

# St Therese's Community School, Wilcannia Annual School Report 2015



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**Principal**  
*Noeleen O'Neill*

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

St Therese's Community School, Wilcannia is registered by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) and managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Diocese of Wilcannia Forbes. The CEO is the 'approved authority' for The Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

The Annual School Report for this year provides the school community with fair, reliable and objective information about school performance measures and policies, as determined by the Minister for Education.

The Report outlines information regarding School Review and Improvement initiatives and developments of major interest and importance to the school community during the year. It also details the achievements arising from the School's annual planning.

Accordingly, the Report demonstrates accountability to regulatory bodies, the school community and the Catholic Education Office. It complements and is supplementary to school newsletters and other regular communication.

Following its submission to the NSW BOSTES, the Report will be presented to the Parent Body and will be available on the school's website by 30 June 2016.

## MESSAGE FROM KEY GROUPS IN OUR COMMUNITY

### Principal's Message

St Therese's Community School is a very special K-2 school in Wilcannia, a small town in the remote outback of NSW. In many ways, 2015 has been a year of consolidation for the school community and for me as Principal. As a result of a lot of hard work by the teachers, Aboriginal Education Workers, parents and students, St Therese's is a much calmer and happier place today. Attendance is improving and the students' learning has shown incredible growth this year. We focused on providing quality instruction and aligning learning experiences with individual student's data. Writing and reading were priorities in 2015 and this is evident in the progress made by the students.

I am grateful for the support offered by the Catholic Education Office, ensuring the students at St Therese's are provided with every opportunity to succeed.

I thank the teachers and Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) at St Therese's for their commitment, enthusiasm and dedication to the students and their families.

The students at St Therese's should be very proud of their achievements in 2015. It has been a very successful year.

I certify that information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school's progress, achievements and areas for development.

Noeleen O'Neill  
Principal

### Parent Body Message

We are pleased that our children are going to school and learning. They always want to be at school and seem happy to be there. This year the teachers helped our children to learn to read and we are happy that the children bring reading books home. We especially like the birthday assemblies and open days. We need the bus to take the children to school and we want the Aboriginal Education Workers to help the children learn. We like it when we have the school community meetings so the CEO knows what we feel is important.

## Student Body Message

As St Therese's is a K-2 school, it does not have a Student Representative Council.

## SCHOOL FEATURES

### History

St Therese's Mission School opened on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1966 with the Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion. The school began with ten students, seven in Kindergarten, one student in Year 1 and three pre-schoolers. In 1989 the school had a name change to St Therese's Community School. The school continued to grow with enrolment peaking at 66 students in 1996.

St Therese's Community school is a Catholic Systemic co-educational school located in Wilcannia. The school caters for students from Kindergarten to Year Two and has a current enrolment of 27 students. 100% of students are Aboriginal. The school prides itself on its calm and happy atmosphere and quality teaching and learning experiences, offering all students the opportunity for growth and success. Central to the life of St Therese's is the development of a Christian community that supports and teaches the traditions and values of the Catholic Church. Students, through word and example, are led to know and live the way of Jesus in the Gospels. Held highly are the spiritual values of love, respect, justice and dignity in living and learning.

St Therese's is a culturally appropriate learning environment in which students of early childhood level can develop their identity and educational skills with the caring support of committed and qualified educators of indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds. One of our main objectives is to integrate local Paakantji cultural and spiritual teachings. Our school motto is 'We are the hope of the future, let's get educated.'

### Our achievements in 2015 included:

- Being identified by the NSW Catholic Education Commission (CEC) as one of five schools in NSW to improve attendance well above the average for their ABS remoteness category
- Hosting a visit from the NSW CEC to share what is working at St Therese's to improve student attendance
- Introduction of a comprehensive attendance monitoring and following up process
- End of Year celebration - Half of our students had an attendance rate of over 90%
- Successfully hosting CEO staff for a Compliance Audit visit in Term 2
- Conducting two school community meetings with the Director of the CEO
- Introducing uninterrupted learning time from 9.30 am to 11.40 am each day
- Introducing Minilit as a whole class literacy intervention in Stage One

- Incorporating daily writing - drafting and publishing
- Significant growth in reading and writing levels in Stage One
- Introduction of a classroom based at home reading program
- Developing three radio advertisements for the Wilcannia radio station - importance of attending school, reading every day and coping with being angry
- Successfully hosting the Wilcannia Forbes St Vincent de Paul Central Council Mini-Vinnies Conference with 90 students and staff from Cobar and Broken Hill attending
- Introduction of Paakantji dance classes
- Students dancing at the Sisters of Mercy Celebration Mass at St John's Church
- Weekly Paakantji language and culture classes
- All AEWs attending the three day Biennial CEC NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers Conference in Wagga Wagga
- Principal was selected to participate in the QELi Small schools leadership course
- AEWs organised and delivered a presentation to staff on Paakantji culture and the history of Wilcannia
- Visit by aboriginal students from Carroll College, Broulee - gardening, cleaning church, and sharing dreaming stories
- Emu egg hunting excursion with the Bishop and Carroll College students and staff
- Laying of artificial grass under the new Covered Outdoor Learning Area
- St Therese's Open Day- Mathematics
- Changing the name of the Calming room to Peaceful Place to reflect changes in its use and improvement in behaviour
- Receiving a grant from the Catholic Women's League to provide items for structured 'house play' and a cubby house for the students to play in
- Life Education Van and Christian Clown visits
- 'Heaps Decent' sessions each term
- End of year outing to Broken Hill Aquatic Centre for students with high attendance
- Successful Personalised Learning Plan meetings with SMART goals linked to learning and social skills
- Breakfast, hot lunch and fruit provided daily
- Bus pick up and drop offs for all students and AEWs
- Extensive range of National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week activities
- Weekly nutrition and cooking lessons with Maari Ma Dietician from Broken Hill
- Weekly Speech Therapy services through Allied Health in Outback Schools program - The University of Sydney
- Visit from the Royal Flying Doctors Service - life size plane, first aid activities

## Information Technology

In 2015, St Therese's did not have a designated Information and Communication Technology teacher (ICT) teacher to oversee the implementation of ICT. Each teacher was responsible for

ensuring that they integrated technology across all Key Learning Areas. Chromebooks were provided to each student and professional learning was delivered to staff. Word processing skills were explicitly taught and students used their Chromebooks for publishing written work, researching topics and playing educational games such as Mathletics and Reading Eggs. iPads continued to be used, especially in Kindergarten.

Teachers used digital media to enhance all learning, especially in English, Science and Religious Education. In 2015, each classroom and the hall, had new state of the art whiteboards and projectors installed.

## Drug Education

Aspects in drug education were covered in Personal Development and Health lessons. Prior to and following the Life Education Visit, students participated in a number of relevant learning experiences on making healthy choices and drugs. During the visit from the Royal Flying Doctors Service, students played inside the plane and learnt about health, drugs, emergencies and first aid.

## STUDENT PROFILE

### Student Enrolment

The school caters for students in Kindergarten to Year 6. Students attending this school come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information describes the student profile for 2015:

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
18	9	27	27

\* Language Background Other than English

### Enrolment Policy

Our school follows the Enrolment Policy and the Guidelines for Enrolment of Students with Special Needs that states-

- Catholic schools contribute to the mission of the Wilcannia Forbes Diocese by educating and forming students in Catholic discipleship by offering them experiences of following Jesus as members of the Catholic community. Catholic schools have traditionally aimed to support Catholic parents in their role of educating their children in the faith.
- At least 75% of the children enrolled should be baptised Catholics. Variations to this can be made in each parish by the Parish priest and Principal.

- The decision to enrol a student with a disability will depend on an appraisal of a number of factors including: the student’s support needs in areas such as curriculum, mobility, social skills, personal care and communication; the expressed desires of parents and caregivers; and the capacity of the school to provide the level of support services required. Appraisals will involve Catholic Education Office personnel, parents or caregivers and may include documentation from medical practitioners, other health and education professionals and the advice of experts in the field of the particular disability.
- Children must be aged five by 30 April of the year of enrolment before being enrolled in Kindergarten. In exceptional cases acceleration to each level of schooling will be considered.

## Student Attendance Profile

Our school follows the Catholic Education Office’s Guidelines and Procedures for the Management of Student Attendance to reflect amendments to the NSW Education Act. These procedures are located on The Catholic Education Office intranet.

The average student attendance rate for the school during 2015 was 70.5%

School attendance rates aggregated by year group are shown in the following table.

<b>Attendance Rates by Year Group</b>	
Kindergarten	50.5%
Year 1	84%
Year 2	69.5%
Ungraded	43%

Whilst attendance at St Therese’s continues to improve each year, one of its challenges is changing the community’s perception that Kindergarten is not essential. Our children’s attendance improves significantly from Year One.

## 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, monitors part or whole day absences.

- The class roll is electronically marked daily using approved codes. Absences are carefully recorded
- An Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) keeps a record of attendance on each bus run
- Explanations of absences are generally provided to the AEWs who forward them on to the Principal or teachers

- In the event of an explanation not being provided, teachers report the matter to the Principal
- Unexplained absences are followed up by the Principal in consultation with the school consultant. Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of school based strategies including:
  - telephone contact with parents;
  - student and parent interviews;
  - reviewing the appropriateness of the student’s educational program;
  - development of a school based attendance improvement plan;
  - support from school based personnel.
- If school based interventions prove unsuccessful then the school may make referral to the Director of Schools who advises the Catholic Education Commission.
- Absences are recorded on the student’s report at the end of each semester.
- Each fortnight the Principal validates an Official Record of Attendance for each class. These records are kept for 7 years.

## STAFFING PROFILE

In 2015 the staff profile consisted of:

Total Teaching Staff*	Total Non-Teaching Staff	Combined Total
5	7	12

\*This number includes 5 full-time teachers.

Percentage of staff who are indigenous	<b>60</b>
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## Professional Learning

Professional learning opportunities are highly valued and sought by all members of St Therese’s Community School staff. During 2015 school personnel undertook a range of professional learning activities related to improving student outcomes.

The school held four whole school development days this year with the areas of focus as follows:

<b>Term 1</b>	Day 1 - Child Protection, Mandatory reporting, literacy Day 2 - ICT- Chromebooks
<b>Term 2</b>	Day 3 - HSIE – NSW History K–6 Syllabus
<b>Term 4</b>	Day 4 – Religious Education - Diocesan Statement of Faith & staff spirituality

Other professional learning activities provided:

- Paakantji Culture and tour of significant sites - all staff



- Mustard Seed Retreat - 3 teachers
- ELP (Online tool for K-6 Literacy/Numeracy Continuum) - all staff
- Classroom Prayer In-service - 3 teachers
- Religious Education Co-ordinator Cluster meeting - 1 teacher
- Making Jesus Real teleconferences - 1 teacher
- Extending Mathematical Understanding Leaders' Course Parts 1 and 2 - 1 teacher
- Minilit Training - 3 teachers
- Assessing writing - 5 teachers
- Using Running records - 3 teachers
- Personal Learning Plans - all staff
- QELi Small Schools' Leadership Course- 1 teacher
- Teaching students experiencing trauma - all staff
- Introduction to Sharing our Story - 3 teachers
- Level One Religious Education Accreditation - all staff
- Staff mental health and wellbeing - all staff
- Team building - all staff
- Working and living in a remote location - all staff
- Best Start Training - 1 teacher
- Biennial CECNSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers Conference - 5 staff

## Teacher Standards

The following table sets out the number of teachers who fall into each of the three categories determined by the Board of Studies:

Teacher Qualifications		Number of Teachers
<b>1</b>	Those having formal qualifications from a recognised higher education institution or equivalent.	5
<b>2</b>	Those having graduate qualifications but not a formal teaching qualification from a recognised higher education institution or equivalent.	
<b>3</b>	Those not having qualifications described in 1 or 2 above but having relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate relevant knowledge.	

## Teacher Attendance and Retention

The average daily teacher attendance rate for 2015 was 97.33%. This does not include planned leave such as maternity or long service leave. The teacher retention rate from 2014 to 2015 was 25%.

## CATHOLIC LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Catholic Schools have a unique role in the evangelising and educating mission of the Church. As a key ministry of parishes and the Diocese, Catholic schools encourage and support parents in their responsibility for the faith formation of their children. This formation is supported by prayer and opportunities to participate in the life, mission and liturgy of the broader Catholic community.

St Therese's Community School is an important part of the Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish in Broken Hill. The Parish Priest comes to Wilcannia once a month to celebrate Mass and connect with the parish and wider Aboriginal community. On each occasion he stays overnight at St Therese's and spends the following morning at the school with the staff and students.

During 2015, the students learnt to greet and bless visitors, say Grace and simple prayers and sing several hymns. Classroom prayer is an important aspect of liturgical life at St Therese's and Paakantji culture is integrated within it. Whole school prayer occurred once a week with each class being responsible for reading and playing musical instruments. Simple liturgical celebrations were held throughout the year including Easter, Anzac Day, NAIDOC, Sorry Day, St Therese's feast day and Remembrance Day. On Ash Wednesday the staff, students and community members were involved in a special liturgy incorporating a smoking ceremony.

At the end of the school year, St Therese's held a school mass under the Covered Outdoor Learning Area. Many parents, parishioners and community members joined us in celebrating the Eucharist. Students were actively involved in reading, singing and participating in the offertory procession.

In 2015, teachers continued to use the adapted St Therese's Community School Religious Education program as it best met the needs of our students. Making Jesus Real strategies were included in daily classroom activities and closely linked to positive playground behaviour.

## CURRICULUM

The school provides an educational program based on, and taught in accordance with the NSW BOSTES 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. In addition, the school implements the curriculum requirements of the Catholic Education Office, Wilcannia-Forbes.

Staff members are committed to continuous improvement of teaching and learning in all facets of the curriculum.

The majority of students at St Therese's Community School require intensive and individualised support in their learning. In 2015, a holistic classroom based model of support was provided for

each student. Students' learning and behavioural needs were met within an inclusive classroom model. Rarely were students withdrawn for interventions. Small class sizes and a high student teacher ratio enabled the divergent needs of students to be met. Individualised and small group explicit instruction in reading and writing were priorities in 2015. Teachers in Stage One were provided with training in using Minilit as a whole class reading intervention.

Students requiring extension were catered for as individuals and small groups work at different levels within each classroom.

Paakantji language and culture classes continued to be very important, both as a program and integrated across all Key Learning Areas. Paakantji dance was introduced for students who showed an interest in learning it.

The weekly nutrition and cooking classes extended the students' learning in Personal Development Health and Physical Education and English. Students researched different foods and wrote recipes to make easy healthy meals and snacks.

## **STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

All students at St Therese's are Aboriginal and LBOTE. Many of our students required significant support in literacy learning. Teachers planned their programs to cater for the different learning styles and needs of the students in their classes. Assessments included diagnostic testing, pre and post testing, writing samples and observations. Marie Clay Observational Survey data was used to indicate success, identify areas of difficulty as well as inform future planning.

Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) were developed and continually reviewed to ensure that they aligned with the data collected through assessments and observations. Individual learning and behavioural goals were set for each student and strategies developed to ensure they were met.

Aboriginal Education Workers are an integral part of the PLP process and provide a vital link with parents. We continue to strive to encourage each student to reach his or her potential in all areas of learning.

In 2015, the students at St Therese's have made considerable progress in their reading and writing levels. A number of students have reached or exceeded appropriate benchmarks for their chronological ages. The staff and students are very proud of the progress gained in literacy in 2015.

## **PASTORAL CARE AND WELLBEING**

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes are committed to safe and supportive school environments. Our school is guided by relevant policies, procedures and guidelines that are found on the Catholic Education Office Intranet.

## Student Welfare Policy

The Pastoral Care Policy is based on the Mission of the Catholic Church and reflects the values of respect and forgiveness. It aims to foster in students self-discipline and respect for the dignity and worth of self and others. It aims to develop students' understanding of their rights and their corresponding responsibilities to respect and protect the rights of others.

The full text of the School's Pastoral Care Policy may be accessed on the school's website or at the administration office.

## Discipline Policy

The school expressly prohibits the administration of corporal punishment by school persons and non-school persons, including parents, to enforce discipline in the school.

The full text of the School's Behaviour Management Policy may be accessed on the school's website or at the administration office.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

Our school rejects all forms of bullying and strives to develop a school community that respects the dignity of each person by promoting human rights, human dignity, social justice and peace.

All members of the school community are expected to contribute to the prevention of bullying by modelling and promoting appropriate behaviour and respectful relationships. When an incident of bullying occurs, the procedures outlined in the policy are followed.

## Complaints and Grievances

The diocesan Resolution of Complaints Policy (*CEO Intranet*) forms an important element in the Diocese's commitment to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for school communities. St Therese's Community School follows these procedures.

## Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility

The Year 2 students were involved in the Mini Vinnies conference activities appropriate to their level. Topics included bullying, mental health and social justice.

A native garden was established at the front entrance of the school and students were responsible for watering and simple weeding. During National Tree Week, the Shire Council donated a large number of native trees and shrubs and the students were involved in planting them around the school. Each class was responsible for watering the plants to help them establish before the summer.

During the year, as part of the cyclical improvement process, our school community has reviewed the following policies: Medication Policy, Pastoral Care Policy

Access to all policies and guidelines can be obtained by contacting the school office.

## **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

St Therese's Community School is committed to continuous improvement. System-wide processes support a culture of self-review and self-improvement to assist the school in achieving improved learning outcomes and life opportunities for students. Each year the school develops an improvement plan (Framework for Strategic Planning) which identifies aspects for improvement and development. A wide range of data informs development of the plan. In collaboration with the Consultant the school engages in an annual evidence-based evaluation aiming at all times for quality, improvement and accountability.

### **Key Improvements Achieved in 2015**

Our priorities for 2015 were on student support, attendance and literacy. A holistic 'wrap around' model of student support was introduced to cater for the learning and behavioural needs of the students within an inclusive classroom setting. The classroom AEW worked closely with the teacher to support each student's attendance and engagement in school. We prioritised student attendance and set higher expectations for achievement, especially in English. Significant improvements in students' reading and writing data have been made in 2015.

The establishment of an agreed practice for English, uninterrupted learning time, literacy block, daily writing and a home reading program contributed to the improvements gained in 2015. Teachers effectively used student data; the Marie Clay Observational Survey and The NSW Literacy Continuum K-10 to identify what needed to be taught and inform their teaching practices.

Improving attendance was a priority for 2015. In response to concerns about a number of students, a comprehensive attendance monitoring and follow up process was developed. The staff worked tirelessly to support students and families to get the students to school. Once the students felt connected to their teachers and peers and became proud of their learning, they wanted to come to school. St Therese's was identified by the NSWCEC for having above average improvement in attendance.

### **Priorities for 2016**

Our priorities for 2016 will be on spelling instruction, reporting student achievement to parents and Paakantji language and culture.

Teachers will investigate and implement an effective spelling program and/or strategies for the learners at St Therese's. Spelling instruction will build on the reading and writing priorities of 2015.

The Personal Learning Plan and parent teacher meeting process will be reviewed to ensure it appropriately meets the unique needs of the parents in Wilcannia.

Paakantji language and culture classes will become more integrated and classroom based. Rather than being a one off lesson each week, classroom AEWs will support the students' learning of language and culture within their classrooms. Teachers will play an important role in ensuring language and culture permeates all learning at St Therese's.

## **PARENT, STUDENT AND TEACHER 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.

### **Parent Satisfaction**

Parent surveys reveal that parents feel welcome at St Therese's. The majority of our parents are pleased with home school communication and feel they know what is happening at the school. All parents are happy with the schools resources, especially the new artificial grass under the COLA. Most parents indicated that they are happy with their involvement in the Personal Learning Plan process and the feedback provided to them about their child's learning and behaviour. All parents believe that their child is learning. Some parents feel that they can talk about their child's learning with the teacher but most suggested that they prefer to talk with the AEWs. All parents are very happy with the students' behaviour at school.

### **Student Satisfaction**

The student survey was conducted with Year 2 students. All students indicated that they are happy at school and enjoy coming each day. All students believe that they are learning and that their teachers help them to learn. Most students suggest that they try their hardest with their school work. All students indicated that they are safe and respected in the classroom and on the playground.

### **Teacher Satisfaction**

The teachers and AEWs enjoy working at St Therese's. They all believe that their efforts are appreciated by their colleagues and parents. Most teachers recognised that there are distinct

challenges to living and working in a remote location, but they feel well supported in their roles. Some teachers suggested that the school needs to improve in its communication with parents about student achievement. A number of parents did not attend PLP meetings and have had little contact with the school. All teachers believe that their students are learning and are pleased with their student’s individual progress.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

A full copy of the school’s 2015 financial statement is tabled at the Annual General Meeting of the School Committee. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

This financial information is based on data provided in the Commonwealth Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for the 2015 year is detailed below:

RECURRENT AND CAPITAL INCOME			RECURRENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	
Commonwealth Grants	Recurrent	<b>\$223,498</b>	Capital Expenditure	<b>\$329,446</b>
Government Capital Grants		<b>\$327,867</b>	Salaries and Related Expenses	<b>\$865,856</b>
State Recurrent Grants		<b>\$955,413</b>	Non-Salary Expenses	<b>\$389,856</b>
Fees and Private Income		<b>\$109,772</b>	Total Expenditure	<b>\$1,585,158</b>
Other Capital Income		<b>\$8,113</b>		
Total Income		<b>\$1,624,662</b>		

### Notes

**Commonwealth Recurrent Grants** include recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.

**Government Capital Grants** include all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State governments.

**State Recurrent Grants** include recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.

**Fees and Private Income** include diocesan and school-based fees, excursion and other private income.

**Other Capital Income** includes building levies and capital donations used to fund capital expenditure.

**Capital Expenditure** includes expenditure on school buildings, furniture and equipment.

**Salaries and Related Expenditure** includes all salaries, allowances and related expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.

**Non Salary Expenses** include all other non salary recurrent expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.