



**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

**TO THE**

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

**FOR THE**

**2014**

**ACADEMIC YEAR**

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

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT to the SCHOOL COMMUNITY  
for the 2014 ACADEMIC YEAR**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Covenant Christian School's Annual Report for the 2014 academic year.

Our theme in 2014 was *The Truth of God*. The "Term Verse to Remember" for each term was:

Term	Verse
1	"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth..... And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." – John 17:17,19
2	Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, <sup>4</sup> And so find favour and high esteem in the sight of God and man. – Proverbs 3:3-4
3	And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. – John 1:14
4	Love suffers long <i>and</i> is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. – 1 Cor 13:4-7

2014 was the second year that the new enrolment policy has been operating and the first year under the new name of *Covenant Christian School*. We also finalised the design of a new school crest during the year.

We have seen a steady and increasing flow of children from non-Christian families joining the school. By the end of 2014 there were a total of 14 students from non-Christian families enrolled at Covenant forming 10.1% of the total roll (138 at the end of 2014). 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.

Our efforts to promote the school in the wider community have increased significantly. Our focus and emphasis will always be on reaching Christian families as a priority while continuing to present ourselves as a viable alternative for non-Christian families who desire a soundly Bible-based Christian education for their children. Word of mouth is a key aspect of our promotional efforts and we will be continuing to develop marketing strategies that aim to build on that.

I am very thankful for the very stable, settled and competent team we have staffing the school.

**COUNCIL**

The Chairman's report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2014.

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.

**Income**

Aust Govt	886,019
State Govt	298,558
Fees etc.	690,927
Other private	55,731
Gross	\$1,931,235

## Re-registration

Covenant is not due to be audited for re-registration until 2016.

## STAFF

The staff are the most important part of Covenant Christian School 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 2014 Covenant Christian School employed 17 (11.8 FTE) teaching staff and 5 non-teaching staff (3.3 FTE). Staff absences represented 3.37% of total days worked.

All teaching staff members were deemed qualified for their positions, and are registered with the ACT Teachers Quality Institute (TQI). The breakdown of highest qualifications held by staff is as follows: 1 Masters degree, 14 Bachelor degrees and 1 Diploma of Teaching. All teaching staff achieved at least the minimum approved professional learning as required by TQI during the year and were thus able to renew their practising certificates for the following year.

All our staff and volunteers hold valid and current WWVP (Working with Vulnerable People) registration.

The ratio of male to female teaching staff was 3:8. There were no indigenous members of staff in 2014.

There were some staff changes in 2014. Mr Chris Butler (Director of Studies – Secondary) was absent for the whole of semester 2 on long service leave. His administrative duties were ably covered by Mrs Wendy Lyons in his absence. Some temporary staff were employed to cover this period. We were pleased to welcome Mrs Sarah Allan, Mrs Kellie Inman, Mr Eric Frith (all secondary part-time) and Mr Gerard Bacon (Primary part-time). Mrs Helen Morris (Secondary science) took maternity leave starting in July. We also farewelled Miss Karina Andrews (Secondary full-time) in the middle of the year and we farewelled Mr Gerard Bacon and Mr Eric Frith at the end of the year.

## Professional Development weeks

### 28 – 31 January 2014

- Rev Peter Gobbo (Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church) led staff devotions over the four days.
- Council Chair, Dr Richard James, addressed staff on Council initiatives and survey results.
- CPR refresher training was provided by the Red Cross and was attended by all staff.
- A Christian DVD-based professional development course using Paul David Tripp's *Your Christian School: a culture of grace?* occupied the bulk of the time during the week. All teaching staff attended by this and it was well-received.
- We joined the staff of Trinity Christian School for a 1 day professional development course on autism with Sue Larkey.
- Mr Chris Butler organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- In-house orientation was carried out by the Principal and Bursar.

### 30 June - 4 July 2014

- Rev Geoff Findlay (Westminster Presbyterian Church in Belconnen) led staff devotions over the five days. His focus was on an introductory Christian worldview perspective on the main subject areas.
- The mid-year reports were finalised during this week.
- Mr Ray Tiller introduced staff to his Professional Learning Program.
- Staff worked on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in unallocated time during this week.

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.

## STUDENTS

The school had 141 students enrolled at the August census date.

The Year 10 students who left the school in 2014 were enrolled in Trinity Christian School and in Canberra College.

### **Student Attendance**

The student average attendance rate was 95.5%. The rate in Infants/Primary was 96.3% and in Secondary 94.3%. Students at Covenant are required to be in attendance each day that the school is in operation. Students absent from school 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 school before 8:50am if their child is going to be absent. Each morning, the teacher marks the electronic roll and submits it by 9.05am. The school office contacts parents if a student has an unexplained absence from the school – 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 Special Assembly were addressed by Mr Neil Benfell, a retired Christian school Principal. He spoke at the Special Assembly on the topic *Christ Reigns* and his evening lecture was on a related topic.

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

The 3 day Secondary Camp in 2014 was held at Tathra from 5 – 7 February. Students were exposed to a variety of activities including kayaking, surfing and other beach related activities. It was a most enjoyable camp and the Lord blessed us with good weather for the whole time.

The Year 9/10 Outdoor Education elective subject proved to be a very popular choice and two lines were timetabled in 2014. This group was taken on an overnight camp 10-11 April.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$3,630.40 in 2014. 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 a Compassion Special Relief Appeal and some minor TEAR Australia projects.

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.

Students were also engaged in activities that involved developing and wearing a costume –the Living Literature Day in August gave students the opportunity to dress in a favourite character from a work of fiction. Primary assemblies, particularly for Year 5/6, often have a drama element which involves dressing in a costume. 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 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 2014.
- The Secondary Art Club was held as an after school activity under Mrs Elizabeth Coleman’s instruction from term 2 onwards.
- The annual Bush Dance was held at the Gordon Primary School hall at the end of August.
- A Creation Ministries International speaker addressed students late October. We also hosted this speaker (Dr Carl Wieland) for an evening public meeting using our library.
- Year 6 Dinner was held in the school library on the evening of Friday 12 December.
- Year 10 Graduation Dinner was held at the Southern Cross Club premises during Week 9 of Term 4.
- A Grandparents Day combined with open classrooms was held 4 November.
- A student choir performed at the Floriade festival on Friday 26 September.
- The annual awards and prizegiving gathering, known as the Thanksgiving Evening, was held at Calwell High School Theatre on the evening of Thursday 11 December. Dr Richard James, our Council Chairman, and Rev Peter Gobbo both gave well-received messages during the evening.

The 2014 edition of the Covenant Christian School yearbook, the *Collage*, once again 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 and the quality of the production keeps improving.

### 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 school 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 2014 results were published early March 2015. Our 2014 Year 9 cohort did particularly well overall, particularly in comparison to schools of a similar socio-economic level.

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.

The tables below 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.

Writing				
	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Year 3</b>	90% (9/10)	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 5</b>	80% (4/5)	95% (19/20)	100%	92%
<b>Year 7</b>	100%	94% (17/18)	100%	92%
<b>Year 9</b>	94% (15/16)	100%	93% (14/15)	87%

Reading				
	2011	2012	2013	2014
	100%	100%	100%	92%
	80% (4/5)	100%	100%	100%
	100%	100%	83% (5/6)	100%
	94% (15/16)	100%	100%	94%

Spelling				
	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Year 3</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 5</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 7</b>	100%	94% (17/18)	83% (5/6)	92%
<b>Year 9</b>	100%	100%	93% (14/15)	94%

Grammar & Punctuation				
	2011	2012	2013	2014
	100%	100%	100%	92%
	100%	100%	90% (9/10)	100%
	100%	94% (17/18)	83% (5/6)	96%
	94% (15/16)	100%	100%	94%

Numeracy				
	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Year 3</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 5</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 7</b>	100%	94% (16/17)	100%	96%
<b>Year 9</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

While the school continues to provide a sound academic programme, it is not the most important thing. The school'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 school to grow our children in His ways.

## PARENTS

Parents and supporters gather for a monthly Saturday prayer meeting to pray for the needs of the School 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 a team consisting of Mrs Rebecca Hooley and Miss Evie Stubbs. It proved most beneficial for the good number in attendance.

Parenting seminars using the 'Getting to the heart of parenting' conference resources produced by Paul Tripp Ministries were run for a total of five evening sessions during term 2.

Many parents, staff and students were involved in the 2014 Spring Fair which was a great attraction for people from the local neighbourhood. The Spring Fair is operating every second year alternating with a Car Boot Sale. With the approximately \$7125 (net) raised, the proceeds of the Spring Fair would go towards a replacement roof for the Lodge.

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. From 2015 onwards this funding is now administered through the ACT government and Covenant had to reapply for funding. Thankfully we were successful in our application and are pleased we are able to continue to offer chaplaincy services at Covenant.

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 school during the year. Students from years 3-10 are included in the group of stakeholders surveyed.

In December we surveyed parents, staff and students (from Years 3 – 10) concerning their views about the College and how it is performing. Data from this annual survey is used by Council to identify key issues that may need attention and to keep an eye on trends both good and concerning.

#### *Parent Survey*

It was encouraging to see that the Christian character of Covenant and quality of education were still widely acknowledged by the parents as fundamental strengths of the school:

- The School is Christ-centred (4.86) (on a scale of 1 to 5)
- A Christian worldview comes through clearly across the schools program (4.68)
- The school is a safe and caring community for my child (4.59)
- The school's teachers give good pastoral care (4.35)
- The school has a good academic program (4.33)

The staff and leadership of the school also received strong support from parents:

- Senior staff are competent and approachable (4.49)
- The school's administrative staff members are friendly and helpful (4.62)
- The chaplain's role is beneficial to the school (4.53)

Overall, parents were generally satisfied with the educational outcomes of the school (4.16), believed that the school is 'value for money' (4.31) and that therefore they would be prepared to recommend the school to other Christian families (4.32). These numbers whilst encouraging, tracked a little lower than those recorded for previous years. Council and staff are acutely aware that we need to be constantly improving and aiming high standards across all aspects of school life.

Areas of concern raised by parents focused on the sports program, both internal (3.74) and external opportunities for interschool sport (3.60). Given this feedback is similar for the last 3 – 4 years, Council recently requested a thorough review of the school's sport program. Other areas that scored low indicating that improvement is needed were:

- Adequate numbers of excursions (3.95)
- Catering for students with special needs (3.72)
- Council's governance is coherent and effective (3.97)
- IT resources are adequate and well supported (3.31)

#### *Staff survey*

Areas that attracted strong support from the staff fell into three main categories; 1) leadership, 2) the character of Covenant, and 3) resources.

- 1) Leadership: Principal (4.62), Directors of Studies (4.46), Chaplain (4.38), Admin staff (4.31)
- 2) Character of CCS: Christ centred (4.31), Christian worldview in school program (4.15), Safe and caring community for students (4.31), Staff understand / committed to vision (4.08)

- 3) Resources: Library (4.23), facilities well maintained and presented (4.08). While more is need, staff have noticed that IT resources have improved markedly (3.85), from ratings in previous years of about 3.00.

Areas that attracted lower scores by staff indicating potential areas of concern or weakness were as follows:

- 4) School program: appropriate internal sports program (3.54), number of excursions (3.77), curriculum; thorough, engaging, strong basis for teaching (3.77) (3.4 - 3.8 last four years)
- 5) Students: catering for ESL (3.23), special needs students (3.85)
- 6) Uniforms: dress uniforms (~3.9), sports uniforms (3.9, 3.4)
- 7) Council : governance is coherent and effective (3.38)
- 8) Student behaviour and attitude:
  - students are generally positive, inclusive and caring (3.77)
  - students treat staff/teachers with respect (3.85)
  - desire to obey the Lord, parents & teachers (3.31, 3.46)

Key weaknesses of Covenant were identified by staff under the following categories; the small size of the school, difficulty in attracting quality teachers who teach from a Christian perspective, reputation and student behaviour. The strengths of Covenant identified by staff largely fell within four main categories; small size, staff (teaching and administration), the fact that Covenant is a God-focussed school and lastly a that Covenant is a caring community.

#### *Student survey*

It is an interesting exercise to see how the student's perspectives position alongside the staff and parents surveys. It was therefore heartening to see that our students still acknowledge and recognize the strength of the Christian distinctives at Covenant. For example: 'my school encourages me to focus my learning on God and the Bible' (4.30), 'my school actively encourages my faith in God' (4.20).

The student's satisfaction with Covenant and the quality of education they receive met with a mixed result (3.85) being down a little on the previous year (3.93).

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

#### **ICT developments**

We have continued to improve our use of ICT at Covenant. Improved internet has been achieved through the introduction of wireless bearers which has greatly increased our capacity. We have introduced Google Classrooms to provide students with a 'cloud-based' system that allows for a seamless interface whether at school or at home, particularly for the submission of assignments. Teachers are beginning to make use of this more effectively as time progresses.

All classrooms were fitted in 2013 with a large television with an HDMI interface which is used by teachers to connect to a laptop for powerpoint displays and also facilitates showing video clips and websites to students. A Bluray/DVD player for each classroom was added late 2014.

The PCSchool Student Management system software was installed to facilitate administration work and the recording of student absences. It is intended to further extend the utilisation of this product in 2015 to allow for student academic reporting and pastoral care functions.

A new server was installed in 2014 which improved the performance of the PCSchool system and has provided improved functionality for staff included remote desktop and email capability.

#### **Change of period length**

After some research and consultation, the decision was made to move to a 50 minute long period for Years 7-10. This means Covenant's secondary classes will move to a 6 period day from the current 8 periods/day. The change will be implemented from term 1, 2015 and is anticipated to improve student learning outcomes through allowing a longer time to focus on a topic in class. Additional benefits identified were less time lost in period transitions and reduced stress on teachers in terms of lesson preparation. This change will align Covenant's secondary programme with the practice of almost all other secondary schools in the ACT.

#### **CONCLUSION**

2014 was the first year of operation under the new name of Covenant Christian School. Efforts to market the school have continued and are slowly bearing fruit. We have struggled to reach many new Christian families and were saddened with some very supportive families leaving us due to inter-state relocations for employment.



The proportion of students from non-Christian families grew significantly during the year and a recommendation to extend the 'cap' to 25% was agreed to by Council as we grew in confidence in our ability to manage the new enrolment policy effectively.

A decision was made to proceed with the preparation of an application for an ACT government grant to build a pre-school. Work commenced on this in 2014 and the application was submitted late February 2015. This is an exciting development with the potential to significantly and positively affect future enrolments.

We thank the Lord for guiding us through this period of transition and we look forward to His continued guidance and blessing for the 2015 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast  
Principal  
24 March 2015