



PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

TO THE

SCHOOL COMMUNITY

FOR THE

2013

ACADEMIC YEAR

**COVENANT COLLEGE, TUGGERANONG, A.C.T.
ASSOCIATION INC.**

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT to the COVENANT COMMUNITY
for the 2013 ACADEMIC YEAR**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Covenant College's Annual Report for the 2013 academic year.

Our theme in 2013 was *The Goodness of God*. The "Term Verse to Remember" for each term was:

Term	Verse	Rationale
1	Micah 6:8 <i>"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"</i>	Our salvation, all our blessings flow out of God's goodness; He expects us to live accordingly.
2	Rom 7:12 <i>"..the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good"</i>	God's law is an outworking of His good nature –hence our delight
3	Gal 5:22-3 <i>"..the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."</i>	We are called to be imitators of Christ – goodness is therefore required of us as a fruit.
4	Ex 34:6-7 <i>"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty.."</i>	Our God is absolute goodness and therefore all His ways are good.

2013 was the first year that the new enrolment policy was operating. We have seen a steady but small flow of children from non-Christian families joining the school. By the end of 2013 there were a total of 6 students from non-Christian families enrolled at Covenant forming 4.3% of the total roll. We have sought to make welcome families who are "like-minded" in terms of the educational outcomes they are hoping to achieve for their children. We have also sought to ensure that non-Christian families come into the school as fully informed as possible as to what to expect as we continue to provide the soundly biblical Christian education that Covenant is known for. We have been very pleased to see these families integrating well into the Covenant community.

2013 was also my first year as Principal and I am delighted and humbled by God's goodness in making this new relationship settle and develop as it has. I am looking forward to many more years of serving the Covenant community and trust the Lord will continue to bless us in that.

2013 was also the year we started to grapple with the Australian Curriculum in a significant way. The ICT requirements were implemented this year and staff began the work of reviewing our existing curriculum against the requirements of the Australian Curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science and History. A curriculum mapping software package called CurriculumTrak is being utilised to facilitate the work and has proved to be invaluable as a tool. This is an ongoing project for staff as implementation of the Australian Curriculum is a high priority of the ACT Directorate of Education and Training.

COUNCIL

The Chairman's report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2013. Dr Richard James finished his term on Council and stepped down as Chairman at the AGM. Mr Jeff Buckpitt was elected to succeed him.

Council provides a valuable oversight for the school and has sought to give wise and God-honouring direction in all its deliberations. Please continue to uphold these faithful servants of the Lord in your prayers.

Council decided, after consulting with the school community, that the foreshadowed name change to *Covenant Christian School* should happen with effect from January 2014.

Income

Aust Govt	792,598
State Govt	300,248
Fees etc.	561,171
Other private	<u>65,780</u>
Gross	\$1,719,796

Re-registration

Covenant is not due to be audited for re-registration until 2016. We have now met all outstanding items required to be attended to as a result of the last registration audit in 2011.

STAFF

The staff are the most important part of the College in that they are the people who day by day work with the students in the classroom and elsewhere around the school. The Lord has blessed us with a group of very competent and committed Christian staff – both teaching and non-teaching. Their work has continued to make Covenant a school where young people can be nurtured in a safe and caring learning environment that seeks to honour God in all that is done.

In 2013 Covenant College employed 14 (11.0 FTE) teaching staff and 6 non-teaching staff (3.5 FTE). Teaching staff absences represented 2.42% of total days worked.

All teaching staff members were deemed qualified for their positions, and are registered with the ACT Teachers Quality Institute. The breakdown of qualifications held by staff is as follows: Master's degree (1), Bachelor's degrees (17), Graduate Diplomas (9) and one Diploma of Education.

During 2013 all staff and volunteers working at the school were required to obtain a separate Working With Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration by late 2013. All our staff and volunteers now hold valid WWVP registration.

The ratio of male to female teaching staff was 4:10. There were no indigenous members of staff in 2013.

Staff changes were minimal in 2013. We were pleased to welcome Mrs Lesli Findlay (Secondary part-time) and Mr Martin Keast (Principal) at the start of the year. We also farewelled Mr Daniel van Bentum (Director of Studies – Primary) at the end of the year. Daniel had served at Covenant for the last nine years and made a significant contribution to Covenant during this time.

Professional Development weeks

29 January – 1 February 2013

- Rev Peter Gadsby (Reformed Church of Canberra) led staff devotions over the four days.
- Council Chair, Dr Richard James, addressed staff on Council initiatives and survey results.
- A Senior First Aid & CPR course was conducted by Red Cross and attended by all staff.
- Mr Chris Butler organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- In-house orientation was carried out by the Principal and Bursar.
- Implementation of the Australian Curriculum was the main focus of the working sessions during the Professional Development week.

15 – 19 July 2013

- Rev Barry James and Dr Noel Weeks led staff devotions over the five days.
- Dr Weeks spoke on various topics associated with the Australian Curriculum from a Christian worldview perspective.
- The mid-year reports were finalised during this week.
- Staff produced a revised rationale statement from a Christian perspective for English, History, Mathematics and Science as part of the work on the Australian Curriculum implementation.

Staff devotions have continued each morning. Various members of staff are rostered to lead this profitable time of reflection and encouragement from God's Word. A member of staff and two school families are always brought before the Lord in prayer along with other items of praise, thanksgiving and intercession.

Mentors were appointed to work with staff who are relatively inexperienced. One member of staff was released for a day to observe similar level classes at a neighbouring Christian school.

We are developing good collegial relationships with staff from neighbouring Christian schools. This has included organising shared professional development opportunities which has been most profitable.

STUDENTS

The College had 139 students enrolled at the August census date.

The Year 10 students who left the College in 2013 were enrolled in Trinity Christian School and in Canberra College.

Student Attendance

The student average attendance rate was 96.4%. The rate in Infants/Primary was 96.6% and in Secondary 96.1%. Students at the College are required to be in attendance each day that the College is in operation. Students absent from the College are required to furnish a reason (from their parents) in writing, signed and dated, for their absence upon his/her return. Parents are requested to telephone (or email) the College before 8:50am if their child is going to be absent. Each morning, absence slips are completed by the Class Teacher or Head of House. These are forwarded to the Office secretary who marks the electronic rolls for each class. The College contacts parents if a student has an unexplained absence from the College – this is usually done within 45 minutes of the rolls being marked each day.

Students with Special Needs/ESL

Students with special needs have been well catered for with the mandatory process of SCAN identifying those most in need of assistance. The Study Skills elective option (limited to six students) continues for students needing special help to organise their workload and ensure assignments are completed by the due date. Modified levels of work have been applied to students in a number of subjects. The ESL course developed and implemented for students from overseas has proved beneficial and helped inform the tracking of students in their academic progress. The number of full-time overseas students has reduced during the course of the year. Tracking of all students has been maintained and students with special needs identified and helped.

Student Activities

The annual Foundation Day lecture and Service were addressed by Dr Noel Weeks. He spoke at the Service on *A Curriculum for Life* and his evening lecture was entitled *Command and invitation to the Christian School*.

Senior students in Year 10 were given leadership badges to recognise their position and role in the life of the College. The students provided a valuable input into the life of the College including leading the student House teams and providing a role model for service around the school.

The 3 day Secondary Camp in 2013 was held at Wee Jasper (Mountain Trails Adventure School) from 29-31 May. Students were exposed to a variety of activities including horse-riding, archery and caving. It was a most enjoyable camp and the Lord blessed us with good weather over the period of the camp.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$3,105 in 2013. This fundraising effort was spearheaded by the Business Studies students under the guidance of Mrs Helen Crow. Monies were raised for our 'Compassion child', Melaku, and for Bibles for distribution around the world (Bible League) and also for TEAR Australian projects (including two toilets for villages in the third world).

Secondary students also engaged in various service activities both in the wider community and within the school. These projects provide a great opportunity for our students to give of themselves practically to meet needs that exist and enjoy themselves serving God at the same time.

Students were involved in the performing arts this year through various annual events such as the TAG Quest (a talent quest), the Music Soiree (musical entertainment combined with culinary and hospitality skills), and the Evening of the Arts (a variety evening involving students and staff). We are blessed to have the services of Mrs Wendy Lyons and Mrs Claire Cain who put a lot of effort into these events.

This year the Food Technology students under Mrs Claire Cain's guidance ran the *Cafe Munch 'n' Crunch* for a day. The food was excellent and students learned skills such as serving tables, handling orders and cash, as well as preparing food for paying customers.

Students were also engaged in activities that involved developing and wearing a costume – the Costume Theme competition in April gave students scope to wear something related to the first letter of their name and the Living Literature Day in August gave students the opportunity to dress in a favourite character from a work of fiction. These activities formed a great break from the normal routines of study and allowed many students to shine.

Regular Chaplain’s Breakfasts were held during the year for one year level at a time to hear from a teacher who is from a different part of the school. These were well-attended and enjoyable. Our new Chaplain, Mr Jeremy Hopwood, provides a very well-received service to the school community.

Other important student activities were:

- Various sports carnivals as part of our inter-House competition – swimming, athletics and cross-country were held in 2013.
- The Secondary Art Club was held as an after school activity under Mrs Elizabeth Coleman’s instruction from term 2 onwards.
- A Medieval Feast was held for Year 6 in June.
- The annual Bush Dance was held at the Gordon Primary School hall at the end of August.
- A Creation Ministries speaker addressed students late October.
- A speaker from Open Doors spoke on ‘The Arab Spring’ to secondary students in late November.
- Year 6 Dinner was held at the Alliance Church premises on 13 December.
- Year 10 Graduation Dinner was held at the Southern Cross Club premises during Week 9 of Term 4.
- The annual awards and prizegiving gathering, known as the Thanksgiving Evening, was held at Calwell High School Theatre on the evening of Thursday 12 December. Rev Peter Gadsby (Reformed Church of Canberra) and our Board Chairman, Mr Jeff Buckpitt, gave well-appreciated messages during the evening.

The 2013 edition of the College yearbook, the *Collage*, provided a colourful and comprehensive snapshot of the various activities that happened during the year. Mrs Elizabeth Coleman does a fantastic job of collating and editing this record of the life of the school.

Benchmarking

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sat the NAPLAN national benchmarking tests in reading, writing, spelling, grammar & punctuation, and numeracy. The following table compares these results, showing the percentage of our students who scored results at or above the national benchmarks. From the tables you will note that the College has achieved some very good results.

Since the beginning of 2010, the NAPLAN results have been published on the Federal Government’s “My School” website. The 2013 results were published early March 2014. What they show is that our Year 3 and our Year 7 cohort are both below average when compared against all Australian students at their Year level. The Year 7 cohort showed the same characteristics when assessed as Year 5 in 2011 but it is also evident that they have made progress over this period. The 2013 Year 9 cohort came in as ‘significantly above average’ in all categories except Spelling which is a great improvement from their 2011 Year 7 NAPLAN results when they were ‘significantly above average’ in Reading and ‘Grammar & Punctuation’ only. Our small cohort sizes do tend to make for significant variation from year to year and this is apparent when comparing the 2013 NAPLAN results with those obtained in 2012.

However, as with any statistical analysis, there are many variables that can affect the results and the result of any student in any given year eg. being recently arrived from overseas with minimal English skills; having had a death in the family. League tables, made from such information by the media, do not take into account such variables nor do they attest to the faith-based nature of many schools where the teaching of certain values is of the highest priority. While they may laud a school with one cohort of students, they might just as easily do the opposite with another.

Writing				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Year 3	100%	90% (9/10)	100%	100%
Year 5	100%	80% (4/5)	95% (19/20)	100%
Year 7	100%	100%	94% (17/18)	100%
Year 9	100%	94% (15/16)	100%	93% (14/15)

Reading				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	100%	80% (4/5)	100%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	83% (5/6)
	100%	94% (15/16)	100%	100%

Spelling				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 7	100%	100%	94% (17/18)	83% (5/6)
Year 9	100%	100%	100%	93% (14/15)

Grammar & Punctuation				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
	94% (15/16)	100%	100%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	90% (9/10)
	100%	100%	94% (17/18)	83% (5/6)
	100%	94% (15/16)	100%	100%

Numeracy				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 7	100%	100%	94% (16/17)	100%
Year 9	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above tables show the percentage of our students who scored results at or above the National Minimum Standards (NMS).

The figures enclosed by () represent actual student numbers.

While the College has excelled academically, it is not the most important thing. The College's purpose, as stated in our Constitution, "to encourage ... the pursuit and dissemination of true Christian scholarship in all areas of the school's curriculum and interest, so as to establish a truly Christian world view in all disciplines of life," is what matters. 'Our Covenant' adds to this:

- (i) by precept and example, to confront students with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ so that in God's appointed time, they might come to exhibit the fruits of true repentance and faith in Christ, confessing Him as Lord and Saviour;
- (ii) to train students in the beginning of Christian scholarship and seek to give incentive for their continuing development as Christian scholars;
- (iii) to develop and apply principles that set the Christian ideals of citizenship, godly character and the spirit of reverence, so that personality and sense of responsibility are developed together in the entire life of the scholar; and
- (iv) to this end students will be encouraged to achieve the highest standard consistent with their capabilities in all their activities pursuing excellence for the glory of God."

Might we be ever grateful to our wonderful Heavenly Father for the opportunity He has provided through the College to grow our children in His ways.

PARENTS

Parents and supporters gather for a fortnightly Saturday prayer meeting to pray for the needs of the College from 7:30am to 8:00am. This is usually held on the first Saturday of each month.

A Spalding Course for Parents was held over three evenings in March led by Mrs Liberty Overton, a Spalding consultant who used to work at Covenant as the K/1 teacher. It proved most beneficial for the good number in attendance.

Many parents, staff and students were involved in the Car Boot Sale (which will alternate with a Spring Fair as an annual event on the College calendar). With the \$1811 (net) raised, it was agreed that proceeds of the Car Boot Sale would go towards equipment for Music and for Industrial Design.

Parent/teacher interviews were held in Term 1, Week 7 and Term 3, Week 3. An interim report was forwarded to parents prior to these special evenings. Semester reports were distributed to parents at the end of Semesters 1 and 2. The reports are 'plain English' report cards with A – E grades.

Weekly communication with parents is via the Communicator. It is distributed each Thursday afternoon by hard copy and email.

GENERAL

Chaplaincy

The School Chaplain position has been ably filled by Mr Jeremy Hopwood. Funding for this position is through a special grant which is provided by the Federal Government. Mr Hopwood has organised a series of 'Chaplain's breakfasts' which have been well-attended by students. In addition he has been able to provide pastoral advice and counselling to students as required. The school community has reflected positively on the Chaplaincy.

Surveys

Annual surveys are carried out with the main stakeholder groups in the school community to get feedback on the performance of the College during the year. Students from years 3-10 are included in the group of stakeholders surveyed.

Parent Survey

Responses were once again positive with high scores being given to the questions about willingness to recommend the school to other Christian families (average score of 4.54 on a rating scale of 1 to 5) and satisfaction with educational outcomes (average score of 4.33).

The main strengths identified for the College were:

- The College is Christ centred (4.83)
- Christian worldview comes through the program (4.74)
- The College's administrative staff are friendly and helpful (4.67)
- I am willing to recommend the College to other Christian families (4.54)

These results suggest that the College is doing well in meeting most parents' expectations in providing a high quality Christ centred education.

The areas of relative weakness or concern noted in the survey results were:

- Information technology resources are adequate and well supported (3.55)
- The College internal sports program is appropriate (3.56)
- Opportunities are given for interschool sport (3.60)
- The College caters appropriately for students with special needs (3.70)
- The College website is useful to parents (3.75);

In response to the first point, Council has responded with a number of investments including upgrades to our internet connectivity, large televisions in most classes and the development of a strategy for further investment as funds become available.

Staff Survey

- One of the most important questions in the staff survey is that pertaining to job satisfaction. In response to the question "Overall I am satisfied with my employment at the College" responses received were "strongly agree" x 6, "agree" x 7, neutral x 2 and 1 "don't know" with an overall average rating of 4.26.
- The areas of greatest strength (ie score in excess of 4.3) noted by staff were:
 - The Principal is competent and approachable (4.69)
 - The College is a safe and caring community (4.63)
 - The College admin staff are friendly and helpful (4.56)
 - I believe that the work of the College Chaplain is beneficial (4.33)
 - The College is Christ centred (4.31)
 - I make good use of internal emails (4.31).

Student Survey

- One of the most important questions in the student survey is that about students' satisfaction with the school. In response to the question "I am generally satisfied with my school and the quality of education I receive." The average score was 3.93 (marginally down on previous years) comprising 32 strongly agree, 28 agree, 16 neutral, 11 disagree and 0 strongly disagree and 1 "don't know".

Overall there is a generally positive perception of the College and its programme. The results suggest that the College is meeting the expectations of the major stakeholders in providing a Christ-centred, quality education in a safe and caring environment.

CONCLUSION

2013 was a year of significant change while maintaining a commitment to continuity for Covenant College. The year started with a new Principal and was the first year of operation with non-Christian families being welcomed under a changed enrolment policy. The decision to change the name from Covenant College to Covenant Christian School effective from the start of the 2014 school year further emphasises a time of new beginnings while retaining the term 'Covenant' emphasises that the core commitments and perspectives of Covenant continue to abide as fundamental to the school's reason for existing.

Our biggest challenge is meeting the requirements of the Australian Curriculum in such a way that our fundamental goal of delivering a soundly biblical Christian education is not compromised while respecting the obligations we are under as a recipient of territory and federal funding. This will be a major focus for staff over the next few years.

We thank the Lord for guiding us through this period of transition and we look forward to His continued guidance and blessing for the 2014 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast
Principal
11 March 2014