St Michael’s
Catholic Primary School
Nowra

Annual School Report
2008
About This Report

St Michael’s Catholic Primary School, Nowra is registered by the Board of Studies (NSW) and managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Wollongong, the ‘approved authority’ for the Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

The Annual School Report 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 about 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. Following its submission to the Board of Studies, the Report will be available on the school’s website by 30 June 2009.

The Report demonstrates accountability to regulatory bodies, the school community and the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong. This Report has been approved by the Director of Schools to ensure compliance with all NSW Board of Studies requirements for Registration.

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

St. Michael’s Catholic Primary School
PO Box 126
Nowra NSW 2541
Ph: (02) 4421 3630
Fax: (02) 4423 2861
Email: info@stmichaels.woll.catholic.edu.au

Parish Priest: Fr Patrick Faherty

Principal: Mrs Irena Blinkhorn

Date: December 2008
Vision Statement

The Shoalhaven children, together with Priests, Staff and Parents strive to provide: A Christian community, in which the Catholic faith is taught, valued, lived and celebrated. A learning community in which children are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Message from Key School Bodies

Principal’s Message

As a Catholic school St. Michael’s accepts its mission as one promoting a faith relationship with Jesus, in whom all values find fulfilment. We are fortunate that both the Church and school share the same grounds, which is indicative of the inter-relationship between Parish and School. As a staff we see it as a priority to offer the best possible education to all children within a Catholic environment in which prayer is an integral part of school life. Parental involvement in the school is welcomed at all levels.

Parent Involvement

The year has been a successful one at St Michael’s with monthly Parents & Friends (P&F) meetings attended by many parents who were keen to discuss school matters. The P&F have helped contribute to a number of school needs. Our profits for 2008 are $29,552.81.

Our events and activities have included: Disco, a welcoming to new students, catering for the Diocesan Cross Country, the Easter Egg Raffle, a challenging Trivia Night and our Annual Fete & Fair. These events are characteristic of the school’s sense of community. Each year it is heartening to see the families of St. Michael’s come together to make such events successful, both socially and financially.

Parents and Friends Association, President

Student Leadership

This year Australia hosted World Youth Day. There were celebrations and Masses held in our Parish and all over Australia. The Cross and Icon came to our school and we had a prayer service to welcome them, followed by a procession to the Bomaderry Children’s Home. Many children and adults went to World Youth Day celebrations in Sydney from our Parish, with many families hosting Pilgrims.

We have encouraged all students in Year 5 who would like to be school leaders, to have a go, because it helps you develop your confidence and leadership skills.

School Captains

School Profile

In 1893, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan established St Michael’s to serve the needs of the Nowra Catholic Community. The school still maintains the Good Samaritan tradition. The Parish covers most of the Shoalhaven region and includes five station churches.
St Michael’s is a three stream K-6 Catholic primary school with 490 students. There is a Learning Centre for children with special needs. In addition to class teachers there are specialist teachers in Music and Library. All children attend these classes each week.

The provision of sound educational practice is a shared responsibility of the Parish Priest, Principal, Staff and Parents under the supervision of the Catholic Education Office, Wollongong. The Principal is responsible for administering the school assisted by an Assistant Principal, three Coordinators and a Religious Education Coordinator.

**Student Enrolments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

**Student Attendance for 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Staffing Profile**

There are a total of thirty teachers, including full and par time, at St Michael’s Catholic Primary School.

**School Leadership**

The Principal, Assistant Principal, a Religious Education Middle Leader, 3 Middle Leaders and the Senior School Support Officer make up the Leadership team.

**Classroom Teachers and Support Staff**

Twenty-four classroom teachers and seven school support officers assisting in the classroom.

**Specialist Teachers**

The specialist teachers work in the areas of: Special Education, Reading Recovery, Music and Library.

**Administrative Staff**

A Senior School Support Officer manages the office assisted by two part time School Support Officers. Other administrative roles are the Librarian Assistant and Canteen Supervisor.

**Teaching Staff Experience**

There is a mix of age and experience on staff. Eighteen teachers have over twenty years of teaching experience and twelve have over eight years experience in the profession.
All teaching staff hold the minimum qualification of a Diploma in Teaching. Further qualifications held are: Master degrees by three staff, Bachelor degrees by fourteen staff, and Graduate Diplomas by nine staff.

**Teacher Standards**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by AEI - NOOSR*</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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 Office of Overseas Skills Recognition Staff Retention*

**Staff Attendance**

The average daily staff attendance rate for 2008 was 95.89%.

The staff retention rate is high at St Michael’s Catholic Primary School with 91% of the teaching staff remaining for the 2008 school year.

**Professional Learning**

Professional learning opportunities are highly valued and sought by all members of St Michael’s Catholic Primary School staff. During 2008 school personnel undertook a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes.

These included:
- Restorative Justice Training,
- Rock & Water Program,
- Boys Education Program,
- Anaphylaxis Training,
- Anita Chin Mathematics,
- Special Education Conference at Mater Dei,
- Tony Attwood Seminar – Bullying and dealing with children with Autism, and
- Teachers Workshop Operation Art.

School based expenditure on professional learning in 2008 was $7,166. This is in addition to expenditure on professional learning opportunities provided by the Catholic Education Office.
Culture of the Catholic School

St Michael’s Catholic Primary School seeks to promote its own Catholic Identity and the traditions of the Catholic Church. This is supported by ensuring the visibility throughout the school of symbols of Catholic faith, including “Sacred Spaces” in classrooms, school foyer and staffroom. Liturgies are planned in liaison with the Parish Priest and class teachers to ensure the liturgical celebrations enable the life of the school to be linked with the Parish community and the mission of the church. Most Friday mornings a grade joins with the Parishioners in celebrating Mass. Once a month the students are actively involved in a variety of ministries at Sunday Mass. The school community celebrated the Cross and Icon visit, Ash Wednesday, Grandparents’ Mass, and the Feast of the Assumption, St Michael’s Feast Day and Year 6 Graduation Mass.

School and Parish support each other in the Sacramental Programs: Penance in Year 2, First Eucharist in Year 3, and Year 6 students received the Gifts of the Holy Spirit when they made their Confirmation during a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Peter Ingham. Each Program is enhanced and supported by a retreat day, two parent information evenings and a prayer evening. Involved are the Parish Priest, catechists, teachers and parents.

The school has continued to promote a culture of social justice. Students learned about the work of Caritas and raised money for Project Compassion. The school also raised funds for Catholic Mission and The Trading Circle. A total of $3,359.10 was donated to these organisations.

Student Welfare

A VIP – “Students are Very Important People” group was established to help provide strategies for a positive and supportive school environment. Kids Care boxes were placed in all classrooms as another means to report bullying and harassment. The Restorative Justice Program was implemented with support from Marist Youth Care aiming at identifying the behaviours and how others are affected, rather than blaming the child or adult. The emphasis is on relationships, relationship building and responsibility. Appropriate and desirable behaviours are acknowledged and reinforced through a Behaviour Achievement Award system, where children progress through coloured levels, culminating in a Rainbow Badge.

Other programs are ‘Rock and Water’, where boys are taught to control and focus their energy to gain self control, self reflection and self confidence; “Working it out: Tools for Everyday Peacemakers”, designed to raise individual self esteem, develop resilience skills, and effective communication; for Kindergarten an interactive social skills program involving role play, literature and activities; and Peer support with Year 6 leaders working with small groups to develop friendship strategies.

The Complaints & Grievances Procedures can be found on the Catholic Education Office website: www.ceowoll.catholic.edu.au at 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 following graphs reflect the aggregated income and expenditure for St Michael’s Catholic Primary School for the year ended 31 December 2008. This data is taken from the 2008 financial return to the Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Income

Expenditure

Learning & Teaching

Introduction
At St Michael’s all aspects of life are valued including the spiritual, physical, aesthetic and intellectual. Teachers follow the NSW Board of Studies Curricula. In 2008 staff focused on scope and sequence for all Key Learning Areas (KLA’s) from Kindergarten to Year 6, aligning outcomes, planning and assessment across each grade and stage.
Curriculum and Pedagogy

The school continues to develop learning communities where students, staff and parents are involved.

The Quality Learning and Teaching Framework was used as a model for improving academic practice in the areas of assessment and reporting.

In 2008 Grade 4 were involved in a Diocesan Pilot Programme using technology in Religious Education. In addition to supporting the children in using technology to create their Religious Literacy Assessment products, Catholic Education Office (CEO) consultants assisted in the publishing of the children’s work in an Edublog on the internet.

A wide range of assessment tasks were used and teachers closely monitored student learning. Using the Quality Learning and Teaching Framework assisted in developing richer assessment procedures. The data from these assessments provide teachers with information that will assist them to make informed judgements about achievements of students and to design more effective learning and teaching programs.

All Australian States and Territories agreed to undertake the first National Assessment Tests for children in years 3 and 5. Students from Primary schools throughout Australia participated in this National Assessment Plan for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

The examination was held over three consecutive days May 13-15, testing: Spelling, Writing and Grammar, Reading and Numeracy.

The Religious Literacy Assessment for Year 4 students consists of two sections: Part A, which is a formal written set of responses and Part B, presentations using multimedia formats which are based on the completion of individual student work samples.

After redeveloping whole school Scope and Sequences for both Human Society and Its Environment and Science and Technology, the school purchased new integrated units, which cover all areas of the current Science and Technology Syllabus.

This year we purchased twenty five new laptops to replace older ones. They are continuing to be used within the classrooms and are available to every class. We purchased digital video and still cameras for each grade. The staff held a number of workshops on different software packages including word, excel, photoshop elements, garageband, myclasses and podcasting.

Twenty-one Interwrite Boards and data projectors have been purchased and should be fully installed in each classroom for the start of 2009.

Cross Curriculum

Reading Recovery has continued to be a great support for children with reading and writing needs. In Year 1 fourteen students completed this program under the tuition of the two trained teachers. This brings the total number of Reading Recovery trained teachers in our school to seven.

The MULTILIT Program is designed for children who have struggled to learn to read in the first few years of schooling. These children need intensive systematic reading instruction in the areas of phonics, word attack skills, sight word recognition and supported book reading in a one-on-one context. MULTILIT incorporates all of these. During 2008 twenty one students
participated in the Program. School Support Officer time was allocated to ensure greater support for students with high needs in the areas of Literacy through the MULTILIT Program. Regular team meetings are held to maintain the integrity of the Program.

Basic Skill tests from 2007 were analysed, with an emphasis on mathematical language. Staff and parents were in-serviced on “Mental Computations” with Anita Chin. Teachers incorporated more “hands on” activities as a continuation of “Mathematics in Indigenous Contexts” program which was undertaken in 2007. Flipping Numbers Chart and Decahands are used to support all students.

This year during National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, a special flag raising ceremony was held involving community elders, students, parents and staff. The children participated in Aboriginal cultural awareness activities. St Michael’s formed an Indigenous Educational Committee, holding a staff meeting to set a twelve month plan aimed at increasing involvement and consultation with the Indigenous community. New indigenous families were welcomed to the school at a “gathered lunch”. The Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) staff member represented both the school and Diocese in Canberra for the National Apology Day. The National Apology Resource was promoted at a staff meeting.

St Michael’s participated in National Tree Planting Day and World Environment Day, winning as their prize a selection of trees presented by the federal Member of Parliament, Mrs. Joanna Gash MP.

**Meeting the Needs of All Students**

The Learning Centre operates to support students funded under the Commonwealth’s Students with Disability Funding with their English and Mathematics. The students work with the support of a teacher and a school support officer (SSO), on their individual programs, which cater for their needs.

Individual Educational Plans (IEP’s) are designed for children with special needs at both ends of the spectrum. The class teacher, parents and the Learning Centre teacher, hold IEP meetings at the end of each Term to review the progress of these children and set new goals.

The gifted and talented students at St Michael’s are provided with enrichment opportunities in all Key Learning Areas. There are IEP’s written for these students where required. The school offers students the opportunity to compete in University of NSW Australian School Competitions and to be involved in a variety of enrichment programs.

In sport, students took part in House Team competitions in swimming, cross-country and athletics at school level. Grades 3 to 6 students participated in gala days for soccer, Dragon Tag, NRL, basketball, netball and cricket. Students in Grades 3 to 6 attended skills development clinics run by representatives of Australian Rugby League and Australian Football League. Grade 2 children participated in a ten day Swim Safe Program.

Students at St Michael’s had the opportunity to trial for a variety of sports for selection in Wollongong Diocesan Teams and possibly progress to MacKillop and State Carnival levels. These are elite athletes in their chosen sports. Two students at St Michael’s this year received a Primary Blue Medallion at the Catholic Development Fund Sports Awards in Wollongong, and a teacher received the Teacher’s Service Award for their contribution to Diocesan sport.
Teachers use *myclasses* to enhance learning and developing understanding, placing a strong emphasis on technology to showcase student learning. A number of staff meetings and after hour training sessions were organised to help the teaching staff upgrade their skills.

**Expanding Learning Opportunities**

The school competed in the Shoalhaven Eisteddfod, with 3 entries: Infants and Primary Choirs and in Grade 3, the Verse Speaking. Each entry achieved first place. Representatives from Grades 5 and 6 were chosen to compete in Public Speaking at the Catholic Development Fund competitions; one of our students placed third. As in previous years, students in Grades 3 to 6 were given the opportunity to test their skills and knowledge in the University of NSW Australian School Competitions for Schools English, Writing, Mathematics, Computer and Science. Children had the chance to exercise their creative talents in various art competitions throughout the year, including the Dymocks Golden Paw Awards, Albatross Art Competition and “The Christmas Story” Exhibition and Competition. The Premier’s Reading Challenge was again held with children in Grades 2 to 6 being encouraged to participate. Students were offered the opportunity to enter the RSPCA Writing Competition and the Dorothea Mackellar and Taronga Poetry Competitions. Years 5 and 6 students were finalists in competition to create a Water Saving advertising commercial, for National Water Week.

**Professional Learning**

During 2008, the Catholic Education Office supported St Michael’s staff in a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes.

St Michael’s staff participated in a Restorative Justice Training Day, as part of our Learning Communities Project, which is now being implemented throughout the school.

Four staff members were trained in the use of the Diocesan Quality Learning and Teaching Framework, with their initial focus on rating assessment tasks. Religious Literacy was also supported in 2008. Two staff were trained as Reading Recovery Teachers this year.

Staff also attended courses in Numeracy: Teaching Measurement in the Early Years, Literacy; Creative Writing Workshop and Information Communication Learning Technology (ICLT); 2 Simple Course. Staff members also took advantage of courses the Catholic Education Office (CEO) held in the school holidays, with two staff members attending the Coaching for Performance Workshop and two staff members attending the Child Protection In-service. Faith development was also supported. The school was fortunate to have a teacher and two support officers attend spirituality retreats, Berekah and Journey, as well as a whole staff spirituality course attended during staff meeting times. The staff members have undertaken the Adult Spirituality Course, “Wisdom Schools”; this was facilitated by four guest speakers culminating in a retreat day with Father Richard Leonard (Catholic Media Advisor).
Student Achievement

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 Plan for 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.

Religious Literacy Assessment

The Religious Literacy Assessment program for Year 4 students was successfully implemented within our school in 2008.

The school cohort consisted of fifty-five Year 4 students who sat the Religious Literacy Assessment Workbook (Part A) on 1 September and fifty-nine completed the Extended Task (Part B). The Extended Task is based on the Unit *One With God’s Creation* and was completed during the first half of Term 3.

The students showed a high level of performance in their knowledge of the religious tradition. This high level of performance was particularly noticeable in their:

- knowledge of the commandments,
- knowledge of the Genesis Story of God’s Creation, and
- ability to identify key symbols, signs and rituals of the Catholic Tradition.

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 the parts of the Liturgy of the Word,
- recall that Advent is the beginning of the Church’s Year, and
- recall the events of Easter.

The performance of each student was described as developing, achieving or extending.

For Part A 9% of students were placed in the developing level, 62% in the achieving level and 29% were in the extending level.

For Part B 14% of students were placed in the developing level, 69% in the achieving level and 17% were in the extending level.

Combining Parts A and B, 11% of students were placed in the developing level, 69% in the achieving level and 20% were in the extending level for Religious Literacy.

NAPLAN

St Michael’s made significant learning gains in the four areas of reading, writing, numeracy and overall literacy in the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy for 2008. The learning gain is a comparison of results between Year 3 to Year 5. In all areas except for writing, we achieved higher than the state and diocesan averages. In writing we scored above the Diocesan average but below the state average.
St Michael's Primary School,  
Nowra  
Student Achievement 2008  
National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy  

Student Achievement in Bands  
The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was introduced for students in Years 3 and 5 in May this year. NAPLAN replaces the previous State-based Basic Skills Test 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. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAPLAN 2008:</th>
<th>YEAR 3</th>
<th>YEAR 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% in Bands</td>
<td>Bands 1 and 2</td>
<td>Bands 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Achievement of National Minimum Standard  
The lowest Band for each year (Band 1 in Year 3 and Band 3 in Year 5) represents students who are achieving BELOW the National Minimum Standard (NMS) in each aspect of NAPLAN. Students in the second Band for each year (Band 2 in Year 3 and Band 4 in Year 5) represents students who are achieving AT the NMS. Students in all other Bands are achieving ABOVE the NMS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAPLAN 2008: % AT or ABOVE NMS</th>
<th>YEAR 3</th>
<th>YEAR 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent, Student & Staff Satisfaction

During 2008 parents, staff and Grades 4, 5 and 6 students were surveyed to provide each group the opportunity for input in areas affecting learning and teaching and the general functioning of the school. The information provided by the survey will be used to assist the school with future planning. The responses received were mostly very positive. 33% strongly agreed, 58% agreed, 7% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed to questions within the survey.

Results revealed that all members of the school community agree that St Michael’s helps the students develop a knowledge and understanding of the Catholic tradition, and that the school effectively communicates information about activities and events. A majority of students responded that they felt proud of their school. The data also revealed a significant proportion of the community agree that the students are challenged to maximise their learning outcomes, that individual learning needs are catered for and that appropriate information regarding student progress is relayed.

When asked if their teacher encourages them to the best of their ability students responded positively. A large number of students understand their rights and responsibilities at school and who to approach if they have a problem.

Parents agree that St Michael’s provides various opportunities for them to become involved and that teachers are genuinely interested in the welfare of their child. Parents were happy on the whole with the communication by the school. As a result of the parent surveys, compulsory parent interviews will take place at least once a year.

School Review and Improvement

School Review and Improvement is an ongoing process of self-evaluation measured against a commonly agreed set of criteria. By the end of 2008 all schools have begun the transition to the new School Review and Improvement process.

School Review and Improvement components reviewed in 2008:

- Parents, parishes and the broader Church
- Educational potential
- Reporting student achievement
- Integration of Information and Communication Technology
- Provision for the diverse needs of learners.
- School climate, learning environment and relationships

School Review and Improvement components to be reviewed in 2009:

- Catholic life and culture
- Pastoral care
- Professional development of staff
- School climate, learning environment and relationships
- Assessment