

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School Forestville

2008 Annual Report



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1. Message from Key Groups in Our School Community

1.1 Message from the Principal

During 2008 Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School participated in the process of school review. Review involved accreditation and validation of the great work done by so many since our last review in 2002. It has been used as a source of information for this report as much data was gathered from staff, parents and students to inform school review processes. I trust you find the report informative and that you feel as encouraged as I do about the future direction of our school.

1.2 Message from the Parent Body

The Parents' and Friends' Association provided significant support for the school during 2008 in financial terms but, more importantly, its commitment to focusing on the use of a stronger collaborative approach in organising activities which promote the value for community was highly successful. The Parents' and Friends' Executive team, although new to their role this year, worked cohesively to support the Principal in achieving the aims of the school. Many parents who worked on the sub-committees formed during the year have decided to continue their contribution by volunteering for sub-committees or executive positions in 2009.

The formation of a School Advisory Board in 2008 is seen as further evidence of parents and school working together and we look forward to further developing initiatives in the coming year.

President 2008

Parents' and Friends' Association

1.3 Message from the Student Body

The students of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School enjoyed the past year. Our Year 6 classes graduated in December, having had a very busy year as student representative councillors, Kindergarten Senior Buddies, Colour House Captains and prefects with lots of different responsibilities. A highlight of our year was the leadership camp at Challenge Ranch. We learned a great deal about our roles and about each other. We were able to put much of our learning into practice when we returned to school. We leave Our Lady of Good Counsel with fond memories and feel well prepared for high school.

School Captains 2008



2. School Profile

2.1 Introduction

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School is a co-educational primary school catering for students from Kindergarten to Year 6. The school works actively, as an integral part of the Parish of Frenchs Forest, with our priests and parishioners to achieve a well integrated parish focused on being one parish, united in Christ. It is well known for its high quality teaching and learning environment, its dedicated staff and its welcoming, family-like atmosphere.

During 2008, the school population reached 311 which represented a growth of approximately twenty pupils from the previous year.

2.2 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2008:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Indigenous	Total
165	146	16	0	311

*Language background other than English

2.3 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.cso.brokenbay.catholic.edu.au/resources/index.html> or by contacting the Catholic Schools Office.

2.4 Staff Profile

The NSW government requires that this report details 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
20	0	0	20

2.5 Teacher Attendance and Retention Rates

The average teacher attendance rate during 2008 was 97.6%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave.



The teacher retention rate from 2007 to 2008 was 94.4%.

2.6 Teacher Satisfaction

The teaching staff at Our Lady of Good Counsel was provided with significant opportunity to participate in a range of professional learning opportunities during the year. Each member of staff has an opportunity to set goals in relation to their own learning as well as those nominated as the learning focus of the school. They use the professional learning opportunities provided at school, diocesan and broader community level to achieve these goals. At Our Lady of Good Counsel, relevant professional learning was seen as a major contributor to student achievement and staff satisfaction.

2.7 Student Attendance

The average student attendance rate for 2008 was 95%.

2.8 Student Satisfaction

As part of our school review process, data was gathered from students, through a forum, interviews and surveys, about their experience of school at Our Lady of Good Counsel. Students spoke highly of their teachers and the quality of the school environment. They acknowledged the importance of their friends and of being part of a safe school, together with an emphasis on prayer and religious education.



3. Catholic Life and Mission

3.1 Catholic Heritage

The Brigidine Sisters first staffed and administered Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School. Hospitality, finding the presence of God in the ordinary activities of our day, and seeing God within creation, including the creative (music and the arts), lie at the heart of the Brigidine charism. Today these values live on as we work to ensure that the values of hospitality, care and support are nurtured. Our school site has many aspects in which nature and creation are a focus for prayer and reflection. Prayer continued as a major part of the day for each class. Prayer was presented and shared by the children with their class and teacher. Deliberate and thoughtful planning continued to lie at the heart of our liturgical celebrations as we endeavoured to assist all who gathered with us to connect with God. The community was invited to share mass and/or special liturgy at least twice per term with us.

3.2 Religious Life of the School

The children from Kindergarten to Year 6 were involved in presenting the story of the passion and death of Jesus prior to their Easter break. The liturgy was very moving and provided wonderful preparation for Easter. One of the highlights of the year was the participation of the school with the parish in World Youth Day. We hosted two hundred and fifty pilgrims from Australia, New Zealand and America for one week. Parents, staff and parishioners provided hospitality, a safe environment and incredible generosity to our visitors. All who took part reported that the experience was valuable at a personal and communal level.

Children involved in sacramental programs were provided with support through our religious education programs and the school worked with the parish to support facilitators who helped deliver the parish-based sacramental programs to children and parents. Towards the end of the year the whole school was engaged in presenting a Christmas play, "The Perfect Gift", to the broader community. The play delivered a message that the greatest gift anyone can receive is the gift of God's love. The process of preparing for, and delivering, the play was a significant experience for staff, parents and children in 2008.

3.3 The School in the Life of the Parish and the Diocese

Our Lady of Good Counsel continues to work with the Parish to organise monthly parish family masses. The parents of each grade are rostered to provide hospitality and support for the mass on these occasions but all involved at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School are invited to attend. Attendance at mass on these days is increasing and is seen as an effective way of nurturing a connection between parents, parish and school. Our new Parish Priest arrived in April and expressed a commitment to make a personal connection with our families and the children at our school. His regular visits to the school, inclusive manner at community celebrations and willingness to be present at school gatherings and special occasions is forging this connection. Parish family masses provided an excellent opportunity for further cementing the place of school as part of the Parish. We welcomed two new assistant priests to our parish during the year. Each priest makes regular contact with the school through masses, visits or the sacramental programs.

Our Lady of Good Counsel took part in the Year 6 Cluster Mass and the Diocesan Mission Mass in 2008 and will host the Year 6 Cluster Mass in 2009. Each occasion helped the children see themselves as part of a larger Catholic family which shares a common set of beliefs and views.

Year 6 from St Martin's and Our Lady of Good Counsel worked with the Parish Youth Minister on preparation for World Youth Day by taking part in a World Youth Day Program over four weeks in the lead up to the event. This initiative was a first step in building programs in the parish for our Stage 3 students aimed at encouraging them to play an important role as vital members of our parish community.



As our three churches, St Martin's Davidson, Our Lady of Good Counsel Forestville and St Anthony in the Fields, work to integrate their activities into the one Parish of Frenchs Forest we ensured that we were part of parish initiatives to promote unity. One such event was St Martin's Day when each Church and school contributed to the organisation of the mass and the subsequent community barbeque. We look forward to being part of similar events in the future.

3.4 Catholic Worldview

Children at Our Lady of Good Counsel have the opportunity to join the Mini Vinnies group which provides support for the main St Vincent de Paul Group within the parish. Crazy Sock Day and our Christmas hamper mufti days provided support for the Winter and Christmas appeals run by the society.

Our Lady of Good Counsel organised a special mission evening during which Stage 3 primary school children from the state schools and St Martin's were invited to an evening to consider how discipleship calls each of us to action. A guest speaker from the Northern Beaches Refuge provided information about Sierra Leone and the ways others act in faith through the organisation. Children attending the evening were invited to contribute.

The children also worked with St Paul's Manly in their Build a Hut program. Mini Vinnies organised a 'design a house' competition and special mufti day to raise funds for the construction of a family hut in Cambodia. The children were thrilled to receive photos of a completed hut built from the proceeds made from the donations of the families and children of our school.

Our Student Representative Councillors were organised into sub-groups around the key action areas of Liturgy, Community and Social with each group responsible for taking action to ensure the organisation of activities and the smooth running of events such as masses, assemblies and special events during the school year. We were encouraged that our school review report noted that parents felt the religious life of the school was inclusive of them and provided a variety of opportunities for them to be involved in sharing and practising faith.

3.5 Professional Learning in Catholic Life and Mission

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established a policy on the [Professional Requirements for the Accreditation of Teachers of Religious Education](#) which is implemented by all systemic schools in the Diocese.

One staff member attended the Ministry for Teachers I course conducted by the Bishop, while the whole staff participated in a staff development day which focused on Catholic Worldview. The morning session focused on the formation of values within a Catholic school. The afternoon session focused on study of the Trinity. The Catholic Schools Office provided support for the teachers, the Religious Education Coordinator and the Principal in planning and implementing the diocesan Religious Education curriculum through the work of the Education Officer, Mission Services. This work ensured consistent, quality teaching and learning in religious education for the children of OLG. C.

The staff used the Bishop's modelling of Lectio Divina to support their prayer time during the seasons of Lent and Advent. The process provided a simply but meaningful way for all to be engaged in these sessions.



4. Pastoral Care

4.1 Diocesan Policies

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established [Pastoral Care](#) and [Student Discipline](#) Policies which are implemented by all schools in the Diocese.

The implementation of these policies is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

4.2 School Implementation of Diocesan Policy

In order to ensure a safer and supportive environment, Our Lady of Good Counsel began to implement the Friendly Schools, Friendly Families Program as part of its anti-bullying program. The program is designed to build resilience and to provide a consistent approach to an anti-bullying strategy across the school. All classes trialled a unit of work from the program in 2008. The program will be fully implemented in 2009.

4.3 Pastoral Care of Families

Programs such as Cook-a-dinner were maintained this year and provided much support to families in need. Our school counsellor continued to receive referrals from children and families in need of support for a variety of reasons. This support included on-site intervention, referral to relevant agencies and professionals and constant monitoring of progress for each referral.

Our learning support team provides much needed learning and pastoral support to children with special needs and to their families through the establishment of a range of initiatives which include lunch club, special social skills groups, focused learning groups and individualised programs. Regular contact with parents is a feature of the work of the team.

Our Lady of Good Counsel continued to host a satellite class of children with autism. The children were enrolled at the Vern Barnett School in Forestville but were located at OLGC. The class was a composite Kindergarten to Year 2 group and each child was integrated for varying amounts of time into mainstream classes throughout the week. The aim is to prepare the children in this class for assimilation into mainstream schooling.

4.4 Resolving Issues

The Diocese of Broken Bay has established a [Complaints Handling Policy](#) which is implemented by all schools in the Diocese.

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



5. Excellence in Teaching and Learning

5.1 Quality Teaching and Learning

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School continues to use the Quality Teaching Framework as a valuable tool for forming a quality learning environment. During 2008, the school review report acknowledged a commendable level of consistency in relation to teaching practice across all grades. In addition the teachers were also commended for their dedication to teaching and learning at the school. The panel noted a range of improvements in facilities since the 2002 review, including computer facilities, general resources and organisation of learning. The dedication of staff to the children and the mission and vision of the school was also noted. As we move into the future our challenge will be to demonstrate a high level of commitment toward the concept of shared leadership in teaching and learning. This direction falls in line with our move toward a more collaborative approach across the school.

As a member of the Peninsula Catholic Learning Community of Schools, Our Lady of Good Counsel was involved in programs targeted at children with particular ability in the area of mathematics. Identified children in Year 6 were given the opportunity to participate in a mathematics focus group with Year 7 pupils at St Paul's College Manly over an extended period of time. At Years 3 and 4 level, identified children took part in focused mathematics study with children from other Catholic schools at St Rose Collaroy; and children from Kindergarten to Year 6 who showed strong ability in the area of mathematics participated in the 'Come on Kids' online mathematics learning project over several weeks.

We reviewed and improved our transition to school program. Children moving from before school programs to mainstream school were involved in a series of mornings at Our Lady of Good Counsel which afforded us an opportunity to assess school readiness and then introduce transition sessions for each child. Parents were fully informed of strategies used with the children and were offered the opportunity to take part in parent education sessions about beginning school. Every new family received a comprehensive document entitled "Your Child's First Year at School" to support them as their child moved into mainstream schooling.

5.2 Student Achievement

2008 was the first year of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). As a result of this new initiative, several points should be noted:

- A national minimum standard replaces the national benchmark of previous years.
- It is not possible in 2008 to provide comparisons with previous years' data.
- Students who were exempted from a test were deemed not to have met the national minimum standard.
- In the 2008 cohort, there were 47 students in Year 3 and 24 students in Year 5.

Detail on school performance is provided in the following tables where band distributions and percentages of students achieving the national minimum standard are outlined separately for Year 3 and Year 5. In Year 3, the highest band that a student can achieve is Band 6. In Year 5, the highest band that a student can achieve is Band 8.



Year 3 band distributions and % of students at or above national minimum:

		Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	School	0	0	11	23	40	26	100
	National	6.1	12	17.7	23	21.7	17.7	92.1
Writing	School	0	0	4	17	32	47	95.8
	National	2.9	6.5	15.6	28.7	27.4	17.2	95.4
Spelling	School	0	4	2	38	28	28	95.8
	National	5.9	10	19	25.9	21.9	15.5	92.4
Grammar & Punctuation	School	0	0	9	19	30	43	91.7
	National	6.6	10.7	17.3	23.3	21.3	19.1	91.7
Numeracy	School	0	0	17	28	36	19	95.8
	National	3.3	10.9	22.9	28	20.9	12.4	95.0

Band distributions at Year 3 demonstrate that for every test area the school percentage of students in the top two bands exceeds national rates. It is also pleasing to note that the percentage of students in the lower bands is very low in each area with spelling the only area showing some representation at Band 2. This suggests that emphasis on identification of literacy issues in the early years along with appropriate intervention is working. Writing, grammar and punctuation are particularly strong. Results in spelling show a need to review teaching practices. We will need continued effort into 2009 on the area of numeracy with particular emphasis to be placed on elements of the numeracy block.

Year 5 band distributions and % of students at or above national minimum:

		Band 3 (-)	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 (+)	% at or above national minimum
Reading	School	0	13	8	42	29	8	100
	National	7.5	13.6	23.9	26	18.1	9.3	90.9
Writing	School	0	4	22	17	43	13	100
	National	5.9	11.8	25.3	29.3	17.9	8.3	92.5
Spelling	School	4	4	4	38	46	4	96.0
	National	6.8	12.8	24.9	28.2	18.2	7.6	91.7
Grammar & Punctuation	School	8	4	8	29	8	42	92.0
	National	6.6	11	21.2	26.4	19.9	13.4	91.9
Numeracy	School	4	4	17	46	21	8	96.0
	National	5.9	17.4	28.9	25.7	13.9	6.6	92.6

The school experienced a significant change in student numbers as the number of boys moving into year five varied. A smaller cohort of students (twenty-four in all) does mean that single students can have significant impact on percentage results. Despite this, our students achieved higher overall results when combining the scores for pupils achieving in the top two bands and comparing these with the national statistics. These results indicate a broad range of ability within the cohort. The results indicate a need for us to look at how we cater for this broad range of ability moving into year six. This is strongly indicated in grammar and punctuation where our students were represented in the lower band but also showed extremely strong representation in Bands 6 and 8. The results show a need to review the way we are working with spelling. We will continue to work on our numeracy block with a particular emphasis on improving ability to solve problems and interpret questions more carefully. Our overall aim will be to move higher numbers of pupils into the top two bands.



5.3 Extracurricular Activities

We continued to provide a broad range of extracurricular activities during 2008 including Italian, French, Double Dutch Skipping, keyboard lessons and training and concert band.

The Peninsula Catholic Learning Community of Schools ensured opportunities for our children to participate in varying sporting activities throughout the year including the Robbie Slater Soccer Cup, the Peninsula Cricket Carnival, athletics, swimming and cross country carnivals. Our senior students participated in the Independent Schools Debating Competition and the Peninsula Public Speaking competition. We also participated in the Marana Music Festival and the Yamaha Band Competition.

Our Lady of Good Counsel completed its third year as a member of the Active After School Sports Program funded by the Australian Sports Commission with children enjoying activities such as basketball, multisports, dance and martial arts free of charge.

We introduced the Our Lady of Good Counsel Kids Club to provide before and after school care and vacation care for our children.

5.4 Professional Learning

The average expenditure on professional learning, per teacher, in 2008 was \$1,500.

Teachers participated in a range of professional learning activities during the year. Particular emphasis was placed on the area of numeracy with a series of staff meetings organised in partnership with the University of Sydney. Sessions assisted teachers to work specifically in the areas of teaching two dimensional shapes and measurement. Three teachers took the opportunity to complete a Certificate in Primary Mathematics Education course through the University of Sydney. The course will be offered to interested staff again in 2009. A staff development day was spent familiarising teachers with the new national assessment procedures and results as they pertained to Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Staff worked with a literacy consultant to lift student achievement of writing outcomes. This was part of an overall approach to continue support for the teaching of literacy on a regular basis and to raise achievement of student outcomes.

A group of teachers was engaged in contributing to a school based research project on the implementation of the Quality Teaching Project. The research involved a group of teachers planning a series of lessons, agreeing to observation of their teaching, then applying the discussed changes to a new lesson focused on the same concepts. The project used student work samples and teacher anecdotal records to identify changes in practice and improved outcomes for students. Results were then shared with staff.

All staff were engaged in learning to use interactive whiteboards as part of their teaching program. Early morning breakfast sessions were organised to train teachers in the use of this technology. Particular focus was placed on developing skills with software that could be used across the curriculum.

Our Lady of Good Counsel hosted a leadership presentation on behalf of the Catholic Schools Office. The presenter was of international note and approximately one hundred executive staff from schools across the diocese attended. Information from the meeting has been carried forward by the Peninsula Catholic Learning Community of Schools with executive workshops and programs planned in the coming year's professional learning calendar. Our Lady of Good Counsel will host three sessions from another presenter in 2009.



6. Strategic Initiatives

6.1 2008 Priorities and Achievements

A range of priorities and challenges were named for achievement in 2008:

- Organisation of parish family masses was streamlined. Improved parent involvement, earlier information to class parents about calendar setting, and strong support from parish priests have meant better attendance and a growing sense of unity.
- Literacy and numeracy initiatives were implemented with a report on our 2008 plan sent to the Catholic Schools Office in December indicating improved outcomes for teachers and students. The initiatives included embedding the Quality Teaching Framework into teaching practice and examining practices for the teaching of writing.
- The Community Water Project moved to ninety-five percent complete by the end of the year. A number of difficulties occurred due to weather, repair and maintenance work and testing time lines for the providers. New grass and an irrigation system were installed. Sprinklers provide a regular supply of harvested water to the playing field via a pop-up system.
- The school received a new roof dish which gives us access to improved bandwidth and speed for our internet service. Our ICLT facilities were significantly improved in terms of hardware and software.
- Education sessions for parents were offered in relation to transition to school, mathematics in the early years and the Paired Writing Program. All sessions were presented by Our Lady of Good Counsel staff.
- We launched our new school web page which can be viewed at www.olgc.dbb.catholic.edu.au This has become an excellent source of information for the current year and an effective first port of call for parents interested in finding out more about our school.
- Our Lady of Good Counsel completed school review, successfully receiving renewal of registration from the Board of Studies and the system. As a result of review, a new strategic plan has been developed and we are in the beginning stages of establishing our School Advisory Board.

6.2 2009 Priorities and Challenges

A new set of priorities and challenges have been identified for 2009:

- Full establishment of a school advisory board to assist in reviewing then implementing the school mission and vision statement, the school annual goals and Diocesan priorities.
- Engagement of the school board in helping to provide opportunities for parents to engage in faith formation opportunities including prayer.
- Support and assistance for the integration of the three Churches - Our Lady of Good Counsel Forestville, St Martin's Davidson and St Anthony in the Fields Terrey Hills to become the one Parish of Frenchs Forest.
- Implementation of the Commonwealth Government's Building Educational Revolution agenda in accordance with guidelines provided by the diocese.
- Implementation of the Friendly Schools, Friendly Families program.
- Involvement and support of all initiatives associated with the Peninsula Catholic Learning Community of Schools which provides a broad range of learning opportunities for our children and families.



- Refine and improve communications between home and school with particular attention on contemporary means of communication.
- Focus as a staff on the effective use of assessment data which informs teaching practices and which is concerned about improved learning outcomes for students. The staff will review criteria for allocation of A-E grades in school reports.
- Engage parents as genuine partners in the education of their children through effective learning programs and parent education opportunities.
- Plan for the upgrading of the school play equipment facilities.
- Continue the school program for upgrading classroom ICLT resources.
- Implement the 2009 section of the school maintenance program and ensure budget is considered for the next five years.



7. Parent Participation

7.1 Introduction

Work began in 2008 on the formation of the School Advisory Board. Much of the work of the Board during the year concerned preparation for school review and the development of a deeper understanding about the purpose of the Catholic school. Once established, the Board will support the Principal in reviewing then implementing the school vision and mission statement. The Board will work with the Parents' and Friends' Association on the achievement of annual goals and seek ways to engage the parent community in their work.

Parents are regarded as key partners in the education of their children. They have exercised this partnership in many ways during the year. Our review of the role of Class Parents during the year has had a particular influence on the life of the school. It has resulted in a more manageable yet key role in our community. We look forward to continuing to find effective ways to engage our parents in school life.

7.2 Parent Satisfaction

Our school review data, which involved surveys of the parent community, revealed satisfaction with school facilities, the liturgical life of the school, pastoral care, the sense of welcome which is part of the culture of the school and the integration of faith into the life of the school.

Parents felt that there was a sense of strategic direction about the school; there were many extracurricular opportunities provided for the children; and that the teachers and Principal were genuinely concerned that each child was nurtured and cared for. It was felt that communication was good and that there were opportunities for student leadership.

For the future, parents suggested that, although communication was good, there was still a need to continue improving communication in response to societal advances in this area. They especially wanted to be involved in talking about the strategic direction of the school into the future. Data showed that parents want to see better use of assessment data and a stronger emphasis on developing numeracy skills. Sustainability of our strengths into the future was raised in reporting. There was also a desire to understand what it means to be a Catholic community within the Diocese of Broken Bay and how to be an active part of it.



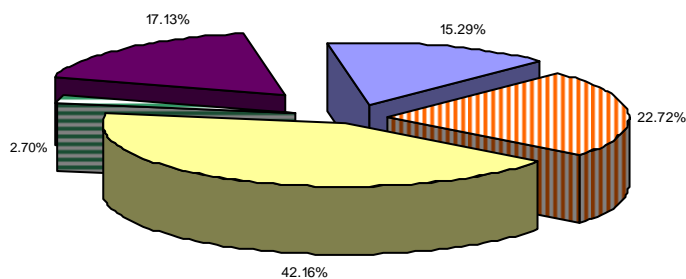
8. Financial Report

Consistent with Board of Studies requirements, financial income and expenditure for this school is shown in the graphs below.

Diocesan system financial reporting is found in the Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools Office Annual Report.

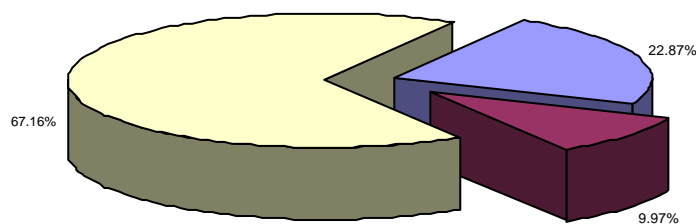
Income

- Fees and Other Private Income
- State Government Funds
- Commonwealth Recurrent Grants
- Government Capital Grants
- Other Capital Income



Expenditure

- Salaries, Allowances and Related Costs
- Non salary Expenses
- Capital Expenditure



The contents of this annual report have been validated by the School's consultant, Michelle Smith.