



2020

ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT



St Thomas' Catholic Primary School

2 Horsley Avenue, WILLOUGHBY 2068

Principal: Mrs Jenny McKeown

Web: www.stwddb.catholic.edu.au

About this report

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School (the 'School') is registered by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and managed by Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB). CSBB as the 'approved authority' for the diocesan registration system formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act (1990), is responsible for monitoring the compliance of member schools in the manner that has been approved by the Minister of Education.

The Annual School Report (the 'Report') demonstrates accountability to regulatory bodies and CSBB. Additionally, the Report complements and is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the School community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students.

The Report provides parents and the wider community with fair, reliable and objective information about educational and financial performance measures as well as School and system policies. This information includes summary contextual data, an overview of student performance in state and national assessments, a description of the achievement of priorities in the previous year and areas for improvement. Detailed information about the School's improvement journey is documented in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) which is developed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with key stakeholders.

Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can be also be obtained from the [My School website](#).

Message from key groups in our community

Principal's Message

2020 was a challenging year for everyone, no less for the St Thomas community. Our staff proved adaptive and agile in the face of the challenges which the COVID 19 Pandemic created. We were able to move to providing remote learning swiftly despite all the platforms being relatively new to us while still provide face to face on site schooling for over 130 children every day. All teachers were needed to meet supervision requirements as each classroom could accommodate less than half of the usual number of students.

Most of our usual participation in sporting and academic competitions did not occur but we were able to run our swimming carnival in term 4 despite restrictions which required us to limit parent helpers to no student contact roles and cohorts travelling separately for short carnivals. The Mathematics Olympiad went ahead much to the delight of our Mathematicians in the senior grades.

Most significantly building work commenced on our School Advisory Team Agile Learning Spaces project. Our new efficient collaborate administration area was handed over at the end of Term 4 when work commenced on refurbishing our old administration area as three flexible learning spaces.

Parent Body Message

2020 was all set to be a fabulous year of community engagement well mapped by the Parents & Friends Association (P&F). The various committees were actively involved in coordinating so many opportunities to build on the already strong relationships that exist within the school and wider community. Fortunately, we were able to host our annual 'Welcome Night' so that many new families had a chance to kick up their heels and meet other parents and the staff at St Thomas'.

St Thomas Primary School has an active network of volunteers within the P&F Association, parent network and community, resulting in many successful social functions and a supportive pastoral care network for those families during times of need. In true St Thomas' style, the Parents & Friends Association (P&F) were not to be beaten by the hand that 2020 dealt. Whilst we were unable to host our annual The Art and Craft Show, the community rolled up their sleeves and coordinated a CoVid friendly, 'Opening Night In.' Many families gathered together in small groups and hosted a great night in, participating in live, as well silent, auctions. Many thanks to all who made this such a great community event.

Student Body Message

All of the Year 6 students have experienced a range of leadership opportunities this year. Our experiences were very different to previous Year 6 groups.

We didn't have school assemblies each morning so opportunities to stand up on Monday morning and lead the school in prayer, raise the flag, distribute the weekly Principal's Awards or announce the winner of the weekly colour house points competition didn't occur. We all had to rethink these practices.

From the beginning of Term 2 school leaders used the school PA system to carry out those jobs. A weekly prayer was filmed and distributed to classes for teachers to use in their room. We even had a school musical and it was lights, cameras and action for two nights with no audience. Every family received a video of both performances.

At the end of the year the school and parents gave us the best send off we could have hoped for given the restrictions that were still in place.

We will miss St Thomas but know that we are now ready to move into the next chapter of our lives.

School Features

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School, Willoughby, is a Catholic systemic co-educational school.

The School provides for the educational needs of children from Kindergarten to Year 6 and draws its enrolments primarily from the Catholic Parish of the Lower North Shore. The School is established in an attractive setting with a challenging and stimulating outdoor play environment.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph founded the School in 1928 and the School's recently developed vision statement draws on the Josephite charism: St Thomas Catholic School, Willoughby, exists to educate and form students in Catholic discipleship by creating a place where students: grow in their relationship with God; strive for excellence in the development of the whole person in the context of contemporary life; and reach out through service to others.

During 2020 the School Advisory Team – Agile Learning Space worked with Stanton Dahl Architects and Trinity Quality Interiors to redesign our learning spaces to better meet the needs of our student body and pedagogical design. In October work commenced on moving administration to a more effective position at the front of the site, freeing up space for more functional learning environments to be created.

The School's rich and broad curriculum offers a diverse Creative Arts program including concert and training bands and choirs, instrumental tuition, biannual whole school musical, inter-school debating and a variety of competitive and experiential sporting events. Lunch clubs include double-dutch skipping, chess, library, art, jazz improvisation and sport; these activities provide additional stimulation for all grades.

A rich musical environment is provided through junior and senior choirs as well as recorder and keyboard lessons. Our training and concert bands are provided as extra-curricular enrichment. All classrooms have large touchscreens, ipads and laptop computers. The School has an extensive playground and sports equipment with abundant shade provided by five magnificent Moreton Bay fig trees and two large, all-weather structures.

Student Profile

Student Enrolment

Students attending the School come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information describes the student profile for 2020. Additional information can be found on the [My School website](#).

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
182	178	75	360

* Language Background Other than English

Enrolment Policy

The School follows the [Enrolment Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools](#). The policy encourages the local Catholic community, under the leadership of the parish priest and principal, to look upon the time of enrolment as a potential occasion for ongoing evangelisation. The policy calls upon parents to examine their present faith commitments, to develop their role as prime educators of their children in faith and to immerse themselves in the communal, liturgical, ministerial and service dimensions of the parish. Copies of this policy and other policies in this Report may be obtained from the [CSBB website](#) or by contacting CSBB.

Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for the School in 2020 was 95.28%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group						
Kindergarten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
94.80	95.39	95.39	95.70	95.44	95.30	94.92

Managing Student 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 NSW Education Act (1990) 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 a sense of wellbeing and belonging in students
- 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, CSBB and the relevant Department of Education 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. CSBB monitors each School's compliance with student attendance and management of non-attendance as part of the system's School Review and Development (SRD) processes. The School's attendance monitoring procedures are based on the Procedures for the Management of Student Attendance in the Broken Bay Diocesan Schools System (password required).

Staffing Profile

Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2020:

Total number of staff	26
Number of full time teaching staff	15
Number of part time teaching staff	7
Number of non-teaching staff	4

Total number of teaching staff by NESA category

All teachers employed by the School are qualified to teach in NSW. Additionally, all teachers at this School who are responsible for delivering the curriculum are accredited with NESA. Effective from October 2007, the minimum qualification for a teacher in a systemic school in the Diocese of Broken Bay is a four year teaching degree.

Teachers at this School are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the NSW Teacher Accreditation Act 2004. Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher are voluntary. The number of teachers within the Diocesan Schools System (systemic schools) at these levels is as follows:

- Proficient: 1294 teachers
- Provisional: 105 teachers
- Conditional: 1 teacher

Additionally, there are approximately 25 teachers who are currently actively engaged in the submission process at the higher levels of accreditation. Teacher status at individual schools can be sourced directly from the School.

Professional Learning

The ongoing professional learning (PL) of each staff member is highly valued. PL can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in-services, meetings and conferences and a range of programs provided by CSBB. The School takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking staff PL. Individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing PL. All teachers have been involved in PL opportunities during

the year related to improving student outcomes. The following table provides specific information relating to the focus of three of these staff development days.

Summary of professional learning at this school

In 2020 staff have engaged in extensive PL in the teaching of Reading and Spelling. Staff research has begun on locating and evaluating quality diagnostic spelling tools which can support teaching to student point of need. A Staff Development Day was held on identifying quality literature for use in teaching comprehension across the grades led by a lecturer from the Australian Catholic University.

With the onset of COVID-19 and home based learning staff engaged in PL to support the provision of engaging online learning which could be completed with or without web access.

Staff responsible for English and Mathematics PL in the school were able to engage with quality mentors through online webinars throughout the year.

One staff member is working towards a Master of Educational Leadership.

Catholic Identity and Mission

As a Catholic community, the School shares in the mission of the local Church. The [Diocesan Mission Statement](#) is our statement of shared common purpose: "The Diocese of Broken Bay exists to evangelise, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, gathered as friends in the Lord and sent out to be missionary disciples."

In partnership with parents as the first faith educators of their children and the local parish community, the School seeks to educate and form young people in the Catholic faith. The School provides formal Religious Education as well as retreats, spirituality days and social justice opportunities in which students are invited to serve others, especially the poor and those who are marginalised.

The School's Religious Education (RE) program is based on the [Broken Bay K-12 Religious Education Curriculum](#) and aims to provide students with meaningful, engaging and challenging learning experiences that explores the rich diversity of the Catholic faith and ways in which we live it.

Faith formation opportunities are provided for students, staff, parents and caregivers. Students regularly celebrate Mass and pray together. Students are invited to participate in age appropriate sacramental and missionary activities aimed at living out their mission as disciples of Jesus.

The Sisters of St Joseph from Mount Street, North Sydney were the foundational teachers at the School. Their continued presence until 1979 gave the School a charism that is still alive today. Therefore, St Mary MacKillop has a special place in the School's ethos and her feast day is celebrated every year.

During 2020 much that epitomises the rich liturgical life of students, staff and the community at St Thomas had to be discontinued. This was sorely felt by all.

As a community we felt that the Year 6 Graduation Mass must go ahead within a COVID safe environment to liturgically mark to conclusion of this part of our students' catholic formation in faith. After a great deal of modification and attendance limited to the parents and siblings of the graduating students.

Environmental teams, Liturgical teams and Social Justice teams are among the varied roles for leadership in Year 6, as well as opportunities for student voice to be heard and acted upon through the Student Representative Council (SRC) with representatives from Kindergarten to Year 6 led by the school captains.

The Parish based Sacramental Program is fully supported by the School, with many parents volunteering to lead groups. The School prayer is prayed on a regular basis and the Ignatian Examen is practised to help students to identify and strengthen their own relationships with God and others.

All staff are encouraged and supported to extend their religious and theological knowledge through further education. The School engages staff in ongoing adult faith formation through spiritual retreat days, attendance at a MacKillop Colloquium and staff meetings. The parent and Parish community are also invited to spiritual retreat days held once a year.

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

The School provides an educational program based on, and taught in accordance with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses for primary education. The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science and Technology (S&T), Human Society and its Environment (HSIE), Creative Arts (CA) and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). In addition to this, the School implements the Diocesan Religious Education syllabus. Staff members are committed to continuous improvement of teaching and learning in all facets of the curriculum.

Online learning became a key focus for learning for all staff in 2020. While home based learning was a focus for Terms 1 & 2 teachers moved the skills they had gained in those terms, into their classroom work in Term 3 & 4 with the added advantage of face to face teaching recommencing for all.

Whether providing input face to face or online, teachers designed and implemented technology-rich, real-world, short and long-term problem-solving opportunities across a wide range of skill areas to engage students in sophisticated, challenging learning using the Project Based Learning model. Project Based Learning provides a strong emphasis on developing students' capabilities in the areas of critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, curiosity, interpersonal and communication skills, self-regulation, grit, entrepreneurial skills, teamwork and craftsmanship.

Student Performance in Tests and Examinations

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN assessment results provide valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. An analysis of these results assists the School's planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs.

Due to the impact of Covid-19 this year, the Education Ministers agreed that NAPLAN would not proceed in 2020. This decision was taken to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, including potential online and remote learning.

Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

Pastoral Care Policy

The School's pastoral care and student wellbeing policies guidelines and procedures are informed by the [Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools](#). This policy is underpinned by the guiding principles from the National Safe Schools Framework (2013) (NSSF) that represent fundamental beliefs about safe, supportive and respectful school communities. These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a prerequisite for effective learning in all Catholic school settings. The Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework for Learning for the Diocese of Broken Bay Schools System (the Framework') utilises the NSSF ensuring that diocesan systemic schools meet the objectives of the NSSF at the same time as meeting the diocesan vision for pastoral care and wellbeing. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the CSBB website or by contacting CSBB. The policy was revised in 2019 to align with the [Australian Wellbeing Framework \(2018\)](#) for implementation in 2020.

Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's policies and procedures for the management of student behaviour are aligned to the [Behaviour Support Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools](#). Policies operate within a context that all members of the school community share responsibility to foster, encourage and promote positive behaviour and respectful relationships. The policy aims to promote a safe and supportive learning environment to maximise teaching and learning time for all students. It supports the development of students' pro-social behaviour based on respectful relationships and clear behavioural expectations. The dignity and responsibility of each person is promoted at all times along with positive student behaviours while ensuring the respect for the rights of all students and staff. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the CSBB website or by contacting CSBB. There were no changes made to this policy in 2020.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The School's Anti-Bullying guidelines and procedures are based on and informed by the [Anti-Bullying Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools](#) and is aligned to the Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools and other related wellbeing policies and guidelines. All students, their families and employees within Catholic education have a right to a learning and work environment that is free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. Anti-Bullying policies support school communities to prevent, reduce and respond to bullying. Further information about

this and other related policies may be obtained from the [CSBB website](#) or by contacting CSBB. There were no changes made to this policy in 2020.

Complaints Handling Policy

The School follows the [Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures for Diocesan Systemic Schools](#). A distinctive feature of this policy is to ensure that complaints are addressed in a timely and confidential manner at the lowest appropriate management level in order to prevent minor problems or concerns from escalating. The expectation is that complaints will be brought forward and resolved in a respectful manner, recognising the dignity of each person concerned in the process. The policy recognises that a number of more minor or simple matters can be resolved without recourse to the formal complaint handling process but rather, quickly and simply, by discussion between the appropriate people. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the [CSBB website](#) or by contacting CSBB. There were no changes made to this policy in 2020.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

The continued implementation of the URSTRONG: Friendology 101 program in 2020 coupled with the ongoing training of new staff has enabled in-class training of all students K-6 resulting in continued growth of students' resilience and agency diminishing friendship issue reports and referrals despite the difficulties faced by families and the disruptions to learning and .

Student leadership continues to be a significant highlight of School life in 2020. The Year 6 cohort showed strong leadership, especially in their management of the Student Representative Council (SRC). Class representatives gave voice to any issues arising from class meetings at monthly SRC meetings.

Respect and responsibility for students as learners as well as members of the School and Parish community is encouraged by all Year 6 leadership roles in the following ways:

fundraising for charitable organisations (Caritas, Canice Kitchen and Catholic Mission) that occurs within the school student body and the awareness raising that occurs through these initiatives run by the Social Justice Team.

Stewardship of creation as promoted by the Environment Team. This year the team commenced a worm farm and made wax wraps for students in Kindergarten.

School community well-being promoted by the Well-being Team. Playground dance parties, chalk drawing and affirmation letters were a focus.

Stewardship of resources which is supported by the Library & Technology Team. All students were loaned a piece of technology to support home-based learning with all being returned in good condition.

Engaging the community in the practice of their faith as supported by the Liturgy Team. A

class liturgy was held in each class and zoomed for parents. Prayer was recorded and led by the team and provided to class teachers for classroom use.

School Improvement

Strategic planning ensures a common purpose and agreed values are established. In Broken Bay systemic schools, this common purpose and agreed values along with goals, targets and key improvement strategies are documented in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). This SIP is a three year planning document and is used to record the School's progress in working towards priorities for improvement in three domains: Mission, Pastoral Care, Learning and Teaching. School improvement planning is supported systemically by the Diocesan Leading Learning initiative. This initiative is research based and has been developed in partnership with the University of Auckland. Building on Leading Learning in the Learning and Teaching domain, the Diocesan Learning Principles guide improvement strategies toward high quality contemporary learning.

Key Improvements Achieved

As a result of targeted professional learning in Religious Education, infants grades units of work demonstrated increased use of contemporary learning strategies that promote deeper thinking about Scripture, resulting in assessments and work samples evidencing an increasing range of creative responses.

Students' outcomes in numeracy were improved by focusing on problem solving with an emphasis on problems with multiple solutions. Challenging problems sourced then worked through with teachers teaching was facilitated through a EPMC approach. Planning for 2021 based on detailed analysis of PAT-Mathematics data.

Students' outcomes in English were improved by teachers actively noticing the craft of writing and how with quality texts, a range of explicit teaching experiences in grammar, inferencing and vocabulary can arise. Also, increased teachers' understanding of our spelling system through professional learning, the purchasing of quality teacher resources and the trialling of several online spelling analysis programs resulted in improved outcomes in Spelling.

Students' social and emotional skills were developed through detailed planning on available play spaces through school construction facilitating collaboration and student agency. Strengthened relationships between teachers and parents have ensured students are ready to learn with conscious adaptations to practice and group meetings.

Priority Key Improvements for Next Year

In Evangelisation & Catechesis - Quality religious education will be further ensured across the school through the provision of in class coaching and quality professional learning.

In Student Achievement we will:

- Extend our culture of continual improvement into the areas of Spelling and Mathematical problem solving with coaching, professional learning and high-quality data collection and analysis preceding classroom application.

- Foster student wellbeing to support student learning through fortnightly 'Ready to Learn' meetings and our assistance dog initiative.

In Capability & Enablement - The capabilities of our staff are identified, developed and enabled through goal setting meetings building a culture of performance enhancement that fosters competency, wellbeing and accountability.

Community Satisfaction

The opinions and ideas of parents, students and teachers are valued and sought. Their suggestions are incorporated into planning for and achieving improved outcomes for students. This year, a variety of processes have been used to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the School from parents, students and teachers.

Parent satisfaction

Parents were surveyed twice last year, once using the Tell Them From Me survey tool early in Term 2 and once by the CSO Broken Bay after school returned to a face to face model at the end of Term 2.

It was extraordinarily gratifying to see that around 90% of those who responded to the survey reported that the school was clear about its Catholic Identity and Mission, facilitates the participation of students and their families in parish life and contributes to the development of student's values and ethical beliefs.

Homework is not highly valued by all of our community who children participating in multiple sports and creative endeavours after school leaving little time for it to be completed. Two years ago the school surveyed parents about their views on homework and exposed dichotomy whereby almost half of respondents wanted less homework and half wanted more homework. Our survey results this year indicate that views have not shifted.

Student satisfaction

Students were surveyed using the Tell Them From Me Survey and significantly reported the work engaged in during Religious Education was highly relevant to their life as they were encouraged to ask questions, discuss ideas and research topics encountered.

The entire senior cohort Year 4 - Year 6 reported actively engaging in social justice initiatives at school.

The leadership opportunities which all students engaged in during Year 6 were highly valued by the senior students. They detailed how they felt these had increased their readiness for other future challenges.

As in previous years the students named project- based learning as providing their most relevant and rigorous learning opportunities.

Teacher satisfaction

Teachers also completed the Tell Them From Me survey and reported that the school leadership supported them in times of difficulty and assisted them to monitor student progress.

The period of home based learning provided opportunities for effective collaboration and collegial support which facilitated embracing change and incorporating new teaching strategies into their professional repertoire. Ongoing collaboration with peers and leaders was strongly supported and will definitely form a part of our future planning cycle.

COVID 19 posed many challenges for our community especially the staff who never knew what might be asked of them tomorrow. The support they received during this time proved to unite them as a group moving into the future.

Financial Statement

Consistent with the NESAs requirements, financial income and expenditure for the School in 2020 is shown below. More detailed financial data is available on the My School website. Diocesan system financial reporting can be found in the Broken Bay Diocese Annual Report.

Recurrent and Capital Income 2020	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹	\$2,023,928
Government Capital Grants ²	\$0
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$562,272
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$1,503,612
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$0
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$217,329
Total Income	\$4,307,141

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2020	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$323,017
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$3,010,619
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$1,191,793
Total Expenditure	\$4,525,429

Notes

1. Commonwealth Recurrent Grants includes recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.
2. Government Capital Grants includes all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State Governments.
3. State Recurrent Grants includes recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.
4. Fees and Private Income include Archdiocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income.
5. Other Capital Income includes building levy fees and capital donations used to fund Capital Expenditure.
6. Capital Expenditure includes expenditure on School Buildings, and Furniture and Equipment.
7. Salaries and Related Expenditure includes all salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.
8. Non-Salary Expenses include all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.

END OF 2020 REPORT