Vision Statement

St Thomas Aquinas School will be an authentically Catholic Primary School, a learning community where every individual is valued and encouraged to achieve their greatest potential in every aspect of life.

Principal's Message

Reflecting on the 2007 School Year, St Thomas Aquinas has been very fortunate to have had many successes and achievements, as well as challenges. The school underwent a School Review in August, which provided time for the school community to review the four key aspects of school life. The community undertook a self-assessment relating to the areas of the Culture, Catholic Identity, Teaching and Learning and Pastoral Care of the school. Each of these areas was validated by a panel of external teachers and Catholic Education Office staff. This process was highly affirming and has given the school a list of commendations and recommendations for future planning and growth.

Parent Involvement

The parents play a vital role in the life of Saint Thomas Aquinas and they are encouraged to become involved in their children’s education. To this end they are engaged in activities both within and outside the classroom, assisting teachers with reading, sport, music and assemblies. The Parents & Friends Association has also been very active this year assisting the school in the continuing refurbishments which have taken place.

One of the challenges of every P & F is to provide ancillary capital for the school to provide a better environment for the children. In 2007 the P & F has continued this tradition and in doing so has left a legacy for the future.

All children who attend our school benefit from the fund raising and general activities of the P & F.”

P & F President

Student Leadership

The designated student leadership within the school consists of a girl and boy school captain and vice captain. There are also sport captains and library monitors. As well as this, many Year 6 children have been involved in the school’s Values Education Program as peacekeepers in the playground and first-aid helpers. Student leadership has been an invaluable support to the teachers at the school.

School Profile

St. Thomas Aquinas Primary School was established in 1903 by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The school is an integral part of the Bowral Parish. The aim is to create an educating community in which children, staff, parents and the Parish Priest support each other in pursuing the highest quality of education, and the development of life long learning for each individual within the community.

The school is in a central location in Bowral, across the road from the Church grounds. The Campus enjoys spacious grounds which typify the local area, and there is considerable open space for playground and shade trees. It is a two stream coeducational school with students drawn predominantly from Bowral.
Student Enrolments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Attendance for 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Enrolment Policy and Procedures can be found on the Catholic Education Office website: www.ceowoll.catholic.edu.au then go to the link Policies.

**Staffing Profile**

St Thomas Aquinas School has a total teaching staff of 18 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers. Of this total there are 14 classroom teachers, 1 Reading Recovery teacher, 0.8 FTE is allocated to the position of Teacher Librarian, 0.4 FTE allocated to Music and 1.75 FTE supports the relief of members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) from face to face teaching to carry out their leadership responsibilities. The SLT comprises the Principal, Assistant Principal, Religious Education Coordinator, and three 2 point coordinators. To further assist in the school, School Support Officers (SSO) are appointed, two SSOs work mainly in the School Office and 5 support teachers in classrooms.

Teacher experience varies from those in their early years of teaching to a substantial group of experienced teachers with between 15 to 25 years experience. Post graduate qualifications are held by 13 staff members consisting of 11 B.Ed degrees, 3 Graduate Diplomas and 2 Masters of Education.

The average daily staff attendance rate for 2007 was 98.16%.

Retention rates of staff has always been very high at St Thomas Aquinas, however at the end of 2007 we will be losing approximately 2 members of our teaching staff due to transfers to other schools.

**Professional Learning**

During 2007 professional learning for staff has continued to be centred around the Inquiry Model of Learning. Four teachers attended the Apollo Parkways three day practicum in Melbourne. This will continue, with a focus to develop this model across the school so that each teacher and class is working within the Inquiry framework. Besides this, teachers have been continually developing their skill in the use of technology. Courses have been offered within the school with a variety of training sessions before the Tuesday morning Communication Meeting.

Another focus this year has been on programming and the development of Scope & Sequence documents. This has involved professional dialogue, and curriculum staff meetings have been focused on in servicing of staff in this area.

Our School Review preparation also involved a range of professional learning activities, and enabled us to reflect on our teaching practices and plan a clear direction for the future.

**Teacher Standards**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by AEI-NOOSR*</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia within AEI-NOOSR* guidelines but lack formal teacher qualifications</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have qualifications as above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Australian Education Institution – National Of
Culture of the Catholic School

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish Primary School owes its foundations to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The community proudly proclaims our Catholic Identity and continues the spirit and tradition of the Sisters. The community recognises and appreciates the contribution that the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart have made to the school.

The Vision and Mission Statements guide the life at school, and signs and symbols of the Catholic Faith are displayed within classrooms and throughout the school.

Prayer plays an important part in daily practices. In this regard the Principal and staff are all in attendance each morning at assembly to begin the day by offering to Jesus through prayer the day’s work and play. Wherever possible the parent body is encouraged to participate in the prayer life of the school and all meetings, assemblies, special feast days and community events are seen as an opportunity for the children, parents and staff to pray together as a community.

As a school we regularly celebrate the Eucharist together, and these gatherings have become a wonderful celebration of the gifts and talents which are abundant in both the staff and students in the school. The school liturgy group, which is an integral part of the school community, works consistently to ensure that such celebrations are always reverent and vibrant occasions.

Social justice issues continue to play an important role in the lives of the students at St Thomas Aquinas. The school community endeavours each year to become involved and committed to supporting as many worthy causes as is able. This year support was extended in the following way to Caritas Project Compassion $2,800, St Vincent de Paul Winter and Christmas Appeals $710, Catholic Missions $200, Sydney Children’s Hospital $800, Mauraba East Timor Orphanage $800 and the Heart Foundation $3,500.

Student Welfare

St Thomas Aquinas offers a safe and secure environment for all students. This is maintained by the school executive and staff who identify areas which need constant care and attention. The responsibilities and expectations of all students are consistently communicated across the school.

The Values Education initiative, which has been in operation since 2006, continues to be implemented within the school. This has provided the whole school community with a focus on specific values, and units of work have been introduced to support these. The Values Education initiative also provides the opportunity for Year 6 students to take on the role of Peacemakers. In this regard students act as playground monitors in conjunction with the teachers, to maintain a safe and happy playground through mediating peer relations.

As well as acting as Peacemakers students take part in the Class Buddy System, which operates as a student support network between Kindergarten and Year 6, Year 1 and Year 5. The Buddy system has been used for many years and continues to provide guidance, friendship and support for students. It has been particularly useful in helping Kindergarten students settle into school routines, as well as promoting a sense of responsibility in the older children.

The Protective Behaviours Program, as well as the Values Education Program, has assisted in minimising the instances of bullying at St Thomas Aquinas. Through the implementation of these programs, the Buddy System and the Peacemakers, children are equipped with strategies which assist them in dealing with bullying issues. Behaviour management, which is monitored by one of the members of the School leadership Team, focuses on restorative processes to promote a safe behaviour environment. An improvement in playground behaviour has been noted as an outcome from all these initiatives.

A merit system operates throughout the school to recognise the achievements of all children. Stickers are awarded to children who display positive behaviour and commitment to their work and peers. Merit awards are given to students in all classes at the fortnightly school assembly. Awards which support the Values Education Program are given out weekly to students who are taking on an active role in adopting specific values into their daily life. These assemblies are an opportunity for parents, staff and students to recognise the achievements of their peers.

A school counsellor from Centacare visits the school one day a week to work with children and the families who are experiencing difficulties. The counsellor also works with classroom teachers to assist in the support of students. Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wollongong are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment, characterised by fairness, mutual trust, respect and
reconciliation. Any parent, student or community member who has a complaint or grievance has the right to have this addressed. The Complaints & Grievances Procedures can be found on the Catholic Education Office website: www.ceowoll.catholic.edu.au then go to the link Policies.

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.

Financial Summary
The 2007 School Year has seen a continuation of the school’s refurbishment program, with more classrooms being modernised and extensive display space added around the walls. Air conditioning is now in every classroom and new glass sliding doors have been added to Kindergarten and 2 Blue classrooms.

The P & F have contributed $23,630, along with our SEDSO money of $10,000, to a major playground enhancement. Through this effort the Infants’ playground is now a beautifully turfed playing area.

The following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, for the year ended 31 December 2007. This data is taken from the 2007 financial return to the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Learning & Teaching
Introduction
As a Catholic School, St Thomas Aquinas is a learning community where individuals are valued and encouraged to achieve their greatest potential. The Learning and Teaching is characterised by a committed staff who work together to provide a child-centred learning environment that strives to meet the needs of all children. The Inquiry model is being developed as an approach to learning and this has allowed a whole school so that all classrooms are working within a similar framework. Collaboration and an openness of professional sharing is encouraged and teachers are very willing to participate in their continued personal and professional learning and growth. The teachers have displayed a great generosity of time and energy in providing a wide variety of experiences to cater for the interests and abilities of the students.

Curriculum & Pedagogy
Syllabus implementation
Scope and Sequences have been developed for all Key Learning Areas to ensure all outcomes are covered throughout the year. Each grade scope and sequence has included content and assessment and clearly stated outcomes to be covered in each term. While teachers have been working on these scope and sequences, there has been ongoing professional dialogue around the delivery of the different syllabus documents.

Assessment & Reporting
The report format from the Diocese of Wollongong has been implemented with the
inclusion of each grade’s Non-Academic Personal Profile. This is an area for continued development and work is continuing on developing a more informative school report in 2008. Assessment has been included in the Scope & Sequences and a Kindergarten to Year 6 plan for assessment is developing across all Key Learning Areas.

Integration
Integration of learning outcomes has been a focus in many of the units of work covered, particularly in HSIE, Science and Technology and Religious Education. The Inquiry model of learning has assisted with this integration and work is ongoing in developing this model.

Technology Supporting Learning
Each class has 3 laptops and 1 desktop computer available, and many grade partners have organised for these to be shared during Literacy and Numeracy blocks. This allows for 8 children in a group to use computers on a rotational cycle. This year children in Years 4, 5, 6 have been asked to purchase their own personal thumb drive. This has been very successful as children are able to save their work and this eliminates a great deal of printing.

Students have access to the internet and are exposed to many tools for presenting their work including, word processing, powerpoint, imovie and Kidspiration. A scope and sequence is being developed to ensure children’s technology skills are built on each year.

Cross Curriculum

Literacy
During this year there has been a continued implementation of the Literacy Block and within this a development of the role of the School Support Officers in working with individual students or groups of children. This has proved a highly successful format, as this has allowed teachers to meet the needs of individual children. Teachers have been covering each of the text types in accordance with the scope and sequences developed last year. In Stages 2 and 3 the use of the Rigby Reading material during Guided Reading has supported the teaching of text types, and students have been working on examples of each.

The use of stories on ipods is increasing and this has supported reluctant readers, and teachers have been working closely with the Librarians to offer these children good quality literature. Additional reading books for home reading have been purchased in K-2, but this is an area for ongoing resourcing.

Our Basic Skills results show our Year 5 children have achieved huge learning gains in their Literacy levels. The feedback in our SMART data indicates the Literacy in the school is at a high standard. Any specific areas that have been identified as a concern within the school will be used to inform staff learning needs for next year.

Reading Recovery is highly successful program conducted within the school, and 18 of our Year 1 children successfully completed this course. Every child in Year 1 who advanced to Year 2 indicated a Reading level on Level 20 or above, while 31% of Year 1 children had access to Reading Recovery support during the year.

Numeracy
In 2007, each grade completed their Scope and Sequence for all outcomes in Numeracy, which indicated assessment strategies and the content to be covered. There have been discussions within stages to develop these, so that children are given appropriate opportunities to achieve the outcomes required. Continuing discussions will take place in stages during 2008 to further develop these assessment procedures and record keeping in this area..

During 2007 a Mathematics Resource room has been constructed, and all materials not required on a daily basis have been stored in this central location. The Mathematics syllabus has been used to identify the resources needed to teach the content in the syllabus and a whole school stock-take has been undertaken to ensure all resources are available. Plans are in place to attain additional resources and materials required to support the teaching of the Numeracy outcomes.

Results from the Basic Skills testing have shown students are achieving a high standard in Numeracy. Documentation on individual students is being analysed assist in planning support the learning of particular children, and to improve the overall school results in Numeracy.
Meeting the Needs of all Students

Teachers have been developing programming to cater for individual needs and an emphasis has been placed on planning for the range of abilities within each classroom. Using the Inquiry Model together with Bloom’s Taxonomy style questioning, has given children many opportunities to challenge themselves according to their own capabilities. Open-ended tasks and higher order thinking activities have catered for children who need extension. Many teachers have grouped the children according to ability levels in Literacy and Numeracy, and students have been placed in rotational groups so that they are challenged to complete work appropriate to their level. With regard to Guided Reading, which is an important component of the Literacy Block, and each student is grouped to read at his or her reading level.

School Support Officers are timetabled to assist the teachers by working with individuals as well as small groups. The Reading Voucher Scheme has also allowed for individual tuition for children who did not reach the benchmark in Literacy in the Year 3 Basic Skills testing.

Technology has assisted with meeting the needs of all children by extending gifted children and supporting students with special needs. The school has other programs which cater for different ability levels, including, Writing Fun and Rainforest Maths.

In 2008 the Assistant Principal will be working each morning with an aim to support gifted students, and other children who require additional support. This will be in addition to the support offered to classroom teachers and as a result each grade will have the availability of 3 teachers to focus on children’s Literacy and Numeracy.

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Children have a wide range of expanded learning opportunities through involvement throughout the school and in the wider community. The school participates in a range of competitions including, poetry and writing competitions; many Art/Craft Shows, public speaking and Chess Tournaments. As a part of the local community the students are very involved in the Moss Vale Show and they are encouraged to enter many of the exhibits. As well, the school supports the Bowral Tulip Time competitions.

At St Thomas Aquinas the Music Programme is outstanding and children are given wonderful opportunities to perform. In 2007 Years 5 and 6 entered the Wollongong Eisteddfod and again achieved excellent results. The Liturgy Group is renowned for the extensive range of instruments used by the children, the quality of music and the singing at community liturgies. A Boys’ Choir has been established this year, it is growing in numbers and its performances are becoming more polished. The school ensemble and guitar groups are all of a high standard. Children from K-6 all have a music lesson each week led by the school’s energetic and talented teacher, Mrs Hamilton. In music, there are also opportunities for private music lessons in a wide range of instruments.

The sporting opportunities offered by the school allow for every child to participate in fun Gala Days for netball, basketball and soccer, as well as carnivals at a local, diocesan, state and Australian level. The school is fortunate to have visiting coaches come and work with teachers and children in cricket, football and basketball. Many of the children are involved in elite sporting events and the school supports students to reach this level. The school also participates in the Heart Foundation’s Super Skippers competition and has been recognised as one of this program’ major sponsors.

Student Achievement

The school uses a variety of assessment strategies at key points in the learning framework. These include teacher observation, portfolios, projects and presentations. The school also participates in the state-wide literacy and numeracy testing program 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.

Basic Skills Test

There were 59 Year 3 and 56 Year 5 students who sat for the 2007 Basic Skills Test. Year 3 is reported in Bands 1-5; Year 5 in Bands 1-6, with Bands 5 and 6 respectively being the highest.
Year 3

Literacy: 13% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 21% of students in Band 5. The best performance was in Reading, followed by Language and Writing.

Numeracy: 19% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 10% of students in Band 5. The best performance was in Measurement & Data, followed by Space & Geometry and Number, Patterns & Algebra.

Year 5

Literacy: 0% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 75% of students in Bands 5 and 6. The best performance was in Reading, followed by Language and Writing.

Numeracy: 2% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 65% of students in Bands 5 and 6. The best performance was in Number, Patterns & Algebra, followed by Measurement & Data and Space & Geometry.

The following graphs give an indication of the learning gains made by students in their journey from Year 3 to Year 5.

National Benchmarks

The table below indicates as a percentage the Year 3 and Year 5 of students achieving the national benchmarks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 3 2005</th>
<th>Year 4 2006</th>
<th>Year 5 2007</th>
<th>Year 3 2005</th>
<th>Year 4 2006</th>
<th>Year 5 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>98.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: National Benchmarks not included have not yet been published

Parent Student and Teacher Satisfaction

Survey results indicate highly affirmation for the school from all key stakeholders. Children feel very proud of their school and are positive about their teachers, and all the school has to offer.

Parents indicate that the school provides strong support of our Catholic tradition and a belief that the teachers are genuinely interested in the welfare of the children. One area parents believe needs addressing is the school needs to cater more for individual learning needs, as a small percentage of parents would like their children challenged more.

An analysis of the responses from a survey of staff reveals that staff are very positive in all areas covered in the survey, and also strongly believe that the school offers a safe and supportive Catholic environment.
School Renewal Priorities

The School Renewal Plan is designed to focus our actions to bring about positive change and growth. The following have been identified as key focus areas for the school during the current cycle of this plan. The School Renewal Plan generally sets directions for a period of 3 – 5 years. It is subject to regular evaluations.

- To implement the new Diocesan School Review and Improvement Plan
- To further develop links between the three Catholic schools on the Southern Highlands.

Progress in 2007 Towards Achievements of School Renewal Plan

- Scope and Sequences have been developed and implemented for all Key Learning Areas
- Four teachers attended the 3 day practicum at Apollo Parkways in Melbourne
- The school successfully completed the School Review in August
- Infants playground has been turfed and irrigated

Priorities for 2008

- Learning Communities Project focusing on quality teaching and learning within the inquiry framework
- Continue development of the Scope & Sequences in each Key Learning Area
- Developing our assessment strategies, data collection and reporting to parents
- Implement the new Diocesan School Review and Improvement Plan
- Continue the playground improvement and installation of an underground water tank
- To further develop the links between the three Highland schools

The information in this report has been verified and the priorities endorsed by the Director of Schools and the Head of School Services.

Peter Turner
Director of Schools

Gary Norris
Principal