

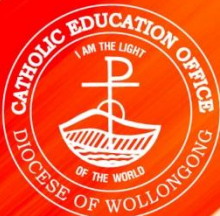
# Annual School Report

2013

*St. Thomas More*



*Ruse*



## About This Report

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St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Ruse is registered by the Board of Studies NSW and managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Diocese of Wollongong. The CEO is the 'approved authority' for the Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

The Annual School Report to the Community for this year provides the school community with fair, reliable and objective information about school performance measures and policies, as determined by the Minister for Education.

The Report also outlines information regarding School Review & Improvement initiatives and developments of major interest and importance to the school community during the year and the achievements arising from the implementation of the school's Annual Action Plan.

Accordingly, the Report demonstrates accountability to regulatory bodies, the school community and the CEO. This Report has been approved by Wollongong CEO to ensure compliance with all Board of Studies NSW requirements for Registration and Accreditation.

This Report complements and is supplementary to school newsletters and other regular communications. Following its submission to the NSW Board of Studies, the Report will be presented to the Parent Body and be available on the school's website by 30 June 2014.

Further information about the school or this Report may be obtained by contacting the school:

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**Parish Priest:** Fr Tony Daly

**Principal:** Mr Paul Croker  
**Date:** 22 November 2013

## **Vision Statement**

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In the spirit of truth and love the vision at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is to be a welcoming community committed to upholding the dignity of the individual, where quality learning and teaching is inspired by the message and life of Jesus.

## **Message from Key School Bodies**

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### **Principal's Message**

This year a special theme “Just like Jesus” was embedded in our community. Students were encouraged to think about how Jesus would act, what He would say and what He did to help others. Our mission of outreach to others and promoting justice in action was highlighted by being “Just like Jesus” and it helped focus our awareness of the Gospel values taught by Jesus during his ministry. We concentrated on Justice in Term 1, Understanding in Term 2, Service in Term 3 and Thankfulness in Term 4.

Refurbishments of the “Discovery Centre” (Library) and the Learning Support Centre have created marvellous new and engaging “learning spaces”. With the purchase of much needed computer equipment we have embarked on a “new vision” to support students with specific learning needs and now use “differentiated” strategies for individual students, including tablet technology in flexible teaching areas, plus the inclusion of note-book “pods”.

Our Sustainable Schools initiatives and Environmental Education programs have had a positive year with construction of a new vegetable garden, planting of orchard trees, installation of a photovoltaic electricity system and additional water recycling storage tanks.

### **Parent Involvement**

In 2013 the Parents’ and Friends’ Association (P&F) of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School continued to demonstrate its support of the learning environment for all the children who attend the school. This was evidenced by the many activities that were run throughout the year. The children continue to enjoy the discos, Feast Day celebrations, and the Christmas Carols night. Above these activities stands the annual School Fete as the pinnacle for not only fund raising, but enjoyment to be had by the children. The enthusiasm and excitement from the children is palpable and is closely matched by the level of involvement of the parents. Special thanks must go to the hard working Fete Committee for organising this great event each year. Special mention and thanks must also go to the Mothers’ Club for their continued support of the school in the many capacities that they fill, from morning teas, to uniform pool, to the Mother’s Day and Father’s Day stalls, to mention a few.

The combined efforts of the P&F, Fete Committee, Mothers' Club, and extended school community, continue to make St Thomas More a great place of learning for our children. Without the continued partnership and support from the school leadership and staff we would not have been able to have such a successful year.

*Parents and Friends Association, President*

### **Student Leadership**

The 2013 School Year at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School was an adventurous and memorable year for everyone, especially the Year 6 students. We started the year by welcoming our school community at the Annual Opening School Mass. During this Mass, we welcomed Mr Russell Matheson MP to our school, to commission our school leaders, as well as, welcoming new members of staff.

As school leaders, we represented St Thomas More during our Year 6 camp, visiting our Australian Parliament in Canberra and the greater Canberra and Snowy Mountain regions. It was a great experience for everyone. We also participated in the Campbelltown community's ANZAC Day ceremony. Our Stage 3 students represented our school by showing their talents through art, at the CEO Wollongong Christmas Art Exhibition and Competition. During the year, Stage 3 students also had the opportunity to participate in the Annual Public Speaking Competition. Representation at various sporting events, such as Diocesan Sport Carnivals, Gala days, and school carnivals, were a highlight during this year.

Celebration of our faith is very important to us. As student leaders, we attended Caritas and Catholic Mission Launches in Wollongong, the Catholic Club Communion Lunch and St Gregory's College Mass. Bishop Peter visited our school and helped to prepare us to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. We also celebrated Prayer and Conversation with Bishop Peter and other Year 6 students from neighbouring schools. We prepared the Remembrance Day Liturgy and participated in Whole school Masses and Liturgies. Meeting our new 2014 Kindergarten students and their parents during Kinder Orientation was also a highlight of our year. To support our community, we helped out at our school Fete, started our school Mini Vinnie's Group and we ran Mufti Day and Disco fundraisers to support community groups.

Thank you to our Parish Priest, the staff at St Thomas More and our parents for providing a wonderful education for us. Thank you to the Parents' & Friends' Association and the Mothers' Club for fundraising to support our learning needs. Finally, thank you for this opportunity to be members of the St Thomas More School Community. We wish everyone the best for the future.

*School Leaders*

## School Profile

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### School Context

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a Catholic systemic co-educational school located in Ruse. The school caters for students in Years Kindergarten (K) to Year 6 (K-6) in a two-stream configuration and has a current enrolment of 370.

The school is located in the Parish of Ruse and is under the direction of the Catholic Education Office, Wollongong. St Thomas More traditions have been enriched from the foundational charisms of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and the Marist Brothers. The school endeavours to cater for the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, behavioural and physical education of all.

St Thomas More has fourteen mixed ability classes and a Learning Support Centre, which supports the needs of students with an identified learning disability. As a Parish School, it is intended that the spiritual growth and welfare of the students be carefully integrated within a needs-based education, which is a shared responsibility of the Parish Priest, Principal, Staff and Parents.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School promotes stewardship by valuing, respecting and encouraging the unique gifts of every person. The school places a strong emphasis on building resilience and operates successful Pastoral Care and Buddy programs. St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is committed to the creation of contemporary and future-oriented learning programs, where educational excellence is encouraged, by providing a relevant, stimulating and challenging curriculum that incorporates the use of learning technologies. The students are able to access laptops, iPads, online resources and state-of-the-art interactive whiteboard technology which supplement and enhance innovative teaching and learning programs.

Students are given many opportunities: academic, sporting, religious and cultural, to discover and make the most of their talents and they regularly participate in Diocesan and local community events. St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a school where students, staff, parents and Parish Priest work and celebrate together in a spirit of true partnership.

### Student Enrolments

2013 Enrolments	
Boys	<b>190</b>
Girls	<b>180</b>
Total	<b>370</b>
Indigenous	<b>9</b>
LBOTE	<b>101</b>

The Diocesan Enrolment Policy and Procedures exists to assist schools in the equitable prioritising of enrolment applications and in order to ensure that the requirements of State and Commonwealth legislation are met.

This documentation can be found on both the school website: [www.stmdow.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stmdow.catholic.edu.au) and the CEO website: [www.dow.catholic.edu.au](http://www.dow.catholic.edu.au). No changes were made to this Diocesan Policy in 2013.

### **Student Attendance**

<b>2013 Attendance</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Kinder	92.8	93.5
Year 1	95.4	94.9
Year 2	95.2	95.9
Year 3	95.4	95.1
Year 4	94.0	93.8
Year 5	93.8	95.7
Year 6	91.7	94.5
Whole school	94.0	94.8

### **Management of Student Non Attendance**

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences. Parents are contacted regularly about unexplained or repeated absences in accordance with the Diocesan Student Attendance & Roll Marking Policy and Procedures Handbook (November 2012).

In 2013, each class teacher had the responsibility of recording class attendance rolls each day, either manually or via the Diocesan Realtime Roll portal. The data was transferred or entered manually into the School Accounting System (SAS). It was a school expectation that if students were absent from school, a written note explaining the absence was provided to the class teacher, which in turn was documented and archived by office staff. An email to the school explaining the absence was also acceptable. If an explanation for an absence was not received, a reminder note requesting an explanation was sent to parents. If two such notes were not returned then an “unexplained/ unjustified” absence was documented. In the event of a child having an excessive number of unexplained absences, contact with the parents was made by the Principal or representative to investigate the circumstances related to these absences.

If a child left school early they were issued with a pass, which indicated that the school was aware of their absence. Parents were required to apply for Principal approval to exempt their child from school for extended periods. Full and partial absences were documented on student reports each Semester.

## Staffing Profile

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There are a total of 21 teachers and 12 support staff at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. This number includes 18 full-time and 3 part-time teachers.

### Teacher Standards

Teacher qualifications fall into 1 of 3 categories for all teaching staff responsible for delivering the curriculum:

Teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by AEI - NOOSR*	100%
Have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia within AEI-NOOSR* guidelines but lack formal teacher qualifications	0%
Do not have qualifications as above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context	0%

*\*Australian Education Institution – National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition Staff Retention*

### Teacher Attendance and Retention

The average daily teacher attendance rate for 2013 was 99.4%. This does not include planned leave such as Maternity or Long Service Leave. The teacher retention rate from 2012 to 2013 was 85 %.

### Professional Learning

During 2013, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School personnel undertook a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes, particularly through School Review & Improvement priorities.

These included:

- A. St Thomas More whole school development days involving 33 staff.  
These days focused on:
  - Planning Day, Policy Showcase and Staff Development;
  - Staff Spirituality, Catholic Education Pedagogy and Creative Arts; and,
  - Implementing the new Australian Curriculum.
- B. Other professional learning activities provided at school level included CEO run courses:
  - Focus on Literacy: K - 2 (8 staff);
  - Focus on Reading: 3 - 6 ( 10 staff);
  - Leading the Australian Curriculum (3 staff);

- Best Start Training (3 staff);
- Early Careers Teacher Professional Development (2 staff);
- Early Careers Teacher Mentor (2 staff);
- Lamplighters – Spiritual Development for Leaders (4 staff);
- A light for the World Personal Spirituality Formation Experience (2 staff);
- Shining Lights Personal Spirituality Formation Experience (2 staff);
- Igniting the Fire Personal Spirituality Formation Experience (3 staff);
- Religious Education Coordinator (REC) Conference (1 staff member);
- Principal/Assistant Principal Retreat (2 staff);
- Religious Literacy Assessment (3 staff);
- South West Sydney, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) Workshops (6 staff);
- Spotlight on Technology (1 staff);
- Oliver (Reference System for Libraries) Training (1 staff member);
- Reading Recovery Training and Support (1 staff);
- School based professional development on supporting students with expressive or receptive language needs, including within class support (15 staff).

Other professional learning activities -

Religious Education (RE) based Leadership training in order to assist the development of spirituality in the school context:

- Improving Pedagogy in Religious Education (2 staff);
- Masters in Theology and Religious Education (5 staff);
- RE Storytelling (3 staff);
- Beginner teachers RE PD (3 staff); and,
- REC retreat (1 staff).

Opportunities to undertake personal spiritual formation:

- Journey (1 staff); and,
- Artist retreat (1 staff).

Pastoral Care training:

- Seasons for Growth (3 staff); and,
- CatholicCare orientation to High School Program (2 staff).

The average expenditure by the school on professional learning per staff member was \$142.

In addition, professional learning opportunities were provided by the Catholic Education Office with an additional average expenditure per staff member of \$1 815.



## Catholic Life & Religious Education

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St Thomas More Catholic Primary School seeks to promote its own Catholic Identity in the tradition of the Catholic Church. All staff work towards promoting faith development through the provision of a quality Religious Education curriculum. This is enhanced by a variety of prayer experiences, liturgical celebrations for all within the community and ensuring that there is a visibility of symbols, scripture and doctrine of the Catholic faith throughout the school.

During 2013, staff received professional development in Religious Literacy, RE curriculum and assessment practices in RE. The staff continued their faith formation through weekly staff prayer, participation in Spirituality Formation programs and a Staff Spirituality Day, which focused on Catholic School Pedagogy and Creative Arts in the RE curriculum.

The school continued to develop a strong relationship with the Parish community. Our Parish Priest, Fr Tony Daly, was very active in the school community, celebrating grade and whole school Masses and visiting each class at least once per term. Every term, Fr Daly administered the Sacrament of Penance to Years 3-6 children. He also met each grade from Kindergarten to Year 2 in their classroom for class prayer liturgies or discussions about the content covered in the Religious Education curriculum.

Also in 2013, all students travelled by bus to the Parish Church each term, to celebrate Mass with the Parish community. The school also prepared weekend Parish Masses, which were led by St Thomas More Catholic Primary School guitar and choir groups. Families and Parishioners were invited to all the celebrations aligned with the Catholic Life and Religious Education of the school. The St Thomas More Catholic Primary School students were active participants in the Parish Sacramental Program. In 2013, each of the Sacramental Programs were supported by the RE lessons within the classrooms. The staff of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, along with the Parish Priest, acted as leaders for all lessons in the Parish Based Sacramental Program. The Religious Education Coordinator (REC) and other staff members liaised with the Parish Sacramental Team to ensure that Parish/School communication was maintained.

Prayer was an integral part of St Thomas More school life. Each day, the school assembled to pray together saying the school prayer or a prayer relevant to feast days or other important events in the Church year. A prayer focus was evident in class RE lessons. Many memorable whole school Masses were celebrated during 2013 such as the Opening School Mass, Ash Wednesday, St Thomas More Feast Day Mass, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Mass, Assumption Of Mary, All Saints Day Mass and the 2013 Thanksgiving Mass. Parents, Parishioners and friends were invited to all of these celebrations.

A community highlight of the year for 2013 was our St Thomas More Feast Day Mass and unveiling of the Remembrance Wall. This wall was built by foundation parents of our school, using the original bricks from the “yellow brick road”, which was a pathway that wound around our playground when the school was first built. Foundation parents and friends were welcomed back to the school for the Mass and unveiling of the wall and commemorative plaque. Another important event was our Grandparents and Special People Mass. During this Mass, the grandparents and carers in the children’s lives were acknowledged. The students shared morning tea with their Grandparents, visited the Book Fair in the Library and showcased their classroom work.

Other important Religious Education events of 2013 were: Catholic Schools Week, the Diocesan Education Mass with Bishop Peter, the school Holy Week Walk, the Year 6 Diocesan Mass with Bishop Peter, Year 5 and Year 6 Diocesan Christmas Art competition, Year 6 Farewell Mass and Dinner, and the St Thomas More Christmas Carols evening.

The St Thomas More Mini-Vinnies Conference continued to lead social justice initiatives. The students in this team met each fortnight. They prayed together, listened to stories of success and planned and organised social justice initiatives, including fundraising activities for St Vincent de Paul, Catholic Mission and Project Compassion. A highlight of their fundraising initiatives was the “Rock Your Socks Disco” which raised funds for the Catholic Mission Campaign. Over \$2 150 was donated to these worthy causes, as well as, many food hampers and Christmas presents. The Year 3 students also organised a “green” day to raise funds for the St Vincent de Paul Bushfire victims appeal.

Connections with the local indigenous community are valued at St Thomas More. At the beginning of 2013, the school welcomed Uncle Ivan and members of the local Dharawal community to share stories with our school community. Members of the school indigenous community attended the Sorry Day Service at Minto. The students participated in prayer and shared morning tea with other children from various schools in the Macarthur, as well as, elders from the Macarthur Indigenous community. The school also held an Indigenous Cultural Day with special guests from the local Dharawal community.

### **Religious Literacy Assessment**

The Religious Literacy Assessment Program for Year 4 students was successfully completed within schools across the Diocese in 2013. The school cohort in 2013 consisted of fifty four Year 4 students who sat the Religious Literacy Assessment Workbook (Part A) on 26 August 2013 and fifty six completed the Extended Task (Part B). The Extended Task was based on the Unit: *One with God’s Creation* and was completed during the first half of Term 3. The performance of each student was described as developing, achieving or extending.

Students showed a good understanding of their knowledge of the religious tradition. This was particularly noticeable in their:

- Understanding of the creation story;

- Ability to identify and demonstrate an understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- Ability to demonstrate a knowledge of Jesus and His teachings;
- Understanding of Lenten practices and the Sacrament of Penance; and,
- Ability to identify ways they can continue the ministry of Jesus.

The students' responses showed a need for them to develop their capacity to work with, and apply the religious tradition, especially in their ability to:

- Identify key symbols, signs and rituals of the Catholic Tradition;
- Identify key symbols, signs and rituals of the Season of Advent;
- Demonstrate a knowledge of Biblical characters; and,
- Identify and match items in the church.

For Part A, 57.4 % of students were placed in the developing level, 40.7 % in the achieving level and 1.9 % were in the extending level.

Students in Part B displayed improvements in their ability to work with and apply their religious knowledge. For Part B, 8.8 % of students were placed in the developing level, 82.5 % in the achieving level and 8.8 % were in the extending level.

Combining Parts A and B, 37 % of students were placed in the developing level, 55.6 % in the achieving level and 7.4 % were in the extending level for Religious Literacy.

## **School Review and Improvement**

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School Review and Improvement (SRI) is an ongoing process of self evaluation measured against a commonly agreed set of criteria. It informs action planning at the school level to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. Above all, Catholic schools must be good schools with a strong learning orientation and a strong sense of purpose. In all aspects of improving and developing, schools should be learning-centred, constantly striving for excellence and have the student as their primary focus.

### **School Review and Improvement components reviewed and rated in 2013:**

In 2013 the SRI components worked through included -

- **Key Area 1: Catholic Life and Religious Education**  
1.2 Religious Education
- **Key Area 2: Students and their Learning**  
2.1 Educational Potential
- **Key Area 3: Pedagogy**

3.2 Provision for Diverse learning needs of students

3.3 Teaching Practices

3.5 Assessment

- **Key Area 5: Resources, Finance and Facilities**

5.1 ICT Resources

**School Review and Improvement components to be reviewed and rated in 2014:**

In 2014 the SRI components to be worked through include -

- **Key Area 2: Students and their Learning**

2.3 Reporting Student Achievement

2.4 Integration of ICLT

- **Key Area 3: Pedagogy**

3.1 Curriculum Provision

3.4 Planning, programming and evaluation

- **Key Area 4: Human Resources Leadership and Management**

4.2 Professional Development of staff

- **Key Area 5: Resources, Finance and Facilities**

5.3 Environmental Stewardship

- **Key Area 6: Parents, Partnership, Consultation and Communication**

6.1 Parent Involvement

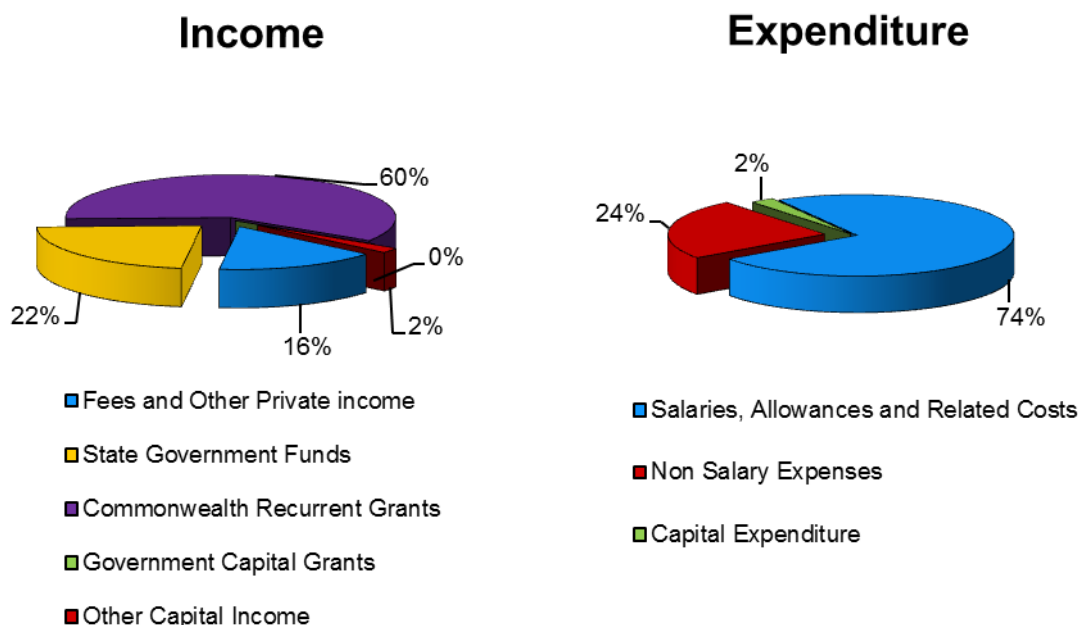
## **Financial Summary**

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Major school expenditure this year focussed on the acquisition of new Information and Communication Learning Technologies (ICLT) equipment throughout the school classrooms. Funds for these substantial purchases were provided to the school from the Parents' and Friends' Association and the Mothers' Club and came from various well-supported fund-raising events. These new ICLT resources are being very well utilised to enhance learning programs in all key learning areas, as well as, providing assistive technologies program in the school's Learning Support Centre.

A grant received from the Campbelltown Catholic Club was used to create an outdoor prayer garden outside the school's Prayer Room. This garden will grow and flourish into a beautiful reflective space that will be used as part of the school and Parish Sacramental programs.

The following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St Thomas More Catholic Primary, Ruse for the year ended 31 December 2013. This data is taken from the 2013 financial return to the Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



## Student Welfare

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St Thomas More Catholic Primary School continued to provide valuable support to all members of the school community. The school continued to have access to the expertise of a Pastoral Support Person (PSP). The PSP has become an integral and active part of the school community and offers those members undergoing hardship and challenges, not only a listening ear and an understanding heart, but also practical help, advice and access to other associated support services. The PSP assisted in the facilitation of the Kindergarten Transition to School and Social Skills Program and has co-ordinated and facilitated the 'Seasons For Growth' grief and loss program within the school.

The promotion of positive relationships amongst all members of the community, especially among the students, is the touchstone of Catholic education. Throughout the year children have been encouraged to strive to be the best they can be. Their achievements in a number of different aspects of school life were recognised through a variety of awards. At the school's weekly Monday morning assembly, individual classroom achievements were celebrated.

Names of students were identified from each Stage, to attend a monthly morning tea with the Principal. The recognition for exemplary behaviour on the playground was celebrated through the presentation of Achievement Cards, Canteen Rewards and Certificates. In 2013,

“Just like Jesus” Awards were presented to children at each grade assembly in recognition of the students who have used their time, talents or treasure for the good of the community.

The ‘Better Buddy’ program, designed to promote friendly and caring schools, also continued to be an integral program, focusing on building strong relationships between the Year 4 students and their Kindergarten buddies. The CatholicCare Counsellor continued to support the children and families three days per fortnight. The Counsellor assisted in supporting the social and emotional development of students at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. The Counsellor ran a program called “Bucket List” and worked with many grades across the school.

The Diocesan School Wide Positive Behaviour For Learning Program (SWPB4L), now in its fifth year at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, continued to make a significant impact within the school. The focus for 2013 was to continue to embed SWPB4L in the classroom through the use of teacher designed classroom behaviour matrixes and specifically taught classroom behavioural expectations, all of which were founded on the four school rules. The revision of procedures and the provision of streamlined methods for documenting and reporting student behaviour continued to be a focus for the members of the SWPB4L team.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wollongong are committed to a safe and supportive environment. The principles, guidelines and procedures set out in the policy documents ***Maintaining Right Relationships*** and ***Safe Work Environment*** are the framework for school leaders, students, staff, parents and the wider community to develop a safe and supportive environment. The Diocesan ***Complaints Handling Procedures*** forms an important element in the Diocese’s commitment to ensuring safe and supportive environments for school communities. These documents can be found on the Catholic Education Office website: [www.dow.catholic.edu.au](http://www.dow.catholic.edu.au). No changes were made to these Diocesan documents in 2013.

In compliance with the ***NSW Reform Act 1990***, Corporal Punishment is banned in all schools within the Diocese of Wollongong.

Access to all policies and guidelines can be obtained by contacting the school office.

## Learning and Teaching

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### Introduction

#### National Partnerships

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School participated in the National Partnership Agreement. This provided the school with the opportunity to focus on a broad range of initiatives designed to lift student educational attainment. As a participating school the focus was on

strengthening successful practices and developing innovative responses to meet the learning needs of all students, especially those most in need of additional support. This partnership program has and will continue to, build teaching skills and focus on literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. This was achieved all members of staff participating in the program, through better use of data, strengthening school leadership, and partnership arrangements between school, parents and the local communities.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School implemented the following initiatives under the National Partnership Agreement:

The *Focus on Literacy* course, which was undertaken by Year K-2 teachers, built on teachers' knowledge of the early learner and the nature of K-2 readers and writers. The course enabled teachers to build a deeper understanding of how to explicitly teach reading, writing and speaking.

The *Focus on Reading* course, which was undertaken by Year 3-6 teachers, and which focused on deliberate teaching that begins with assessment, involves planning for explicit instruction based on students' needs, and supports and scaffolds through modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies.

Members of the teaching staff developed agreed procedures for the organisation of their teaching literacy blocks so there was consistency in lesson delivery and a concentration on quality learning in this vitally important part of the curriculum.

### **Curriculum and Pedagogy**

In 2013, the systematic process of identifying children at the higher end of the learning continuum was maintained. As part of this process fifty five Year 2 students were administered the Acer General Ability Test (AGAT). Six of these students tested in Band 7 or above and went on to be assessed further using the Slosson Intelligence Test. The information gained from these tests provides teachers with specific data to inform enrichment and differentiation. Several teachers have attended Gifted and Talented Network meetings facilitated by Education Officers from the Catholic Education Office, Wollongong.

The commitment of St Thomas More Primary School to provide access to multiple learning technologies was strengthened in 2013 with the purchase of more iPads, MacBooks and several Apple TVs, providing access to a greater number of students than in any previous year. The school also purchased secure, portable storage for all iPads. Staff and students have begun using the Google suite of applications, with all students from Years 2 - 6 issued with email addresses and passwords.

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle. A variety of assessments were undertaken and results used to inform teaching programs for whole class and individual instruction. Results were shared with parents using the Federally Mandated A-E reporting

system and parent/student/teacher interviews. Students in Years 3 and 5 completed National Assessment Plan for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), and students from Years 3-6 were provided with the opportunity to complete University of New South Wales, Mathematics, English, Computer and Science Competitions. The children in Year 5 also participated in the Wollongong Diocese Religious Literacy Assessment.

In 2013, teachers were, as part of learning about the new English K-10 curriculum, introduced to the concept of "Assessment As Learning". This goes hand in hand with "Assessment for", and "Assessment of" Learning, but provides students with the opportunity to assess their own learning. At the end of 2012 the staff of St Thomas More, discussed the importance of tracking assessment results, it was felt more needed to be done with the variety of assessments given to students throughout their time at school, including external assessments such as NAPLAN, assessment by allied health professionals, as well as, school based assessments. 2013 saw the introduction of reading tracking folders which will allow staff to systematically follow the reading development of each student from K-6.

An increase in student enrolments at St Thomas More, allowed for a position of Coordinator 1 to be added to the current Leadership Team. This position was filled in late Term 3, 2013. The area of responsibility allocated to this position was assessment and tracking of student learning outcomes. In conjunction with the Coordinator 1, members of the Leadership Team and staff, assessment tracking procedures were developed for implementation in the 2014 school year. A draft Assessment Policy has also been produced.

During 2013 staff prepared for the mandatory implementation of the NSW Syllabus for the National Curriculum, English K-10, in 2014. Staff attended meetings and plenary sessions to ensure a smooth transition for all staff and students. A school wide scope and sequence was developed in conjunction with the new English Syllabus.

### **Cross Curriculum**

Where possible, learning and teaching programs were integrated across all key learning areas and these were implemented in a variety of ways.

To encourage and increase the love of literature, all students were given the opportunity to participate in the 2013 Premier's Reading Challenge. As with most years, a very encouraging number of students completed the challenge with certificates being awarded late in Term 4.

Grandparents' Day celebration has become one of the major highlights on the school calendar. This year the day was held early in Term 2. Mass was followed by a shared morning tea and then classroom visits. These visits gave parents and grandparents some insight into what happens in classrooms and the day was enjoyed by all who were involved.

All classes had the opportunity to enhance their learning through excursions, and all classes attended Life Education workshops and visiting performances such as the 'Puppet Man'.



Kindergarten visited Calmsley Hill City Farm. Year 1 enjoyed their day exploring the Freres Crossing Nature Reserve and the built parklands of Marsden Park. Year 2 visited the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre to see the Navigation Pacifica exhibition. The children were able to weave treasure boxes, create a treasure map using indigenous symbols, and were enthralled with tales of sailing and navigating the Pacific. Year 3, took a trip to Featherdale Farm and Year 4 enjoyed their excursion to 'The Rocks'. The Year 5 students enjoyed a three-day leadership camp to Wedderburn Christian Camp, and the Year 6 students participated in a three-day excursion to Canberra and the Snowy Mountains.

Indigenous perspectives were celebrated during National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, as well as, part of HSIE units in all grades. Year 2 presented an assembly for NAIDOC Week, which was attended by several local Elders. The school was fortunate to have an indigenous entertainer perform for the entire school. Following the assembly indigenous students were involved in a traditional music workshop.

Throughout the year students participated in a variety of transition and/or orientation programs. Year 6 were involved in transition days at a number of local high schools. CatholicCare ran a Transition to High School program for St Thomas More students and St John the Evangelist students. Students from both schools had sessions facilitated by CatholicCare workers and Year 7 students from St Gregory's College, St Patrick's College and Mount Carmel Catholic High School. During Term 4, the Year 5 students once again participated in the 'Transition Project' which involved students visiting St Patrick's College and John Therry Catholic High School to engage in a number of learning and teaching experiences in Woodwork, Science, Mathematics, Visual Arts and Food and Textiles. These experiences allowed students to experience first-hand learning within the High School context.

### **Meeting the needs of all students**

In 2013, teachers at St Thomas More Primary School offered a differentiated curriculum to help all students achieve their best possible academic results. Learning was diversified for students in the school through the implementation of individual education programs and by utilising small group work. This was supported by School Support Officers (SSOs), who supported students to complete tasks individualised to the specific needs of students, both those with additional needs and those who are achieving above grade level.

The Learning Support Centre catered for students with a variety of additional needs. A full time teacher and School Support Officer worked in the Centre and children attended the Centre for sections of the day depending on their specific learning needs. English, Mathematics and social skills were the main components currently taught in the Centre. All students in the school with Special Needs had an Individual Plan (IP) that was devised collaboratively each Semester by the Learning Support Centre teacher, the child's classroom teacher and the parents.

A Speech Pathologist was engaged this year to identify children in Years K-2 with speech problems. Forty two children were assessed with twenty four receiving specialist speech

intervention support. The Speech Pathologist also trained School Support Officers in specific speech skill training to assist these students.

The enrichment opportunities for the students at St Thomas More included group work that occurred in lunchtimes and within teaching time. This work included: environment gardening, outdoor learning, Camera Club, talent quests, choir, “Music Bus” program, indigenous culture, Artists’ group and a Kid’s Club in the Library.

### **Expanding Learning Opportunities**

The students at St Thomas More Primary School were given opportunities to enter the University of NSW competitions in the following areas: Mathematics, Writing, Spelling, Computers, and Science. Students received several distinctions and pleasing results in these competitions. Selected Stage 2 and Stage 3 students entered the “SPICED” Gifted and Talented program organised by the Wollongong Catholic Education Office and achieved very pleasing standards of self-directed and creative project work. Public Speaking was also offered as an optional competition for Stage 3 classes. The school was involved in many sporting opportunities during the year including carnivals for swimming, athletics and cross country at a school, Regional, Diocesan and State level. The school also entered representative teams for basketball, netball, cricket, football and soccer.

### **Student Achievement**

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The school uses a variety of assessment strategies at key points in the learning framework. These include teacher observation, projects and presentations. The school also participates in the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for the purposes of diagnosing individual learning needs and reviewing whole class teaching programs. Information on student progress is communicated on a regular basis and external assessment results are discussed with parents on an individual basis annually.

#### **NAPLAN**

NAPLAN is implemented for students in Years 3 and 5 and the results provide valuable information about student achievements in Literacy and Numeracy. Analysis of the results is used at school level to support the enhancement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

In May 2013, the children in Year 3 and Year 5 sat the NAPLAN tests. There were forty six Year 3 and fifty Year 5 students who sat these assessments. Overall, the students displayed growth in areas of literacy and numeracy. The Year 3 cohort performed better in reading than spelling and the Year 5 cohort performed better at spelling than reading. The school’s target and focus was on reading, grammar and punctuation, and significant learning gains were reflected in the test results in these areas. Year 3 performed well, achieving more Band 4 and 5 results than the National average in reading, grammar, number and patterns and algebra. Year 5

performed well, achieving more Band 5 and 6 results than the National average in reading, writing, data, measurement and geometry. In addition, the results show that the Year 5 students showed learning gains above the expected growth in literacy and Year 5 girls demonstrated scores above the average state growth in reading. Year 5 girls improved by fifty-nine scale scores from the 2012 data in the test aspect of grammar and punctuation, and Year 3 girls were twenty-four scale scores above the state average in the test aspect of spelling. To continue this growth in student learning, the skills of reading and writing and numeracy will be areas of focus throughout the school in 2014.

### Student Achievement in Bands

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assesses aspects of literacy and numeracy in Years 3 and 5. It provides valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of the results is used at school level to support the enhancement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. Year 3 results are reported in Bands 1 to 6 with Band 6 representing the highest achievement and Year 5 results are reported in Bands 3 to 8 with Band 8 representing the highest achievement.

**Please Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

NAPLAN 2013: % in Bands		YEAR 3			YEAR 5		
		Bands 1 and 2	Bands 3 and 4	Bands 5 and 6	Bands 3 and 4	Bands 5 and 6	Bands 7 and 8
Reading	School	4%	50%	46%	6%	62%	32%
	National	12%	41%	46%	12%	53%	33%
Writing	School	4%	59%	37%	8%	82%	10%
	National	8%	43%	47%	18%	60%	20%
Spelling	School	7%	44%	50%	6%	52%	42%
	National	13%	42%	43%	17%	51%	30%
Grammar & Punctuation	School	9%	39%	52%	4%	52%	44%
	National	10%	37%	51%	14%	51%	32%
Numeracy	School	4%	67%	28%	28%	60%	12%
	National	12%	54%	32%	20%	53%	25%

## Student Achievement of National Minimum Standard

Students are considered to be achieving BELOW the National Minimum Standard (NMS) if they are in the lowest Band for each year (Band 1 in Year 3 and Band 3 in Year 5) or if they have been exempt from NAPLAN. Students in the second Band for each year (Band 2 in Year 3 and Band 4 in Year 5) are achieving AT the NMS. Students in all other Bands are achieving ABOVE the NMS.

NAPLAN 2013: % AT or ABOVE NMS		YEAR 3	YEAR 5
Reading	School	100%	93%
	National	95%	96%
Writing	School	100%	91%
	National	95%	92%
Spelling	School	98%	93%
	National	94%	93%
Grammar & Punctuation	School	98%	91%
	National	95%	95%
Numeracy	School	100%	91%
	National	96%	93%

## Parent, Student and Staff Satisfaction

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Parents and carers, and staff members and Years 4 and 6 students were surveyed during the year. These surveys provided each group with the opportunity for input into areas affecting learning and teaching and the general environment of the school. The information provided from these surveys will be used to assist with future planning, improvements to policies and updating curriculum programs.

### Parents

The parent survey indicated that 100% of parents agreed that the school helped their child develop a knowledge and understanding about Catholic tradition. It also showed that 100% of parents agreed that the school provided various opportunities for parents/carers to become involved. The responses revealed that 100% of parents felt their child was challenged to maximise his/her learning outcomes, while 85% felt the school strived to meet their child's individual learning needs. Results from the survey showed 88% of parents believed the school provided appropriate information about their child's progress. The data also pointed out that 100% of parents knew that the school offered a range of co-curricular activities, and 96% of parents felt teachers were genuinely interested in the welfare of their children. The survey

results also revealed that 96% of parents felt the school provided a safe and supportive environment for children and 96% believed the school effectively communicated information about activities and events.

### **Staff**

Responses from the staff indicated that 92% of staff members agreed that the school helped students develop a knowledge and understanding about Catholic tradition, while 92% also felt that students understood their rights and responsibilities. There were 92% of staff members who felt the school strived to meet students' individual learning needs. The data from the staff survey showed 85% of staff felt the school provided appropriate information to parents/carers about student progress, and 92% felt the school provided a safe and supportive environment for children.

### **Students**

Data gathered from the student survey revealed that 100% of students were proud of their school, and 88% thought the school helped them understand their Catholic Faith. There were 91% of students who believed their teacher encouraged them to learn to the best of their ability, while 100% of students stated that they had a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities at school. The results of the survey also indicated that 85% of students felt safe at school, and 91% of students believed that if they had a problem at school, there were people who they could approach for help. Some 85% of students who responded to the survey agreed that there were sporting and other activities they could enjoy.

