



Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Primary School Forestville

2013 Annual Report



Principal: Mrs Meredith Tomkins

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1. Message from Our School Community

1.1 Message from the Principal

One of our major initiatives in 2013 was to revisit our vision for the school.

As a Catholic School in the Diocese of Broken Bay, Our Lady of Good Counsel exists to educate and form young people in Catholic discipleship: offering them experiences of following Jesus as members of a Catholic community.

Our vision is to build an engaged community that inspires all to be creative, curious, and reflective learners who work towards their full potential, empowered to make a difference in our world.

In 2013 we continued to provide many opportunities and experiences for the children to respond to our motto 'Let Your Light Shine'. Learning through inquiry provided an environment which engaged and challenged the children, encouraged independence, the development of thinking skills and a language to discuss their learning. Indonesian was initiated as a means to introduce the children to an Asian culture and language.

The Annual Report reflects the achievements and future pathways of our community. It aims to provide understandings of our Catholic school, the unique learning environment and the successes of our children.

Principal

1.2 Message from the Parent Body

2013 was another effective year for Our Lady of Good Counsel Parents and Friends Association. The school community was involved in a wide variety of events organised by our class parents. Major functions including welcoming new families, kid's discos, Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations, the Easter Raffle and the main fundraiser 'The Adult's Disco' and these were organised and implemented by volunteers from the parent body.

The key focus was on building a strong community through social activities and fundraising events and this was successfully accomplished.

1.3 Message from the Student Body

We have many wonderful memories of our time at Our Lady of Good Counsel. Our teachers have left a very strong imprint on our lives at school and the little things like getting a special birthday sticker have meant so much. Friends have been a really important part as well as playing sport at morning tea and lunchtime. Learning was 'exciting, interesting and enlightening'. We are now ready to go on to High School and we are excited by the next step but we will miss our primary school.

Year 6 leaders





2. School Profile

2.1 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2013:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
227	191	128	1	418

*Language background other than English

2.2 Enrolment Policy

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established an [Enrolment Policy](#)[†] which is implemented by all systemic schools in the Diocese.

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

[†] Copies of this policy and other policies in this report may be obtained from the Catholic Schools Office website at: <http://www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au/about/index.html> or by contacting the Catholic Schools Office.

2.3 Staff Profile

The NSW government requires that this report detail the number of teachers in each of the following categories:

- have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines
- have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications
- do not have qualifications as described in (a) or (b) but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context. Such teachers must have been employed:
 - to 'teach' in NSW before 1 October 2004 (either on a permanent, casual or temporary basis), and
 - as a 'teacher' during the last five (5) years in a permanent, casual or temporary capacity.

a	b	c	Total
30	0	0	30

Further information about the staff profile can be found in the School Facts section of the school's profile page on the *My School* website.

2.4 Teacher Attendance and Retention Rates

The average teacher attendance rate during 2013 was . This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.

The teacher retention rate from 2012 to 2013 was 90 %.

2.5 Teacher Satisfaction

Overall the teachers were again satisfied with:

- planning time for inquiry units, numeracy, literacy and religious education with grade partners to ensure valuable teaching and learning;
- linking with the parish through grade Masses, whole school Masses, reconciliation and special liturgies;



- showcasing students learning through assemblies;
- communication with parents through the newsletter, curriculum notes and email;
- allocating each class with a class parent;
- promoting social justice (eg. Minnie Vinnies / project compassion);
- providing extra-curricular activities (choir, band, music lessons, chess, debating, public speaking);
- the Buddy Program (Kindergarten and Years 5&6);
- support for each other in hard times;
- best practice in education developed through our professional learning and discussions;
- the catholic ethos evident in our school in the way we accept and care for all in the community;
- the genuine care for the students and their families – seeing the face of Jesus in all of our students;
- change and new challenges;
- the welcome given to new members of our community;
- the high expectations of ourselves and our students and
- student achievement awards.

2.6 Student Attendance and Retention Rates

Year	Average student attendance rate (%)
K	96
1	95
2	95
3	96
4	96
5	96
6	98

The average student attendance rate for 2013 was 96%.

Management of non-attendance: In order for students to reach their full potential it is of paramount importance that they attend school regularly. While it is the parents’ legal responsibility under the Education Act to ensure that their children attend school regularly, our staff as part of their duty of care, monitor all absences and work in partnership with parents to support and promote the regular attendance of students. In doing so the school, under the leadership of the Principal:

- provides a caring environment which fosters in students, a sense of wellbeing and belonging
- maintains accurate records of student attendance
- implements policies and procedures to monitor student attendance and to address non-attendance issues as and when they arise



- communicates to parents and students, the school's expectations with regard to student attendance and the consequences of not meeting these expectations
- recognises and rewards excellent and improved student attendance.

School attendance records also contain information regarding student absences including reasons for absence and documentation to substantiate reasons for absences. Teachers are required to monitor non attendance diligently on a student by student basis and to bring to the attention of the Principal immediately any unexplained absences, non attendance of a chronic nature, or reasons for non attendance that cause concern. Matters of concern are referred to the Principal, the Catholic Schools Office and the relevant Department of Education and Training officer where appropriate.

Where a student is not able to attend school for a prolonged period of time due to a medical condition or illness, the school in collaboration with parents provides resources to contribute to the student's continuum of learning where possible.

The Catholic Schools Office monitors each school's compliance with student attendance and management of non attendance on an annual basis as a minimum, as part of the system's School Review and Development processes.

2.7 Student Satisfaction

The students were satisfied with:

- belonging to a Catholic school – knowing about Jesus;
- great education;
- sharing and caring;
- well-equipped classrooms;
- good teachers and principal;
- large playground and oval;
- fair play in the playground;
- merit and 'smile' awards systems; and
- the extra activities.



3. Catholic Life and Mission

3.1 Catholic Heritage

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School has a rich tradition that began with the first teachers – the Brigidine Sisters. Their charism espoused a deep love of God expressed through their sense of hospitality for others; by finding God in the ordinariness of life, in the beauty of creation and in the constant desire to learn about the connection between God and life. Today these values live on as we work to ensure that the values of hospitality, care and support are nurtured. Our school's natural environment has many areas in which nature and creation are a focus for prayer and reflection. Key symbols of the Brigidine Sisters are also apparent in our school. These include the lamp of learning, the Brigidine cross and the Holy Scriptures. The symbols are used to tie the school to its heritage.

The formation of students in Catholic discipleship is a major aim of our school and this is typified in the motto, 'Let Your Light Shine'. Our vision is to strive for a Christ-centred community where learning is enjoyed in a supportive and challenging environment and where each individual's special gifts are shared in response to the school motto.

As an integral part of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, our Mission commits us to:

- enhance faith development within a welcoming Catholic community committed to service;
- be a school of excellence in teaching and learning;
- respond to the differences of each individual;
- provide a safe and supportive environment; and
- celebrate community achievements .

3.2 Religious Life of the School

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic school supports the parish-based sacramental program through the Religious Education units covered in Years 2 and 3. When the children receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation they are supported by their parents and teachers.

Liturgy and prayer play an important part in school life both in the classroom and in the school community. The students are provided with opportunities to pray weekly during assemblies, in the classrooms daily and in church when attending mass or reconciliation. Major events in the liturgical life of the school include:

- weekly grade Masses;
- monthly Parish family Masses;
- whole school Masses for significant feast days;
- whole school masses to mark the beginning and end of each term as well as the beginning and end of the school year;
- Holy Week and Resurrection liturgies;
- reception of the sacrament of reconciliation;
- liturgies that celebrate occasions such as Anzac Day, Mothers' and Fathers' Days; and
- Year 6 Graduation Mass.

Social justice initiatives for 2013 included both fundraising and social justice awareness programs:

- participation in Project Compassion;
- fundraising for the work of St Vincent de Paul through Mini-Vinnies;
- St Vincent De Paul Winter Appeal and Christmas Hampers for families in need; and
- Peninsula Learning Community of Schools Mission Project: "Education a Right For All"
- Mission Awareness Project (weekly home and school challenges as well as whole day at end of term).



Opportunities exist for staff to reflect and grow spiritually through weekly staff prayer, liturgies and professional development. Each week the staff meeting begins with prayer and the staff also meets during Lent to take part in Lenten staff prayer before school.

This year there our SIP Goal focus was the development of formulating scripture based Discipleship Challenges that connected to all our Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) rules. The co constructed Discipleship Challenges were written by staff at a Staff Development Day with another Diocesan School working on the same project and this was facilitated by both REC's and Margot Beckett. Scripture from the RE modules taught across K-6 were the basis for the Discipleship Challenges written to help our children build on those connections to the way they live, speak and act in everyday life.

There is a strong link between the Parish, School and Diocese. Year 6 students participated in the beginning of the year Cluster Mass with our Parish Priest at the French's Forest Parish church, Our Lady of Good Counsel, in Forestville. The Cluster Mass was attended by Year 6 children from across the Peninsula Catholic schools. The Year 6 children also attended the annual Mission Mass at the Cathedral.

The school actively seeks ways in which to build the school and parish community, by encouraging participation in a wide variety of activities. Parents and the wider community are encouraged to attend whole school and grade Masses and Liturgies. The monthly Parish Family Masses also provide families with opportunities to involve themselves in worship and form closer ties with the parish community. In stage three the students were given the task of selecting the music for the mass in consultation with the Mrs Webster the Parish musician. After mass the parents, teachers and priests gathered to share a meal. Other events such as Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day and the 'Sharing One Faith in Christ' parish Mass were extremely well attended.

A parent prayer and reflection morning titled "A Little Slice of Heaven" was offered to provide parents with the opportunity to join together in prayer and pause to reflect on the scriptures through lectio divina.

Our Lady of Good Counsel also participated in the annual "Sharing One Faith In Christ" Mass at St Anthony in the Fields. This was a collaborative effort between the three churches and provided the opportunity for parishioners and members of the school community to come together to celebrate as members of the one body.

Staff members attended the Diocesan Schools' Staff Mass at the commencement of the school year. This was an ideal opportunity where all staff from the Broken Bay Diocese came together to pray for the year ahead.

The current Religious Education Modules developed and issued through the CSO outline the outcomes and content to be covered in each Grade, Kindergarten to Year 6. Each term the teachers, Peninsula RE schools consultant and the Religious Education Co-ordinator use these modules to plan the units of work to be taught. This is an extremely successful process as it ensures that all children in the classes across each grade have similar teaching, learning and assessment experiences.

Each child was involved in a daily prayer session and religious education lesson.

3.3 Catholic Worldview

Children at Our Lady of Good Counsel have the opportunity to join the Mini Vinnies group which provided support for the main St Vincent de Paul Group within the parish. Crazy Hair Day and our



Christmas hamper mufti days provided support for the Winter and Christmas appeals run by the society.

Student Representative Councillors were organised into sub-groups around the key action areas of Liturgy, Community and Social with each group responsible for taking responsibilities to ensure the organisation of activities and the smooth running of events such as Masses, assemblies and special events (mission project) during the school year.

The community of Our Lady of Good Counsel aligned all values, attitudes, directions and activities with the Diocesan Catholic Worldview. Respect and responsibility also provided the basis for the Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL). During 2011 we continued to focus on the following areas from the Catholic Worldview:

Dignity for the individual is respected and considered

This is evident in our School Mission Statement, our Pastoral Care policy and our student management system. A strong and tangible differentiation component was evidenced throughout the curriculum and qualified staff met the needs of the children who required learning support.

Outreach activities based on service to the wider Catholic and global communities

This was achieved through an active Mini-Vinnies Committee and the Mission Team comprising teachers and groups of children. The aim of the committees was to build awareness, conscience and commitment to outreach in the children. The recipients included St Vincent de Paul and Project Compassion.

Communication - timely and accessible newsletters

Newsletters containing prayers/readings, reflections and information about the school, parish, parent community and wider community, were handed out weekly to the eldest child in the family attending the school.

Welcoming reception practices

At the beginning of the year – new children and families were welcomed at the opening school Mass and assemblies. Prospective parents and kindergarten children were welcomed into our school on Open Day. New parents and children were involved in enrolment interviews and Kindergarten orientation sessions. Parents were welcomed into the classrooms and they supported many learning initiatives. The class parents organised meetings and social events throughout the year. Parents visited open classrooms and attended 'coffee with the Principal' mornings.

Accountability - timely and accessible feedback to students and parents

Feedback was given formally through reports, interviews, national testing, ILPs and IEPs, and informally by written and verbal responses to children's work, needs-based meetings, phone calls, emails and notes.

School presence on Parish Pastoral Council

Principal and Assistant Principal represented the school at Parish Council meetings.

Functioning Students Representative Council

Representatives from Years 5 and 6 were elected by peers. These children then formed committees including liturgy, environment, social and technology.

Just, compassionate and consistent processes for financial hardship

Manageable payment plans were available for families with financial hardship.



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