Annual School Report 2007

Vision Statement
St Columbkille’s Catholic Primary School is a community of God’s people striving to live our Motto, “Christ is the Way.”

Principal’s Message
We have much pleasure in presenting to you the 2007 Annual School Report for St Columbkille’s Parish School.

We at St Columbkille’s are very proud of our Catholic heritage and the tremendous sense of community spirit which is integral to the successes and achievements of our students. During this past year we have faced many challenges associated with the refurbishment of our school, but we now look forward to providing a vibrant, exciting learning environment for future generations.

Parent Involvement
The parents of St Columbkille’s play a vital role in the life of our school and are encouraged to become involved in their children’s education. Parents are engaged in classroom activities, social events and assisting the teachers with sporting events and excursions. In addition there has been invaluable support given to our school Canteen from our wonderful Canteen coordinators and Canteen volunteers.

This year our school’s community spirit was particularly evident in sad and difficult circumstances and we are very blessed to have such wonderful support.

Our school commenced major renovations to the administration areas and classrooms and once again the parent support was outstanding in assisting with the moving of furniture and classroom equipment.

Our P&F Association has also been very active this year with various fund raising events assisting the school to purchase ICT equipment and classroom furniture.

Parents and Friends Association, President

Student Leadership
As St Columbkille’s Student Leaders we have demonstrated our leadership this year by: representing our school at Conversation with the Bishop; showing pride in our school by modelling our School Code of Conduct, ‘RESPECT’ for the younger students; presenting School Awards at weekly Assembly and facilitating the Peer Support and Kinder Buddy Programs.

School Captains

School Profile
St Columbkille’s is a Catholic Parish Primary School established by the Sisters of St Joseph in 1905. The school provides quality education in faith and life for all students following in the tradition of the foundress of the Josephite Order, Blessed Mary MacKillop.

St Columbkille’s School is steeped in a tradition which has been developed for over 100 years. In remembering our past as a community we pay a sincere tribute to the clergy, the Sisters of St Joseph, parishioners,
parents, students and past teachers for their irreplaceable contributions to the Parish School of St Columbkille’s.

Today St Columbkille’s Parish School features a diverse cultural enrolment of 384 students and offers a full curriculum within an atmosphere of mutual respect in which all individuals are valued.

**Student Enrolments**

The Enrolment Policy and Procedures can be found on the Catholic Education Website: [www.ceowoll.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceowoll.catholic.edu.au) then go to the link Policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Attendance for 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Staffing Profile**

There are a total of 24 teachers at St Columbkille’s School.

**School Leadership**

The School Leadership Team consists of the Principal, the Assistant Principal, two Religious Education Co-ordinators and two Co-ordinators.

**Specialist Teachers**

Specialist support teachers work in the areas of Library, Literacy, Reading Recovery, Physical Education and Italian.

**Administrative Staff**

Five School Support Officers are employed at St Columbkille’s to assist student learning in the classroom. Two School Support Officers and one Senior School Support Officer are employed to assist with the administrative duties at the school.

**Teaching Staff Experience**

At St Columbkille’s the number of years teaching experience ranges from 1 year to 35 years and several teachers have post graduate qualifications.

**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**

The staff retention rate is high at St Columbkille’s with 90% of the teaching staff remaining for the 2008 school year.

**Staff Attendance**

The average daily staff attendance rate for 2007 was 97.8%.

**Professional Learning**

Professional learning opportunities are highly valued and sought by all members of St Columbkille’s school staff. During 2007 school personnel undertook a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes.

These included:

- Values Education,
- Quality Learning and Teaching Framework,
- TEACHnology,
- Rethinking Supportive School Environments,
- Effective Literacy and Numeracy,
- Differentiating the Curriculum, and
- Certificate of Special Education.

School based expenditure on professional learning in 2007 was $8300. This is in addition to expenditure on professional learning opportunities provided by the Catholic Education Office.
Culture of the Catholic School

Our school motto, “Christ is the Way”, is evident in the harmonious relationships which exist among staff, students, parents and Parish.

The school exists as an integral part of the Parish in assisting in the education of the faith. Our school is very fortunate to have a wonderful relationship with our Parish Priest, Fr Graham Schmitzer, who so generously gives of his time by providing Eucharistic Liturgy each Friday for the students of our school, opportunities for the children to receive the Sacrament of Penance, Benediction each term and regularly visiting the school.

In 2007 parents were supported by the school and Parish with the implementation of the Parish Sacramental Programmes. In Term 2, Year 6 prepared for and celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation. In Term 3, a large number of children received the Sacrament of Penance for the first time and in November on the Feast of Christ the King, First Communion was celebrated in our Parish. The Sacramental Programs were enhanced with Retreat Days organised for the candidates.

The importance of developing the spirituality of staff was reflected in our participation in the Diocesan “Animators Program” this year. Three staff members completed this course which provided practical and effective ideas and resources to share among staff to assist in the development of their faith journeys. A significant part of this was the introduction of new and varied staff prayers which were presented by the animators at our weekly staff prayer gatherings.

A highlight of our participation in the Animators course was our Staff Retreat Day at Berry in September. This day was facilitated by the animation team, Religious Education Coordinators and our CEO RE consultant. The staff worked together to create colourful silk cloths to enhance our staff prayer space and for use in special liturgies and celebrations. This day also provided the opportunity for staff to participate in the Micah Challenge to experience, and reflect upon the United Nations Millennium Goals which lead us to realise how fortunate we are and how we all have an obligation to help those whose basic needs in life are not met. The culmination of this day consisted of a shared liturgy and the presentation to each staff member of a candle inscribed with the scriptural reading from the prophet Micah: “Act justly; Love tenderly; Walk humbly with your God”.

Student Welfare

With Jesus Christ as our model, St Columbkille’s School is committed to the development of the uniqueness and dignity of each individual. The potential of each child can be realised when home and school share the common aim and purpose – to help each child grow into a responsible and well adjusted person. To this end we continued to maintain a focus on Values Education with specific emphasis on the value of Respect.

Kevin Treston facilitated a workshop for staff early in the year which focused on Values Education and more specifically identified the gospel values which are taught, lived and celebrated at St Columbkille’s School.

Our Pastoral Care Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy were further reviewed throughout the year as part of our 2007 Learning Communities Project. It is planned to continue to revise these policies in line with Restorative Justice Practices which will be implemented at St Columbkille’s in 2008.

A Centacare Counsellor comes to the school one day each week and provides support to students and their families. We were extremely grateful for the immense support from Centacare which was made available to our school community, especially for the staff and Year Six students, in the weeks following the death of our dear Year 6 friend.

A welfare initiative this year which supports the establishment of a Safe School Framework has been the implementation of the Rock and Water Program which is designed to provide students with practical strategies in dealing with conflict. Twelve students benefited from this program this year.

This year our school once again implemented the Peer Support Program which during Term 2 focussed on the values of respect, honesty, fairness, tolerance, responsibility and cooperation. Our Year 6 students showed their commitment to this Program by their thorough preparation and the responsible way they implemented it for the younger students. As well as leading Peer Support Groups, our Year 6 students continued the support of their Kindergarten buddies, providing them with opportunities to develop nurturing and sustainable relationships.

All students this year took part in the Life Education Program which complements our Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Syllabus. Life Education motivates,
encourages and empowers young people to make good life choices for a healthy future. It provides relevant and appropriate drug and health education.

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

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

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

**Financial Summary**

At the beginning of Term 3, 2007 the major refurbishment project of our school commenced. The estimated cost of the refurbishment is $1.5 million. The Commonwealth Capital Grant of $515,000 gained in 2005, together with our current SEDSO balance and our parent contributions to the Parish Contribution Fund, means our total loan is valued at $900 000.

We successfully attained funding of $46,000 through the Investing In Our Schools Program to update our school data services in order to provide our students with faster on demand access to information.

Funds have been set aside to complete various projects planned for the 2008 school year, including, landscaping the area between the school building and the Administration area, new furniture for a number of the new learning spaces, as well as continuing to update our literacy, numeracy and information technology resources.

The following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St Columbkille’s Corrimal 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
St Columbkille’s Parish School is committed to providing quality Catholic Learning and Teaching. This commitment reflects a diverse, contemporary curriculum which caters for the individual needs of all students. Each year, focus areas in Learning and Teaching are identified and these inform our Literacy, Numeracy, Religious Education and Information Communication Learning Technologies curriculum plans. During 2007 our focus areas included the Quality Learning and Teaching Framework, Assessment and Reporting and improved performance in literacy and numeracy.

Curriculum and Pedagogy
All Learning and Teaching Programs fulfil the requirements of the Board of Studies Syllabus documents in each of the six Key Learning Areas. Religious Education is taught using the To Know, Worship and Love curriculum in Years Kindergarten to Year 2, and the Celebrating Our Journey series in Years 3 - 6.

The importance of Assessment and Reporting continues to be given high priority at St Columbkille’s School, with the introduction of the A to E reporting format last year. Teachers work collaboratively to ensure there is consistent teacher judgement on student achievement and performance. Two formal written student reports have been distributed to parents, who were also given the opportunity to attend three formal parent-teacher interviews during 2007 to discuss their child’s learning.

Literacy progress is monitored using the Early Literacy Assessment tools. Long term monitoring of ex-Reading Recovery students continues to be a priority. The Schedule for Early Numeracy Assessment (SENA) tool continues to be used for the assessment of students from Kindergarten to Year 4. These results allow for the monitoring of the Numeracy progress of all students and provide a guide for future planning to cater for the needs of each individual.

The commitment made to the implementation of quality learning and teaching at St Columbkille’s is reflected in a generous budget which allows for the purchasing of contemporary resources across all key learning areas including regularly updating quality reading resources and ICT hardware. With added support from the Parents and Friends Association the purchase of Computer hardware is effectively maintained each year.

In response to our building project, all classes at some point during the year, have had to relocate, to either the Hall or to a new learning space. This relocation was a temporary arrangement whilst the project was being completed. This move had a positive impact on pedagogical practices as teachers worked collaboratively, often in a team-teaching approach, to deliver the curriculum to their students. This opportunity allowed teachers and students to learn in a dynamic learning environment.

Cross Curriculum
The development of Literacy learning is given high priority. Practices in Good First Teaching and Good Better Best strategies continue to be incorporated into daily literacy blocks. Reading Recovery is implemented in Year 1 to support those students needing assistance to develop reading and writing strategies. During 2007, 13 students were supported by this Program.

A Reading Workshop for parents was offered to provide information on the reading process and reading strategies they may use to assist their child’s development.

Participation in the Reach For The Stars initiative was once again held during Literacy and Numeracy week and promoted the Working Mathematically, Measurement and Problem Solving components of the mathematic curriculum.

Indigenous Education is incorporated across all key learning areas and the celebration of the NAIDOC Week liturgy enriched student awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal Culture.

St Columbkille’s school is proud of our K-6 Italian Community Language Program which provides all students with the opportunity to learn a second language during their Primary schooling.

The school community continues to support environmental awareness events such as Clean Up Australia and World Environment Day, by taking an active role in these relevant environmental initiatives.

Meeting the Needs of All Students
St Columbkille’s is committed to catering to the needs of all students. Teachers implement a variety of strategies and learning activities in their Learning and Teaching programs to enhance student learning and to cater for a
wide variety of learning styles and abilities such as the implementation of multiple intelligence theories.

Support for students with learning needs remains a priority. Transition profiles are established for those students who have been assessed as having learning needs and attract extra funding. The School Review Committee also supports teachers of students with learning difficulties.

**Expanding Learning Opportunities**

Many opportunities are offered to students to extend their learning at St Columbkille’s. Throughout 2007 selected students from Stage 3 attended Enrichment Days with our precinct schools in the areas of English, Mathematics, Creative Arts and ICLT. These days were designed to challenge and further develop the knowledge and skills of students identified as being talented in these areas.

Our school choir performed in the Wollongong Eisteddford for the first time this year where they achieved third place. The choir also sang at all school masses and represented our school in *Carols in the Wollongong Mall* and *Carols at the Fraternity*.

Students also participated in the Illawarra Chess Competition, Diocesan and Rotary Premier’s Reading Challenge, Visual Art Competitions and Doodle for Google Competition. Year 3 to 6 students were also challenged through their participation in the University of NSW Competitions in English, Writing, and Mathematics.

Sport competitions and Gala Days were made available to students throughout the year with opportunities to attend all Diocesan organised Sporting events. Many students represented our School and Diocese with one student also representing the State in soccer.

**Professional Learning**

As a learning community St Columbkille’s places great emphasis on the importance of professional learning for all Staff.

During 2007 a Learning Communities Project was undertaken which involved staff members working and learning together to review and develop the School’s Pastoral Care Policy and Anti Bullying Policy. This project will be continued during 2008.

Participation in Diocesan professional learning opportunities was once again given high priority in 2007. Attendance was evident in the following courses: Rethinking Supportive School Environments, Differentiating the Curriculum, Beginning Teachers, Effective Literacy and Numeracy, TEACHnology, and The Certificate of Special Education (Autism Spectrum Disorder). Two teachers were also trained in the *Rock and Water* Program.

A focus for professional learning during 2007 was The Quality Learning and Teaching Framework. Staff members participated in four staff meetings facilitated by Catholic Education Office personnel, focusing on current effective pedagogical practice. Staff members are now looking forward to furthering their understanding with the introduction of the Diocesan Quality Teaching Framework during 2008.

**Parent, Student & Staff Satisfaction**

Of the 107 Parent Surveys returned, 100% indicated that St Columbkilles School helped the students develop a knowledge and understanding of Catholic Tradition. The parent body also strongly agreed that the teachers of our school are genuinely interested in the welfare of all students. Staff indicated that they all strive to particularly provide a safe and supportive learning environment for the children in their care. It is pleasing to note that 100% of students surveyed acknowledged that they are proud of their school and are very aware of their rights and responsibilities at St Columbkille’s School.

An area for improvement identified by 5% of parents and students is that of the range of co-curricular activities offered. This area will be explored with the Parents and Friends Association in 2008.
**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 58 Year 3 and 49 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: 6% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 32% of students in Band 5. The best performance was in Reading, followed by Language and Writing.

Numeracy: 8% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 23% of students in Band 5. The best performance was in Measurement and Data, Space and Geometry followed by Number and Patterns and Geometry.

**Year 5**

Literacy: 2% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 63% of students in Bands 5 and 6. The best performance was in Writing and Language followed by Reading.

Numeracy: 8% of students were in Bands 1 and 2, with 48% of students in Bands 5 and 6. The best performances were in Measurement and Data, Number and Patterns and Algebra followed by Space and Geometry.

**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 3 2006</th>
<th>Year 3 2007</th>
<th>Year 5 2005</th>
<th>Year 5 2006</th>
<th>Year 5 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: National Benchmarks not included have not yet been published.*
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.

- Foster Catholic Identity within the context of Parish.
- Build a community centred on pastoral care and wellbeing of all.
- Develop a community of learners that results in improved learning outcomes for all.
- Provide a contemporary learning environment and resources to support current pedagogy and student outcomes.

Progress in 2007 Towards Achievements of School Renewal Plan

- Staff spirituality and faith formation was promoted by the staff Animation Team, through staff prayer, reflections and the retreat day.
- Reviewed the Pastoral Care, with the emphasis on Values Education and the formation of a St Columbkille’s Code of Conduct.
- The relocation of the Administration offices and the undertaking of the School Building Refurbishment Project have provided our students with a vibrant, exciting learning environment.
- Staff members were engaged in various professional learning opportunities including the Quality Teaching Framework which emphasis the delivery of quality pedagogy.
- A process to review school documentation has commenced.

Priorities for 2008

- Continue to foster opportunities to link with the Parish and wider community.
- To introduce and implement the School Review and Improvement Process to promote excellence for our students and community.
- To continue to develop our Anti Bullying Policy with an emphasis on Restorative Justices theories and practices.
- To provide staff with opportunities to engage in professional learning experiences in the effective teaching of Numeracy to improve student outcomes.
- To commence the landscaping of the school environment.

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

Gayle McMahon  
Principal