

2021

ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE *Together in Christ*



St Columba's Primary School

Lockyer Street, ADAMSTOWN 2289

Principal: Jenny Howard

Web: <http://www.adamstownsc.catholic.edu.au>

About this report

St Columba's Primary School (the 'School') is registered by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and managed by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO), Maitland-Newcastle. The CSO as the 'approved authority' for the diocesan registration system formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act (1990), is responsible for monitoring the compliance of member schools in the manner that has been approved by the Minister of Education. The Annual School Report (the 'Report'), provides parents and the wider community with fair, accurate and objective information about various aspects of school performance and development. Additionally, the Report complements and is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the School community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students.

Detailed information about the School's improvement journey is documented in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) which is developed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with key stakeholders. Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can be also be obtained from the My School website.

Message from key groups in our community

Principal's Message

Our students have enjoyed success in their achievements across the academic, cultural and sporting areas. They flourish in an environment that provides expansive learning activities and the opportunity to perform and grow. We successfully worked within and through the many challenges posed by the changes to learning and its impact on our community through Covid throughout 2021.

The school has a rich spiritual life that celebrates our Catholic traditions, is centred on the teachings of Jesus and the charism of our founders, the Mercy Sisters. We are guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, especially focused on through daily prayer, meditation, staff and student opportunities to recognise and develop their spirituality, liturgical celebrations and by embedding the Making Jesus Real philosophy in all that we do.

Our school community has benefited from the strong support of parents and the wider community. This was of particular notice during the COVID 19 pandemic, as families and the staff worked and communicated effectively and positively.

The staff is continuing with ongoing PD in line with the CSO's Leading Learning Collaborative. It has been an exciting initiative in building capacity for both learners and teachers.

Parent Body Message

2021 was again a very different year for our parent community as Covid impacted school involvement so heavily. Our P&F had to cancel most functions and fundraising during the year and meetings that were able to be held were carried out via Zoom. The P&F was still able to maintain a steady stream of support for the school while limited in practical options on site.

St Columba's maintained a positive relationship with a very supportive parent community through a switch to online sharing of school events and ongoing updates of the situation.

Student Body Message

As leaders of our school, students are grateful for the opportunities to lead and to learn. St Columba's aims to give every Year 6 student the experience of leadership within the school. The school formally inducts the whole Year 6 cohort into their leadership roles at the Opening School Mass and all Year 6 students were given various opportunities for leadership across the year.

Students generally said they had a positive sense of belonging at school – they felt accepted and valued by their peers and others at school. Students feel that St Columba's is a welcoming and friendly school where they have lots of friends who care for them.

School Features

History of the school

Established in the 1890's by the Sisters of Mercy, St. Columba's Primary School continues to serve the needs of the Catholic community of Adamstown. The school proudly maintains its close connection with the Mercy order and its charism. Since the retirement of Sr. Mary Regina Donoghue in December 1986, the school has been staffed by lay teachers.

We have 9 straight classes Three demountable classrooms with additional outdoor learning space have been added to accommodate our students. Enrolment stands at 230 students with two streams in two grades and strong enrolment in all other classes.

Additional teaching staff include a Learning Support teacher who provides expertise in additional needs, supporting students and teachers across all grades, as well as three Learning Support assistants who provide in-class support for teachers, enabling greater access to differentiated learning.

A Gifted Education Mentor (GEM) provides professional and learning support to gifted learners and their teachers, across the school.

An Aboriginal Education Teacher and an English as an Additional Language or Dialect teacher, raises awareness and supports the school community in celebrating our indigenous and multicultural heritage whilst assisting the academic growth and cultural development of our indigenous students.

Location/Drawing Area

St Columba's Primary School mainly draws students from the suburbs of Adamstown and Adamstown Heights, Kotara, Merewether, Broadmeadow and Hamilton. However, we also have students who live in other areas and where family circumstances require a placement in our school.

Our school is a part of the All Saints Blackbutt South Parish which also comprises the communities of St Kevin's at Cardiff and St James' at Kotara South. All three schools have active church and school communities.

St Columba's is part of the Central Region, one of the six geographic regions that make up the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and feeds into St Pius X High School.

Student Profile

Student Enrolment

The School caters for students in Years K – 6. Students attending this School come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information describes the student profile for 2021: Additional information can be found on My School website.

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
119	111	11	230

* Language Background Other than English

Enrolment Policy

The [Enrolment Policy](#) applies to all school enrolments within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. School authorities manage local enrolment processes and procedures in a manner consistent with the rationale and guiding principles articulated in this Enrolment Policy and accompanying procedures. It aims to:

- Set direction for school procedures and practices for enrolling students into Catholic primary and secondary schools within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- Establish a common, consistent approach in enrolment practices.
- Assist the system of Catholic schools to:
 - provide schooling, where possible, for children of Catholic families who seek enrolment
 - cater for the individual needs of each child equitably within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources
 - encourage parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools to give support to parish and school life, especially in education in faith.

Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2021 was 94.24%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group						
Kindergarten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
95.51	95.41	93.60	94.37	93.28	94.90	92.63

Managing Student Non-Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. The School, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

School staff, under the Principal's leadership, support the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the School community
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

The Principal is responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by ensuring that:

- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern
- the Regional Directors of Catholic Schools Office (CSO) or designated CSO officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom the School's strategies have failed to restore regular attendance.

Staffing Profile

Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2021:

Total number of staff	26
Number of full time teaching staff	9
Number of part time teaching staff	12
Number of non-teaching staff	5

Total number of teaching staff by NESA category

Teachers at this School are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the NSW Teacher Accreditation Act 2004. Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher are voluntary. The number of teachers within the Diocesan Schools System (systemic schools) at these levels is as follows:

- Conditional 260 teachers
- Provisional 136 teachers
- Proficient 2060 teachers

Additionally, there are approximately 3 teachers who are currently actively engaged in the submission process at the higher levels of accreditation. Teacher status at individual schools can be sourced directly from the School.

Professional Learning

The ongoing professional development of each staff member is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in services, meetings and conferences and a range of professional learning programs provided by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO). The School takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking of its staff professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

Summary of professional learning at this school

The main focus of staff professional learning during 2021 focused on the implementation of Sharratt's 14 parameters for school improvement. This resulted in collaborative strategic planning through an increased and energetic focus on the use of data to inform teaching practice and support the individual academic growth of every student. The review of data walls, case management meetings, all aligned to a school focus in literacy, enabled teachers to ascertain the most appropriate means of supporting the learning of the children.

The staff at St Columba's maintain a proactive approach to their own professional development through ongoing personal learning and self-reflective practices.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle participate, under the leadership of the Bishop and in partnership with parents and parishes, in the mission of the Church to provide quality education in the context of a living Catholic Christian tradition. Within this context, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle aspire to be:

“Communities of living faith where the heart of all we do is Jesus Christ.”

(Adapted from: The Catholic School's Office Diocesan Vision Statement, 2016)

As such, they are to:

Be truly Catholic in their identity and life;

Be centres of the 'new evangelisation';

Enable students to achieve high levels of 'Catholic religious literacy'; and

Be led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals.

(Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 2007)

St Columba's Adamstown aims to be easily identifiable as a Catholic school. We promote our Catholicity each day in many ways. We begin each day as a school and class using prayer, both formal and spontaneous and each class has a sacred space as one of the focal points in the classroom. Our Catholic identity is reflected in all areas of curricula and every aspect of school life. The sense of Christian community present at St Columba's is evident by the caring and supportive attitude of staff members and a willingness to promote the school vision of "Faith, opportunity and inspired learning for every child."

The school actively promotes its Mercy history and values. We have an active Mini Vinnies team who live and share the Gospel's messages within our school community. We have a current focus on recognising and promoting the Mercy values across the school.

With the ongoing promotion of Making Jesus Real, students were encouraged to take the time to recognise 'God moments' in our lives. These are the times when someone shows us the love of Jesus, and in doing so, is Jesus for us. We were also encouraged to think of ways that we could be Jesus for others.

St Columba's implements the Diocesan K-12 Religion Syllabus. An essential element of each day's learning is a focus time on children learning about our Catholic Faith, deepening their spirituality and providing a time for prayer and reflection. The importance of having such a time each day is reflected in the expectation that teachers in the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle ensure that 2½ hours teaching/learning time each week is

allocated to Religious Education. The classroom teaching at St Columba's promotes student centred learning, utilising the Diocesan Units of Work.

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

The School provides an educational program based on, and taught in accordance with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses for Primary Education. The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. The Catholic Schools' Office Learning Framework is brings together structures that relate to quality learning and experiences in schools across the Diocese.

The Learning Framework provides a context for the development of learning and its key components, informed by research, are built around five essential elements:

Continual focus on Leading Learning

Cultures built on Collaborative Learning

Rich and purposeful Personalised Learning

Creating the conditions for Supportive Learning

Building capacity through Professional Learning

Curriculum

Staff at St Columba's have regular Professional Learning Team meetings to discuss and improve teaching and learning across the school. This means that there are ongoing plans to analyse and improve on current practices and plan for the future. This is done with the scaffold of the Leading Learning Collaborative diocesan focus.

Staff work collaboratively on analysis of standardised and class testing to ensure that assessment results inform their targeted teaching. They share their analysis and planning for individual students as well as for teaching and assessment in literacy and numeracy. Staff work in collaborative environment to continually evaluate and improve on current practice and target areas for improvement. Literacy remains an area of focus overall.

Staff also work with a continuous cycle of assessment, in line with the assessment waterfall example within the Leading Learning Collaborative. This ensures that the assessment of where the children are informs the planning and teaching for each teacher.

Religious Education

Religious Education takes place in both the formal and informal curriculum of the classroom and school. The formal curriculum deals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to religion and faith. As the children move through their schooling, their capacity to understand concepts and the teachings of Jesus and the Church grows and develops. The Religious Education curriculum covers content across four strands.

JESUS and SCRIPTURE

HISTORY and BELIEFS

CELEBRATION and PRAYER
JUSTICE and MORALITY

Learning Support

St Columba's has a learning support teacher who liaises with parents, staff and outside agencies to ensure the best learning opportunities for the children who have additional needs within the school. Teachers have her support in developing and providing programs to support the identified needs of individual students as well as needs across class groups.

GEM

St Columba's continues working as a Gifted Education Lead School. The Gifted Education Mentor (GEM) works with teachers to identify and support children who are working in the gifted range across all curriculum areas. The GEM works at providing quality learning experiences and daily challenge for our gifted learners but also guiding our teachers and giving them confidence in meeting the needs of gifted learners within their classrooms. We continue to deepen our understanding of the gifted learners in our school and support staff to implement differentiation and other provisions to support the diverse needs of our students.

We are proud of our school culture that supports the differences of all our learners and encourages each individual to reach out and discover their true potential. Opportunities also arise for highly gifted students in Years 5 and 6 to participate in the Virtual Academy.

Student Performance in Tests and Examinations

NAPLAN

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia participate in the National Assessment program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The purpose of this test is to provide information to parents and teachers about the achievements of students in aspects of Literacy and Numeracy. The test provides a measure of the student's performance against established standards and against other students in Australia. Each year the results are analysed by the school to inform teaching with a view to improving student performance.

The Commonwealth Government sets minimum acceptable standards for literacy, numeracy, reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling at particular ages. These are referred to as national minimum standards. Student performance in NAPLAN in our school is compared to these standards.

NAPLAN RESULTS 2021		% of students in the top 2 bands		% of students in the bottom 2 bands	
		School	Australia	School	Australia
Year 3	Grammar and Punctuation	68%	54%	5%	11%
	Reading	61%	55%	5%	10%
	Writing	62%	53%	3%	7%
	Spelling	63%	50%	5%	13%
	Numeracy	43%	37%	10%	13%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2021		% of students in the top 2 bands		% of students in the bottom 2 bands	
		School	Australia	School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	36%	35%	5%	14%
	Reading	73%	41%	0%	11%
	Writing	39%	20%	0%	18%
	Spelling	59%	38%	5%	14%
	Numeracy	45%	29%	5%	14%

Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

Pastoral Care Policy

The School's pastoral care and student wellbeing policies guidelines and procedures are informed by the Student Well being and Pastoral Care Policy.

The Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2017, aims to provide a framework for the policies, programs, resources and practices implemented at system and school level with the purpose of supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of students, and all within its school community. It refers to the overall climate of care that exists within a Catholic school.

The environment is designed to be safe and inclusive, one that promotes academic rigour. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents, and the wellbeing of all.

The Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy for Students can be found at www.mn.catholic.edu.au/about/policies

There were no changes to the policy in 2021.

Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's policies and procedures for the management of student behaviour are aligned the CSO [Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#) and to the [Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Procedure](#). The dignity and responsibility of each person is promoted at all times along with positive student behaviours whilst ensuring respect for the rights of all students and staff. Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited in this School. The School does not sanction administration of corporal punishment by School persons and non-School persons, including parents, to enforce discipline in the School. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the School's website.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Catholic Schools Office has established an [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all schools in the diocese. It provides a framework for school communities to work together to prevent and address issues of student bullying, in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person. The CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the Anti-Bullying Policy may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website at this link.

Complaints Handling Policy

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has established a [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all systemic schools in the diocese. The rationale for the policy is that within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world. CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website at this link.

Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

The promotion of respect is at the heart of the school's behaviour management and pastoral care policies. The school is embarking on the process of implementing Positive Behaviours for Learning across the school, in alignment with Making Jesus Real. All classes embrace the Bounce Back Social and Emotional Learning program which assists schools and teachers in their efforts to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in their students and, in particular, to enable them to act with resilience when faced with change and adversity. Additionally, each newsletter includes an article for parents which relates to wellbeing topics. All staff enact the school's Pastoral Care policy to assist in the provision of a safe and secure environment for all students. We recognise that positive relationships are important in achieving and maintaining a happy and productive school environment.

In addition to the school-wide use of Bounce Back, the school uses a range of social and emotional learning programs across K-6 to improve children's self-concept, resilience and social emotional skills. The guiding principles are that behaviour can be changed and environments can be changed to change behaviour. The Principal and staff clearly inform students and parents of student expectations and school rules. Parents are encouraged to work closely with the teaching staff through effective communication, consistency of approach and positive reinforcement.

School Improvement

The School implements the systems review Cycle of improvement which outlines the processes and benchmarks for creating the culture and practice of continuous improvement with students as the focus. Strategic Plans and School Improvement Plans are future focused documents that map the School's directions, aimed specifically at improving educational and pastoral outcomes for all students through the following areas:

- Catholic Formation and Mission
- Learning and Teaching
- Leadership
- Wellbeing and Partnerships

Each year, the School develops an Annual Improvement Plan indicating the intended key improvements for student learning outcomes. A copy of the Strategic Improvement Plan and the Annual Improvement Plan may be obtained from the School administrative office.

Key Improvements Achieved

Catholic Formation & Mission

- Focus on the identified areas for improvement on the School Religious Literacy Plan.
- Dialogue with and survey students and parents on spiritual formation programs

Learning

- Embed the Leading Learning Collaborative strategies and 14 parameter research (Sharratt) to build precision in teaching and leadership practice and improve student growth and achievement, targeting literacy & numeracy
- Leaders will assist teachers to identify and monitor priorities and goals for their professional growth and develop Peers Goal Action Plans based on the Australian Professional Standards. Teachers will reflect and evaluate their practice during this process.
- More specific use of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria with a focus on co-construction and the development of the "third teacher" in each classroom.
- Continuous improvement of pedagogy through the use of professional learning teams and targeted individuals working with our two Pedagogical Mentors.

Leadership

- Foster a continued collaborative culture of leadership that builds capacity across school Executive and staff

Well-Being & Partnerships

- Integration of Making Jesus Real & Positive Behaviours for Learning in the development of scope and sequence for explicitly teaching behavioural expectations for a more consistent approach.

Priority Key Improvements for Next Year

Catholic Formation & Mission

- Clearly communicate the school's Mission and Vision as the foundation for practices and procedures.
- Target and improve teacher capacity to deliver spiritual formation that evangelises and is Christ encountering. Plan and deliver purposeful student formation programs across the school and more specifically in Year 5 and 4 to develop and build leadership capacity, aligned with MJR and our school Mission and Vision.

Learning

- Ongoing practices that embed the Leading Learning Collaborative strategies and 14 parameter research (Sharratt)
- A focus on the new syllabus documents, particularly in Mathematics, and improvement of pedagogical practices.

Well-Being & Partnerships

- Strengthen and build strategic partnerships with parents and families that will support our faith and learning communities.
- Further build on Positive Behaviours for Learning across the school, including building understanding across the school community

Community Satisfaction

The opinions and ideas of parents, students and teachers are valued and sought. Their suggestions are incorporated into planning for and achieving improved outcomes for students. This year, the School has used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the School from parents, students and teachers. At the beginning of each review phase school's undertakes extensive surveying of all stakeholder groups. This data is shared with the school community and contributes to the priorities for future planning.

Parent satisfaction

Parents at St Columba's were surveyed about various aspects of the school. The following comments are representative of a broad range of affirmations and recommendations.

- We're very happy with the school and with the teachers we've worked with
- We love the school community.
- The small community has really helped my children develop their confidence and self-esteem. They feel heard and cared for.
- The Catholic ethos of the school ensures they ask questions about life and spirituality in general. The teachers are involved, caring and really make an effort to get to know the children. We couldn't ask for a better school for our children.
- I really like the community feel of St. Columba's. It is our first year there and my son feels inclusive and safe at his new school.
- I think there is a lovely community based around the school and my child has made some wonderful friends.

Student satisfaction

Students in Years 4-6 were invited to participate in a survey investigating their perceptions about many areas of the school. The students thought it was good to be asked questions about their opinions so teachers would know what they felt was important, what might be beneficial for them and what they felt comfortable about in the school. A brief summary shows:

- Kids feel happy and safe at St Columba's.
- Very positive student/teacher relationships
- Children are very positive about their learning and the learning opportunities they have at school
- Students are very interested in environmental awareness and improving this across our school
- Spirituality/ formation could also be a focus for us. Providing students with opportunities to explore spirituality, not just learn religion.

Teacher satisfaction

Teaching staff at St Columba's are a collegial and professional group of individuals who strive to provide the best outcomes for students, spiritually, academically, emotionally and physically. They are well supported and appreciate the talents of each other. They are firm in their commitment to teaching and learning and offer the following positive attributes about the school.

Survey results from teachers were very positive and affirming. They were positive in how school staff has worked collaboratively to establish learning goals, provide quality learning opportunities and identify how to track student progress,

Teachers felt supported during stressful times, particularly over the past two years of adaptation due to Covid.

Financial Statement

This School Financial Information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth Government in the Commonwealth Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for the 2021 year is detailed below:

Recurrent and Capital Income 2021	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants ¹	\$2,101,668
Government Capital Grants ²	\$0
State Recurrent Grants ³	\$583,827
Fees and Private Income ⁴	\$438,892
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$0
Other Capital Income ⁵	\$155,792
Total Income	\$3,280,179

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2021	
Capital Expenditure ⁶	\$8,910
Salaries and Related Expenses ⁷	\$2,272,517
Non-Salary Expenses ⁸	\$694,195
Total Expenditure	\$2,975,622

Notes

1. Commonwealth Recurrent Grants includes recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.
2. Government Capital Grants includes all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State Governments.
3. State Recurrent Grants includes recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.
4. Fees and Private Income include Archdiocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income.
5. Other Capital Income includes building levy fees and capital donations used to fund Capital Expenditure.
6. Capital Expenditure includes expenditure on School Buildings, and Furniture and Equipment.
7. Salaries and Related Expenditure includes all salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.
8. Non-Salary Expenses include all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.

END OF 2021 REPORT