



St Thomas Aquinas Primary School

2023 Annual School Report



St Thomas Aquinas Primary School
PO Box 199
Springwood 2777
0247234000
StThomas@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.staspringwood.catholic.edu.au

Introduction

About the Annual School Report

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School is registered by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) as a member of the Catholic system of schools in the Diocese of Parramatta.

The Annual School Report provides parents and carers and the wider school community with fair, accurate and objective information about various aspects of school performance and development. The Report describes the achievement of school development priorities in 2023 and gives information about the next years priorities.

This Report is a legislative requirement under the Schools Assistance Act 2008 and the Education Amendment Act 2004.

The information in this Report is complemented by the school website where other school publications and news can be viewed or obtained from the school.

Key Messages

From the Principal Ms. Marina Hardy

I am pleased to present to you the 2023 Annual School Report for St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, Springwood.

At St Thomas Aquinas Primary School we believe that a holistic education which develops the intellectual, spiritual, physical, social and emotional aspects of each child is critical in empowering students with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable all students to reach their personal goals and contribute to the betterment of society. Through daily interactions with students, our Catholic faith is modelled and explicitly taught, and spirituality is nurtured. The staff, in partnership with families and our parish priest, is committed to providing a school where children feel happy, safe, cared for, and are always actively engaged in their learning. In 2023 our school focused on the implementation of our learning goals:

- Numeracy : for all students to engaging in challenging tasks that promote problem solving and reasoning skills
- Literacy : for all students to communicate effectively using simple, compound and complex sentences in their written texts

Significant initiatives that enriched the educational purpose of the school were:

- Targeted professional learning to develop specific pedagogical content knowledge and data analysis focused on the school goals.
- Co-teaching model involving school learning leaders, teacher educators and class teachers in their planning, implementation, peer feedback and reflection cycle.
- Instructional walks by leadership members to monitor and feedback on the progress of the school goals.

The Annual School Report is a government initiative that allows our parents and carers to gain information about some of the structures and performance of our school and its role in the wider community. It is, however, a written document that cannot replace that very real and human need for personal interaction. We invite all parents and carers who wish to discuss any aspect of this report to make contact and work with us collaboratively.

From the Parents/Carers

At St Thomas Aquinas Primary School we welcome the involvement of parents as the first educators of their children in many aspects of school life.

There are a number of activities in which parents participated including:

- Fundraising initiatives such as: Mothers Day Stall, Fathers Day Stall, Project Compassion Outreach
- Colour-a-Thon
- Parish masses with their child
- Whole school masses and liturgies

- Assemblies
- Book Fair Book Parade
- School excursions
- Sporting events - school, zone, Diocesan
- Clothing pool
- Chess club

We believe education is the joint responsibility of parents, teachers and children and that by working together we can provide the best possible learning environment for students.

Parents and carers were formally surveyed in a centrally administered feedback system that provided information to staff about their child's experience and their own experience of school. The results will be used to look at further improvements at the school.

From the Students

The Student Representative Council (SRC) was made up of students from Year 6. The representatives were nominated and elected by their class peers. Nominated students were asked to prepare a short address to their class outlining their vision and goals. The speeches were prepared at school and composed solely by the nominated students.

The work of the SRC included:

- Being responsible for the daily raising and lowering of the national flag and assisting with the weekly assembly.
- Meeting with a leader of learning where opinions were sought about school issues and initiatives.
- Working with the leader of learning and principal in presenting social skills, anti-bullying strategies, behavioural expectations and school pride at assemblies
- Being responsible for meeting and greeting official visitors to our school.

The other area of student leadership was through our Faith in Action groups who proposed and enacted social justice initiatives. These groups were facilitated and supported by the school's Religious Education coordinator. The school has a proud tradition of servant leadership. All students were actively encouraged to strive to model respect, kindness, wisdom and charity.

Students at the school were formally surveyed in a centrally administered feedback system that provided information to staff about the students and their experience of school.

School Context

History of the school

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, was opened in 1921 with a total school enrolment of 24 students in the old church building located on the corner of Hawkesbury Road and Macquarie Road, Springwood. By 1962, enrolments had increased to 187 students and a new school building was erected on the Hawkesbury Road frontage. The Sisters of St Joseph taught at the school until 1976, when the first lay principal was appointed. The first stage of the new St Thomas Aquinas Primary School was opened on its current site in 1982. Seven new classrooms, an administration block and library were completed in 2001. A covered learning area was constructed in 2006 with funds raised by the school community. A new multi-purpose learning and performance space was completed in 2011 together with other school upgrades as part of the federal government's Building the Education Revolution (BER) program. During 2020 the refurbishment of all student bathrooms took place and work on an adventure playground area was completed. During 2021 the refurbishment of all the classrooms also took place with new carpet and pinboards. Our School installed a new covered learning outdoor space with artificial grass. In 2010 an Autism Spectrum (ASPECT) satellite class commenced at the School in conjunction with Autism Spectrum Australia. This class continues to provide families with children on the autism spectrum a specialised learning environment within the School. From 2020 the School introduced a before and after school service for families in the school hall.

Location / Drawing Area

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School is located on a picturesque site with ample playing areas and views of the surrounding bush land and national park. The School is in close proximity to the parish church, pastoral centre and the neighbouring St Columba's Catholic College. As part of the parish of Springwood, the school draws most of its enrolments from families living within the parish area. This area includes the townships of Linden, Faulconbridge, Springwood, Winmalee, Yellow Rock, Hawkesbury Heights and Warrimoo. Additionally, some students come from the greater Blue Mountains area.

Workforce Composition

Staffing Profile

| Staffing Profile | |
|--|----|
| Total Number of Staff | 41 |
| Number of staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people | 0 |
| Number of full time teaching staff | 19 |
| Number of part time teaching staff | 13 |
| Number of non-teaching staff | 9 |

Total number of teaching staff by NESA accreditation level

Teachers at the school are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (NSW). Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is voluntary.

The contracted number of accredited teachers within Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) are as follows:

| Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) accredited teachers | |
|--|------|
| Conditional Teachers | 363 |
| Provisional Teachers | 125 |
| Proficient Teachers and/or above | 3495 |

Teacher status at St Thomas Aquinas Primary School can be sourced directly from the school.

Professional Learning

The ongoing professional development of each staff member working within CSPD is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including: whole of school staff days, subject-specific engagements, conferences, meetings and a range of professional learning opportunities provided by CSPD.

The school takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking its staff's professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

Specific and focused Professional Learning for the staff of the school this year has included:

- To improve written expression for all students.
- Plan, anticipate and use extending prompts to engage and challenge our students in Mathematics.
- Formation for all staff with a theme of Origins and a deep dive into the life of our Patron Saint, St. Thomas Aquinas.

Catholic Identity and Religious Education

Prayer, Liturgical Life and Faith Experiences

Education within the Diocese of Parramatta is a ministry of the Catholic Church, walking with humility in the way of Jesus, serving all of God's people. The Gospel messages of love, forgiveness, tolerance and compassion are lived experiences that are visibly evidenced at school. We offer families high-quality accessible education that challenges each student to discover a meaningful, hope-filled and flourishing life. Our caring teachers share faith and learning with students, including through their own example. Every day, be it in the playground, at an assembly or in the classroom our students experience a genuinely religious way of understanding the world. The invitation to meaningful prayer and liturgy, as well as participation in the Sacraments, nurture and give expression to the religious dimension of school life in the context of the Church's celebration of the liturgical year.

Social Justice

All students at the school are encouraged to regularly engage in activities to support Catholic Mission with fundraising and awareness-raising initiatives. Students are encouraged to work closely with their local parish, community groups, support local charities and participate in outreach or immersion experiences for the benefit of the whole community and the student's personal development.

This year students and staff from the school engaged in the following initiatives and activities:

- Project Compassion fundraiser activities.
- Mission Markets lead by Stage 2 students bringing awareness to the work of Catholic Mission.
- Vinnie's Christmas Hamper Appeal.

All of these initiatives enabled the students and staff to practise their faith through action as Jesus demonstrated in the Gospels.

School, Home and Parish Partnerships

Parents and carers have been actively encouraged to engage in a variety of school activities including parent forums, information evenings, parent/teacher/student meetings, liturgies, social events and opportunities to provide feedback. Regular communication with parents and carers occurred through phone calls, meetings and the Compass information platform.

Religious Education

At the heart of our school is the Religious Education program. It is through this area of study that students learn to value the Catholic identity, traditions, values and Christ's teaching. Our Religious Education program is embodied by the quality of our relationships and how we deal with the daily issues of life.

CSPD schools use Sharing Our Story, a Religious Education curriculum that has been used for more than 20 years. In all subject areas, we offer an education completely consistent

with the teaching of the Church on the dignity of all aspects of the human person. We also appreciate the need to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities.

Professional Learning of Staff in Religious Education

Professional Learning in Religious Education offered to staff this year included:

- Staff engaged in Formation Day with the theme of Origins.
- Staff professional learning on reconnecting to "Sharing Our Story".
- Teacher-led Faith in Action (FIAT) evangelisation group.

Learning and Teaching

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia participated in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The purpose of NAPLAN is to provide information to parents and carers and teachers about the achievements of students in literacy and numeracy. Questions are based mostly on the literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills students have learnt from previous years of schooling.

Each year the results are analysed by the school to inform teaching and learning with a view to improving student performance. Commencing in 2023, NAPLAN test results are reported using proficiency standards. Students' results show how they performed in each of the NAPLAN assessment areas against 4 proficiency levels:

- Exceeding: The student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing
- Strong: The student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing
- Developing: The student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing
- Needs additional support: The student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

The percentages of students achieving at Exceeding and Strong proficiency levels are reported in the table on the next page.

NAPLAN Results Year 3 2023

| Year 3 | Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|
| | School | Australia |
| Reading | 82% | 67% |
| Writing | 90% | 76% |
| Spelling | 58% | 61% |
| Grammar and Punctuation | 66% | 54% |
| Numeracy | 74% | 65% |

NAPLAN Results Year 5 2023

| Year 5 | Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|
| | School | Australia |
| Reading | 91% | 74% |
| Writing | 81% | 66% |
| Spelling | 66% | 69% |
| Grammar and Punctuation | 73% | 64% |
| Numeracy | 83% | 68% |

Student Profile

Enrolment Policy

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School follows the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) Enrolment Policy Procedures and Guidelines. The full text or a link to the full text of the school's enrolment policies, including all prerequisites for continuing enrolment, can be obtained from the school office or can be accessed on the school's website.

Student enrolments

| Student enrolments 2023 | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Number of Boys | Number of Girls |
| 182 | 192 |
| Total Enrolments: 374 | |

Student attendance

| Student attendance rates 2023 | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Year | Attendance Rate | Year | Attendance Rate |
| K | 95% | 4 | 94% |
| 1 | 94% | 5 | 92% |
| 2 | 95% | 6 | 92% |
| 3 | 93% | School Average: 94% | |

Managing non attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents and carers, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

The compulsory schooling age range is 6-17. Parents and carers are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, explaining the absences of their children in writing within several days to the school, and taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences. They maintain accurate records of students' attendance, follow up unexplained absences through written and verbal communication, implement programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise, and provide clear information to students and parents/carers regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

The school principal or their delegate may grant permission for late arrival or early departure from school, leave or exemption from attendance only in individual cases, on written request from parents and carers. For longer exemptions, an application for approval is made through Diocesan authorities. The principal/delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents/carers promptly if an unexplained absence occurs. If truancy is suspected, the principal will contact the parents/carers to ascertain the reason for the absence. If a satisfactory response is not received, the matter will be referred to the relevant staff at CSPD who will follow up unexplained absences as per legislative requirements.

Characteristics of the student body

The table below shows the number of students in each of the categories listed.

| Student Body Characteristics | |
|--|----|
| Language background other than English (LBOTE) | 50 |
| Students with disabilities (SWD) | 94 |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | 13 |

Wellbeing

The wellbeing and safety of all students is central to the purpose of Catholic Education and we acknowledge that healthy relationships and exceptional pastoral care are core to each child's positive experience at school. St Thomas Aquinas Primary School is a place where students are nurtured to grow, to belong and to be safe.

A sense of wellbeing and connectedness promotes optimal development of the person as a whole and contributes to academic success. We have a strong focus on pastoral care and our school has a counsellor to support our students. CSPD provides resourcing for additional wellbeing initiatives and teams to support attendance, behaviour and intervention for students at risk.

Our wellbeing initiatives include:

- Launched CSPD Student Wellbeing Framework.
- Assemblies recognising student achievements across academic, sporting and extra curricular activities.
- Lunch clubs including coding club, dance club, gardening club, art club and library club.

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School bases student wellbeing on the [CSPD Student Wellbeing Policy \(2022\)](#) and the [CSPD Student Wellbeing Framework](#). The guidelines identify the rights and responsibilities of every student in the school and are based on the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. Corporal punishment is expressly forbidden at the school.

Related policies include:

- [Bullying of Students - Prevention and Response Procedure \(2022\)](#)
- [Student Use Of Digital Devices And Online Services Policy \(2022\)](#)
- [Guidelines for Parents and Carers in Raising Complaints \(2023\)](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Policy \(2022\)](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [Student Attendance Policy \(2021\)](#)
- [Student Attendance Procedures \(2022\)](#)
- [Bullying of Students - Prevention and Response Procedure \(2022\)](#)
- [Weapons Procedures \(2022\)](#)
- [Banned Substances Student Procedures \(2022\)](#)
- [Family and School Partnership Principles](#)

Actions promoting respect and responsibility

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School actively promotes respect for others and responsibility for self. During the past year, our community has engaged with the following actions and opportunities:

- National and community initiatives such as Walk Safely to School and Clean Up Australia Days.
- At assemblies the Acknowledgement of Country is said and the National Anthem sung to develop a respect for our Australian identity.

- Buddy system between Kindergarten and Year 6 students.

Community Satisfaction

During 2023, CSPD and our school utilised a variety of measures to obtain feedback from parents and carers, students and staff regarding community satisfaction.

Areas of strength from the parents/carers feedback include:

- Affirmed the school's work in the faith formation and religious education of their children.
- Trusted that the school responds promptly to learning or behaviour concerns.
- Felt that they could easily speak with their child's teacher and the staff at the school are approachable.

Areas of strength from the student feedback include:

- Teacher empathy and positive relationships with peers.
- Are interested in and value learning, and feel they have quality instruction and challenge.
- Student participation in extra curricula activities.

Areas of strength from the staff feedback include:

- Student data used to inform practice.
- Able to work collaboratively to share ideas, discuss assessment strategies and learning difficulties of students.
- A supportive school leadership team.

School Improvement and Learning

Priorities

| Current Year Priorities | | |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Priority 1 | For students to increase their understanding of multiplicative relations and use of multiplicative strategies. | Still Working Towards. |
| Priority 2 | To improve students ability by 12 months, to communicate effectively through accurate simple, compound and complex sentence structure. | Still Working Towards. |

| Projected School Priorities | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Priority 1 | To increase student attendance rate above 89%. | |
| Priority 2 | For students to enter TRANSCENDENT spaces (where God is present) through encounter. | |

Financial Statement

Financial information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth and State Government in the Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for 2023 is detailed below:

| Recurrent and Capital Income | |
|--|-------------|
| Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹ | \$4,528,404 |
| Government Capital Grants ² | \$0 |
| State Recurrent Grants ³ | \$1,184,440 |
| Fees and Private Income ⁴ | \$1,039,916 |
| Other Capital Income ⁵ | \$147,561 |
| Total Income | \$6,900,321 |

| Recurrent and Capital Expenditure | |
|--|-------------|
| Capital Expenditure ⁶ | \$98,530 |
| Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷ | \$5,026,018 |
| Non-Salary Expenses ⁸ | \$1,758,063 |
| Total Expenditure | \$6,882,611 |

¹ Commonwealth relates to Commonwealth Recurrent Grants including per capita funding and special purpose grants

² Capital relates to Government Capital Grants received for construction of school assets

³ State relates to State Recurrent Grants including per capita funding, interest subsidy and special purpose grants

⁴ Fees relate to Diocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income from parents/carers

⁵ Other refers to Other Capital Income including amounts charged for Diocesan Building Levy from parents

⁶ Capital Expenditure refers to expenses incurred mainly for School Buildings, Furniture and Equipment

⁷ Salaries refers to the total of all Salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation, workers compensation and leave

⁸ Non-Salary refers to all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenses