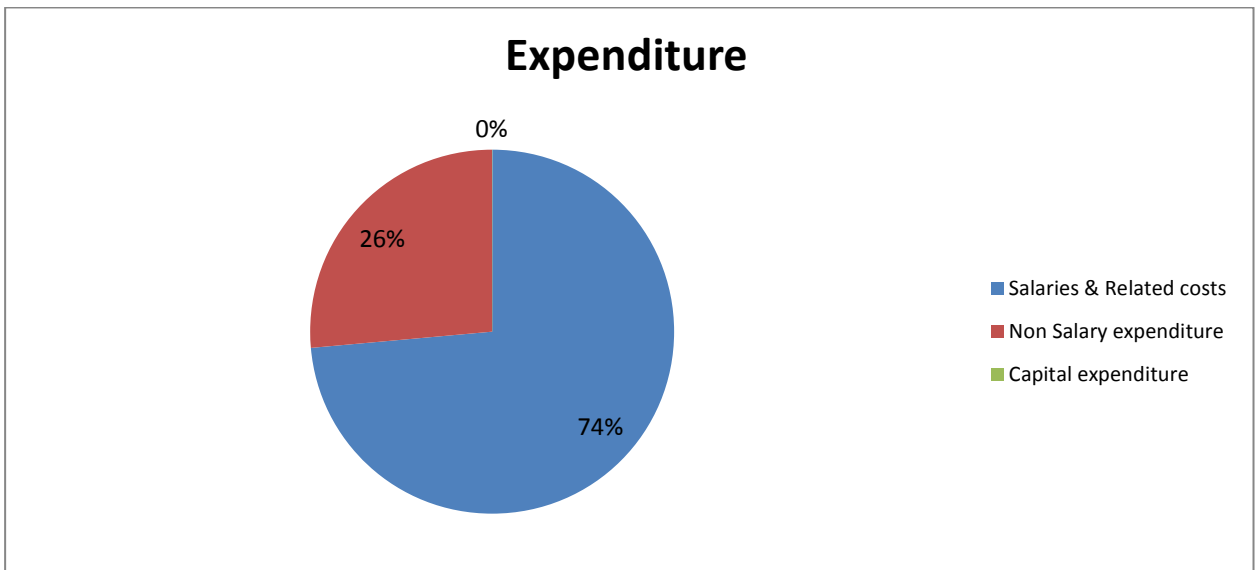
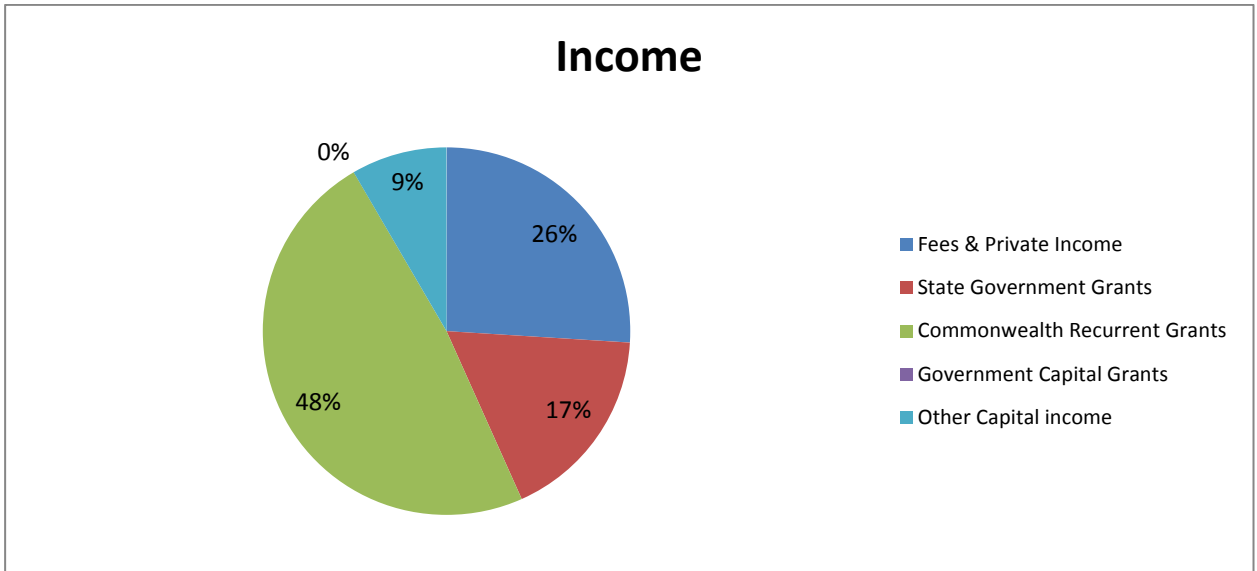
The parents scored the school as being 'very high' in the areas of Overall Satisfaction, Catholic Practices, Philosophy and Faith, Teaching and Learning and Community Engagement and high in the remaining six areas.





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 can be found in the Diocesan school system Annual Report, which will be available at <http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au>



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