2013 PRINCIPAL REPORT
19 November 2013

As we come to the end of the 2013 school year, it is always important to stop and reflect on a year that has been rewarding in many ways, as well as being a time of personal growth for those within our community. I present this report on the school's achievements over the past twelve months with a strong sense of pride in the work that has been undertaken.

In early 2013, after a number of months without a permanent parish priest, there was certainly cause for celebration on the appointment of Fr Wayne Davis. Maintaining strong links between the school and parish is always very important, as is our connection to the Presentation Sisters. The presence of the Presentation Sisters at a number of key events reminds us not only of our rich heritage, but also of our faith - a faith which must be at the core of everything we do.

I wish to thank all staff for their commitment in supporting the school’s Strategic Plan and continuing to work on whole school improvement as mandated for all Catholic schools in WA. In line with Insight QCS data, the following elements were reviewed: Staff Well-Being and Student Management.

The associated renewal process from this review helps us challenge each other in ways in which to best support our students. As a staff, we have continued to strive for excellence in a community where the values of truth, inclusivity and compassion underpin all we do. There is a genuine endeavour for an understanding of present and future trends in our practice and to have a thoughtful influence with our professional conversations on best practice.

As part of our plan to upgrade technology throughout the school and provide a digital framework from which to work, we are mindful that the children must always be central to our thinking. In line with the Australian Curriculum we are working toward integrating ICT across all learning areas, teaching digital citizenship, connecting learning, adapting contemporary practices and teaching device management. To enable this skillset to flourish in both the students and staff, we continue to monitor our infrastructure, maintain strong links with service providers and support each other through coaching practices.

The BYO iPad program in Year 3 has been very successful in enthusing, engaging and supporting teaching and learning that takes place. There is a strong focus on using digital technology not as a substitution tool for pen and paper, rather as a teaching and learning tool to transform and redefine learning.

Contemporary practice has been enhanced, especially in the Year 3 classroom, with the new contemporary learning and pedagogical spaces. Ryan Von Bergheim and Lila Gibbs must be thanked for their leadership in this area, staff development and for the countless hours of their own time they have put into ensuring the success of the program. Thank you.

At the same time, we have been working to deliver strong benefits for children in Early Learning with:
• A continuation of the Three Year Old program at two sessions per week
• Kindergarten at 3 days per week
• Pre-Primary as the first year of compulsory schooling.

Maintaining a focus on the National Quality Standard ensures that the educational program and practice is stimulating and engaging and enhances children’s development.
Celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation provide focus for the school as a Catholic community and as part of the wider worshipping community beyond the school. The school has continued to prepare students during the Religious Education Program. Being parish based and school supported, the Sacramental Program continues to develop the links between, family, school and parish.

The school performed well in the National Literacy & Numeracy Assessments with most of our children achieving results at or above the National Minimum Standard, with many children in the highest bands possible for Year 3 and 5.

- **NAPLAN 2013**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>National Mean 2013</th>
<th>School Mean 2013</th>
<th>School Mean 2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
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<td>488</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>449</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
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<td>441</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>National Mean 2013</th>
<th>School Mean 2013</th>
<th>School Mean 2012</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<td>514</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>501</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>486</td>
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In summary, Year 3 numeracy growth has been consistent, but spelling is closest to the national average than other areas and below some of our like schools.

In summary, Year 5 residual (projected growth) in numeracy has grown significantly but spelling has dropped over time.

Our school focus for the past two years has been on Numeracy, specifically problem solving. We believe that the strategies and procedures introduced in this area are solid and the embedding of these will continue into 2014.

The results achieved in the Yr 3 & 5 Bishop's Literacy Assessments were very good, with our school mean above the state mean. In line with consolidating our parish links, the area of Church will be a minor focus for 2014.

In addition to state and national assessments, the school conducts other external and internal standardised testing to ensure that a rigorous approach in measuring student progress is maintained. All data collected is integral to planning and teaching.

Selected Years 4, 5 & 6 students through the E-Challenge program again participated in the regional Tournament of the Minds competition, prepared for the Night of the Notables and
participated in the regional All Stars Competition, the Australian Mathematics competitions, ICAS English, Writing, Science and Maths, the Readers Challenge and a regional Arts and Science Day. A huge thank you must go to Lisa Keatch who joined us this year and has co-ordinated the E-Challenge and upper classroom extension programs.

We continue to have a significant number of entries from St Thomas’ School into the Catholic Performing Arts. There were many highlights including class groups, class bands, school choir together with individual and small group performances. Thanks to Emily Sullivan’s outstanding skills as a flutist, St Thomas’ won the instrumental shield for the first time in our history. Thank you to Julia Waller who must be congratulated on the success of the program.

The school once again competed very successfully in a range of sporting endeavours at the school, interschool and regional level. Early morning surfing, tennis, swimming coaching, running club and team coaching were once again a real hit with the students. It is important that our strong emphasis on healthy and active lifestyles is maintained. Thank you to Helen Baron-Hay and Sally Ramsay.

2014 PRIORITIES

In the review and planning process, there is a celebration of achievement, whilst at the same time, a need to embrace new directions.

In 2014 we will be developing a new strategic plan for St Thomas' School. I believe it is important to build our strategic direction in close alignment with the new direction of the Catholic Education Office as outlined under the acronym LEAD:

1: **Learning is what we do** - we are committed to learning at every level.
2: **Engagement is essential** - we are committed through positive relationships with all.
3: **Accountability is not optional** - we have personal and collective responsibility for our school's success.
4: **Discipleship is our calling** - we are committed to deepening our relationship with Jesus.

The Quality Catholic Schooling Components to be reviewed in 2014 are:
1. Resource Management
2. Accountability
3. Engagement with Parish & Church

All schools are required to have a **Literacy & Numeracy Plan** in place. To determine our priorities in this plan, the St Thomas' Primary School National Testing results were analysed and compared with similar schools where possible. We have found that the similar schools are our most challenging comparator. After examination of school level data, the **major curriculum priorities for 2014** will be:

- **LITERACY**: With particular emphasis on transferring our word knowledge (spelling) into writing.
- **NUMERACY**: Embedding numeracy problem solving strategies throughout all grade levels.
- **INTEGRATING strengths of the E-Challenge program** into classroom practice across all curriculum area.

The 1:1 BYO iPad program will be incorporated into the Year 3, 4 & 5 programs in 2014. Personal ownership of the iPad is seen as the single most important factor for successful use of this technology, increasing student motivation, interest, engagement, creativity and understanding of complex ideas. Personal ownership also promotes student autonomy, encourages students to take more responsibility for their learning and engages parents in the learning of their children. **All other classes will be supported through the use of the ICT Lab, together with class banks of iPads.**
The Year 4 & 5 classroom furniture will be upgraded to support and enhance contemporary learning spaces and pedagogies.

A continuing priority in the Early Years Learning will be the ongoing conversations about ensuring adequate learning spaces for the students and ensuring we are meeting teaching standards, raising quality and driving continuous improvement in this area.

To help drive these priorities we welcome to the Leadership Team, our new Assistant Principals Ryan Von Bergheim and Nicky Sullivan.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking a number of people.

We are blessed to have Fr Wayne at St Thomas’. His joyful presence and commitment to our school community enriches those around him and promotes strong links between the school and parish.

To members of the Parents and Friends Association, I thank you for your magnificent efforts in fundraising and supporting all the activities of the school. You have continued to enhance the children’s education and the provision of $37 000 for targeted projects throughout the year has been excellent. I am grateful for the leadership of Cath Carol and my sincere thanks on behalf of the school community to all members of the P & F.

With the Early Years playground now complete, we have continued to consolidate on the ‘greening’ aspect of our school grounds. The fact that we now have a nature playground and interactive and sustainable gardens around the school is a testament to Robyn Tandon’s vision, creativity and commitment. Robyn steps down from her role as the ‘gardens’ coordinator this year and I wish to thank her for an amazing three years on the job! Thank you Robyn.

Thank you to all the members of the 2013 School Board, chaired so well by David Edwards, for spending many long hours analysing the figures and planning a financially sustainable future for St Thomas’ School. You are a great team to work with and I thank each of you for the time you have given to the school and the interest you have shown in making certain that the school continues to thrive. My sincere thanks go to Nicole Gallin and James Martin, who will step down this year.

As in previous years, I always say the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and support staff. I acknowledge and wish to express my deep gratitude to all staff at the school for providing the highest quality care and Catholic education to our students. It continues to be such a pleasure working with such outstanding people - thank you.

I wish to pay tribute to Sam Valentine and Matt Cavanough who, as Assistant Principals have carried out their leadership responsibilities with professionalism and amazing energy whilst being committed classroom and support teachers. Thank you also to Ryan von Bergheim who stepped in as acting Assistant Principal during the first semester and maintained a support role on the leadership team throughout the year. All are very capable leaders who have made an outstanding contribution to St Thomas’ School. Thank you.

At the end of this year we will farewell Matt Cavanough who, after two years at St Thomas’ has accepted an Assistant Principal position in Sydney. Tanya Giovannangelo who has been a teacher and Assistant Principal at St Thomas’ for the past fifteen years, will take up a new Assistant Principal position at Yidarra Catholic School. Thank you for your commitment and energy and we wish you both continued success for the future.
To Emma Woods and Nicole Downie who as Educational Assistants in the Early Years, have supported the staff and students and shared so many great qualities with us. We thank you and wish you all the best in future endeavours.

Julia Waller, who will be on leave during 2014 has made a huge contribution to teaching and coordinating music throughout the school. Thank you and best wishes for the year ahead.

When changes to staffing occurs, it is our priority to ensure that we maintain and employ high quality staff members who will share in the vision and direction of teaching and learning at St Thomas'. We welcome Mrs Nicky Sullivan as the new Assistant Principal and Year 4 teacher in 2014.

I wish to conclude by thanking everyone for the personal support given and to thank God for the relationships we have encountered in the course of 2013. May we ask that He walk with us and guide us as we journey ahead in 2014.

Many blessings

Tamara McGougan