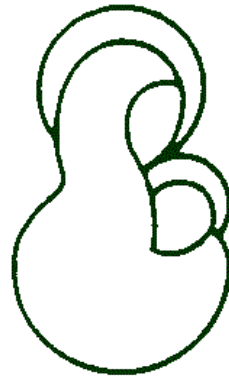


Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst  
Annual School Report to the Community  
2010



GROWING TOGETHER  
IN CHRIST

School Contact Details:

29 Heath Road BLAKEHURST 2221

[info@mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](mailto:info@mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au)

[www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au)

ph: 02 9546 7298

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#### **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT**

AIP: Annual Improvement Plan

BER: Building the Education Revolution

BOS: Board of Studies

CEO: Catholic Education Office

ESL: English as a Second Language

HSIE: Human Society and its Environment

ICT: Information and Communication Technologies

KLA: Key Learning Area

LBOTE: Language backgrounds other than English

LFTT: Language Features of Text Types for ESL Learners

NAIDOC: National Aborigines Day Observance Committee

NAPLAN: National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

P & F: Parents and Friends' Association

PIPS: Performance Indicators in Primary School program

SMART: School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit

SRC: Student Representative Council

THRASS: Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills

## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst is registered by the Board of Studies, NSW, and managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney, the 'approved authority' for the Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

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

The *Report* also outlines information about initiatives and developments of major interest and importance to the community during the year and the achievements arising from the implementation of the school's Annual Improvement Plan (AIP).

Accordingly, the *Report* demonstrates accountability to regulatory bodies, the school community and the CEO, Sydney. This *Report* has been approved by the CEO, Sydney, in consultation with the Regional Consultant who monitors that the school has appropriate processes in place to ensure compliance with all NSW Board of Studies requirements for Registration and Accreditation.

This *Report* complements and is supplementary to school newsletters, Principal's reports to the Parents and Friends and other regular communication. The *Report* will be available on the school's website by 30 June 2011 following its submission to the Board of Studies (BOS).

The contents of this *Report* will be discussed at the Parents and Friends' meetings and scheduled Parent Information evenings.

Further information about the school or this *Report* may be obtained by contacting the school on 9546 7298 or by visiting the website at [www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au).

PRINCIPAL: Mrs Jenni Payne

DATE: December 2010

## **MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES**

### **Principal's Message**

Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst is a member of the Josephite community and encourages the core values of respectful relationships, co-operation, acceptance, compassion, justice and forgiveness for all. A special feature of the pastoral care and student management is the use of the principles of Restorative Justice. This year has been another successful year as documented in this report. We continue to encourage a high standard of achievement and enjoyment of learning through quality and contemporary teaching and learning programs. The dedicated and enthusiastic staff engaged in many professional development opportunities during the year.

In this year of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we were once again blessed with a generous and very hard working parent body, which has supported the school financially to provide funds to refurbish the playground spaces after the completion of the Building the Education Revolution (BER) project.

This Annual Report, which is part of a linked set of processes that ensures quality, improvement and accountability, outlines some of this year's achievements.

### **Parent Representative Body Message**

The Parents and Friends' (P & F) of Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst have continued to contribute strongly to support the school community in 2010. This year was one of celebration for the school with its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The parents organised a tremendous anniversary dinner that was enjoyed by over three hundred and thirty people from the school and parish community.

The school community celebrated the canonisation of Mary MacKillop on 17 October with the blessing of the Mary MacKillop Garden, which was built by the parents and friends of the school community and was dedicated in recognition of her sainthood.

"Dads on Canteen" was introduced during the year for the Mother's Day and Father's Day festivities and was certainly enjoyed by the children, along with the barbeque sausage lunch. The children enjoyed seeing their dads get a little more involved in their school day activities.

Through the generosity, dedication and support of parents, the P & F is in a strong financial position. We are looking forward to working with the Principal and the school community in 2011 to support the upgrade of playground facilities once the building works are fully completed and the school resumes normal operations.

## **Student Representative's Message**

This year our Student Representative Council (SRC) has consisted of two School Captains, two Vice-Captains, two Sports Captains from each of three house colours and two student representatives from each class from Year 2 to Year 6.

Our Year Six student leaders attended the National Young Leaders' Forum for 2010 at the Sydney Entertainment Centre to assist in setting our leadership goals. We have been responsible for leading whole school prayer, including an assembly prayer for National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week and International Teachers' Day. We have worked as a team to raise awareness about many social justice issues including selling supporter packs for NAIDOC Week, raising funds to support the Mater Dei Parish contribution for the Charitable Works Fund and holding a multi-day to raise almost \$500 for the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

As SRC members, we have also been instrumental in raising awareness of and undertaking initiatives to promote healthy eating. We have consulted with the student body to change the School Canteen menu to include more healthy foods and have instigated and promoted a daily fruit and vegetable break in all classrooms during the morning session.

Our Sports Captains organised activities to involve the whole school in the World Cup Soccer 2010 and have also organised and planned the use of our restricted playground space this year.

As school leaders, we have also represented the school at various significant events celebrated by the Catholic community across the Archdiocese.

## **SCHOOL FEATURES**

Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst is a Catholic systemic co-educational school located in Blakehurst. It shares the site with Mater Dei Parish.

The school caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 6 and has a current enrolment of three hundred and seventy-five students. After a few years of significant growth, the school has remained steady in its enrolment in more recent years.

Students attending this school come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The student enrolment is 50% male and 50% female. Of the student community, 75% come from Language Backgrounds Other than English (LBOTE) and less than 1% are of an indigenous background. Further identification of LBOTE students will be an emphasis for the new English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in 2011.

The school employs thirty staff comprising twenty-four teachers and six non-teaching staff, the latter being employed in a variety of capacities including teacher's aides and administration.

Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst was founded by Father Michael Kennedy in 1960. Lay teachers staffed the school when it was first opened and until 1964 when the Sisters of St Joseph took over the administration of the school. They maintained a presence in the school until 1979 when lay teachers again staffed the school.

The students enjoy a large playground that includes asphalt, grassed and landscaped areas, including a newly developed quiet area, the Mary MacKillop Garden, created in 2010 by parents and Year 6 students. As a result of Federal Government BER funding, the original classrooms have been refurbished. The *Mary MacKillop Library*, which is able to accommodate two classes at the one time, and a large covered outdoor learning area have also been constructed. The library is equipped with a mobile interactive whiteboard and notebook computers.

The school has celebrated many special events this year. These have included Grandparents' Day, Holy Week and Easter celebrations, Mother's Day and Father's Day, World Maths Day, World Cup Soccer, the countdown to the canonisation of Mary MacKillop culminating in Mary MacKillop Week, masses and liturgies for special feast days such as Mary Help of Christians as well as Christmas celebrations including a concert with Peter Kearney.

Forty-two students and three teachers actively participated in the Eastern Region Performing Arts Festival *SPLASH* as members of the choir and dance troupe. These students and teachers gave an enormous amount of their own time and energy to creating the choreography and making this an outstanding performance and experience for all who participated and attended. Two outstanding students were also selected as principal vocalists for this production.

Many extra-curricular activities were also undertaken. These included representative sport days for swimming, cross country, softball, soccer and netball. Students in Year 3 to Year 6 engaged in inter-school sport in Oz Tag, soccer and netball.

Our Year 6 students once again competed in *Robocup Dance* at the University of New South Wales, with one team achieving second place.

## **CATHOLIC LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst follows the Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum and uses the student textbooks, *To Know, Worship and Love*, as authorised by the Archbishop of Sydney, George Cardinal Pell.

Our school motto, *Growing Together in Christ*, guides us in developing a community where students can grow in the knowledge of their faith and where Gospel values are integral to all that we do and say. Our emphasis is on relevant and meaningful Religious Education, the development of prayer experiences, whole school social justice programs, the support of parish programs and using a restorative approach with students.

The liturgical and prayer life of the school was a continued focus for the school. This included the continued use of prayer bags for shared prayer at home and the 'Before School' prayer, organised by Mini Vinnies, based on the liturgical celebrations, seasons and sacramental programs. This year has seen the gradual inclusion of parents in prayer through invitations in the weekly newsletter to encourage engagement in reflection days, the Rosary, liturgies and class masses. This was seen as a way of leading parents to be witnesses to their own faith as well as their children's. This year the school introduced Religious Education Monitors whose major role was to contribute to more meaningful religious celebrations through their participation, organisation and assistance with liturgies and school masses.

We celebrated with three classes who participated in Sacramental Programs: Year 3 Penance (Reconciliation), Year 4 Eucharist and Year 6 Confirmation. These programs included additional parish children and encouraged the participation of children of other religious denominations in the school. At each reflection day the children participated in activities related to Gospel teachings and gathered together with the whole school for a special liturgy. Other liturgies of significance were: ANZAC and Remembrance Day services, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents' Day, the Feast of Mary MacKillop, Holy Week, Easter and All Saints Day.

Throughout 2010 the links with our parish have continued through grade masses, Parish Sacramental Programs, support shown for St Vincent de Paul through Mini Vinnies fundraising, Winter Appeal for blankets and non-perishable foods and the Christmas hamper drive for Catholic Care.

This year the children connected with the wider and global community through raising money for Caritas and the Charitable Works Fund as well as beginning to make connections with a local nursing home through fortnightly visits by Mini Vinnies. These opportunities developed the

children's appreciation of the needs of others outside the local school community and how they can assist in a social justice program.

The weekly newsletter item by the Religious Education Co-ordinator enhanced this role in the community and also made parents aware of the religious events happening in the school and parish.

Students in Year 6 participated in the Archdiocesan Religious Education Test in June this year. The test consisted of fifty multiple-choice questions. Results of this test are analysed by staff and are used to inform teaching and learning from Kindergarten to Year 6. The 2010 Archdiocesan average for the test was 81%, with the school average being 80%. Five students were awarded High Distinctions, ten students received Distinctions and fourteen, Credits. Areas of particular strength were in knowledge relating to the Sacraments, Prayer and Beliefs. Areas for further development relate to knowledge in Scripture, Church and the Liturgical Year. Weekly Religious Education materials, through the use of PowerPoint multiple-choice questions has been introduced to the areas of weakness. Based on the analysis of the 2010 results, further work on the Religious Education materials and the review of classroom practice has been discussed and will be addressed further in 2011.

## **SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

The school provides an educational program based on, and taught in accordance with the Board of Studies 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, Sydney. The curriculum, teaching and learning are informed by the priorities, goals and indicators outlined in the *Sydney Catholic Schools 'Towards 2010' Strategic Leadership and Management Plan*, in particular: *Key Area 2* (Students and their Learning) and *Key Area 3* (Pedagogy). Staff at the school are committed to continuous improvement of teaching and learning in all facets of the school curriculum.

Some particular features of the school curriculum and curriculum initiatives during 2010 are outlined below:

- The staff continued their involvement in the Language Features of Text Types (LFTT) project. Five staff attended inservice training and the Project Officer and members of the LFTT Team worked with several teachers on using pre-assessment task analysis to inform the classroom teaching program. All classes have focused on explicit teaching of talking and listening strategies related to the writing of text types.

- The Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS) program was again implemented in Kindergarten and also Year One from the beginning of the year. Year One Teachers have noted a greatly improved understanding of speech sounds (phonemes) and spelling choices (graphemes) as evidenced in student writing. Five staff in other grades attended training during the year and implemented their learnings in Year 2 to Year 6.
- In the first few weeks of the school year, the students in Kindergarten were individually tested by their class teacher in literacy and numeracy skills using the Performance Indicators in Primary School program (PIPS) from the University of Western Australia. Students were again tested in Term 4 to determine the growth in their learning during the year. This has provided significant information on student progress for their teachers.
- Band continued this year for students in Years 3 to 6, with at least forty students attending each term. The students performed for the school community on a number of occasions.
- Targeted intervention and learning support programs continued in literacy to further support students' learning. These programs included the employment of a teacher for three half-days a week to work with small groups on aspects of reading. Indicators of the success of the intervention were the improved fluency and comprehension of all students. Reading Recovery continued for students in Year 1 with nine students being discontinued from the program and one student being carried over to 2011. Students from Years 2 to 4, who had been part of the Reading Recovery program when in Year 1, also received mid-year monitoring and all students received end-of-year monitoring. Special Needs students received support on a daily basis from the Special Needs teacher or teacher's aides.
- The robotics program continued in Year 6. Students worked in small groups to build and program a robot to perform a dance routine to a chosen song. Three teams participated in the Junior Robocup competition held at the University of New South Wales in August, where one team proceeded to the finals.
- One Year 2 Class trialled iPads as a teaching and learning tool in the classroom. The teacher and students reported greater student engagement in literacy group tasks and consolidation of many basic skills due to the motivating and repetitive nature of the learning.
- In technology, the purchase of equipment such as additional interactive white boards, iPod touches, Flip video cameras, Easi-Speak microphones and Beebots has ensured the integration of eLearning. The introduction of a variety of Web 2 technologies such as wikis and blogs has allowed online communication between students. This has changed the way that students present work and share ideas.
- The Numeracy Key Contact Teachers worked with the Numeracy Advisor and several classroom teachers to plan and implement effective pre-assessment tasks to inform the classroom teaching program and to better meet individual student needs. They also worked with teachers on planning engaging and challenging, differentiated numeracy tasks.

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN TESTS

### National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy

Students in Years 3 and 5 sat the *National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) in May this year. NAPLAN assessment results provide valuable information about student achievements in literacy and numeracy. An analysis of these results assists school planning and is used to support teaching and learning programs.

The table provided shows the percentages of students who achieved particular skill bands in numeracy and the aspects of literacy. The school results shown are compared to students nationally. Literacy is reported in four content strands (aspects): Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation. Numeracy is reported as a single content strand.

Further information regarding school performance in NAPLAN against State and National trends has been provided in the school newsletter dated 20 September 2010 and is available from the school intranet and from the school administration office. Additional information can also be accessed from the MySchool website ([www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)).

NAPLAN results 2010 Year 3	% of students in the top 2 bands		% of students in the bottom 2 bands	
	School <sup>1</sup>	All schools <sup>2</sup>	School <sup>1</sup>	All schools <sup>2</sup>
Reading	51%	44%	0%	14%
Writing	84%	47%	0%	8%
Spelling	55%	39%	4%	17%
Grammar & Punctuation	66%	47%	2%	15%
Numeracy	51%	32%	7%	15%

<sup>1</sup> School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART)  
<sup>2</sup> MCEECDYA National report [www.naplan.edu.au](http://www.naplan.edu.au)

NAPLAN results 2010 Year 5	% of students in the top 2 bands		% of students in the bottom 2 bands	
	School <sup>1</sup>	All schools <sup>2</sup>	School <sup>1</sup>	All schools <sup>2</sup>
Reading	34%	29%	10%	21%
Writing	28%	24%	2%	16%
Spelling	53%	28%	4%	19%
Grammar & Punctuation	61%	35%	4%	17%
Numeracy	36%	26%	12%	18%

<sup>1</sup> School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART)  
<sup>2</sup> MCEECDYA National report [www.naplan.edu.au](http://www.naplan.edu.au)

The percentage of both Year 3 and 5 students in the top two bands in Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation is pleasing. This has shown significant growth over the previous year's results. The Year 5 students also showed significant gain in these areas when compared to their results in Year 3. The students in Year 3 also showed significant improvement in Writing and this can be attributed to the implementation of our whole school spelling program, THRASS, and the systematic professional development of staff in writing through the continued implementation of LFTT.

The small percentage of students in the bottom two bands in most areas is also pleasing. Whilst our averages compare favourably to the national averages, initiatives are in place to further improve these results. Significant professional development will continue to occur in 2011 in Numeracy, Reading, THRASS and LFTT. Our standardised testing and tracking of student results will continue to be a focus as will our further refinement of scope and sequences. Staff also engaged in significant professional development to analyse NAPLAN data to inform future planning.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER STANDARDS**

### **Professional learning**

All teachers have been involved in professional development activities during the year. These activities are designed to develop the skills and understandings of staff to improve student outcomes. Professional development can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific inservices, meetings and conferences.

The school held five whole staff days in 2010. The content of these days was as follows: Preparing and moving into classrooms (Term 1), Restorative Justice (Term 1), 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (Term 3), 'Transforming Hearts' Restorative Justice Spirituality (Term 4) and Curriculum Development (Term 4). Curriculum staff meetings are held each week during term.

In a system of schools, costs incurred for professional development activities can be expended from a variety of sources. These sources include the Federal Government and the CEO, Sydney. The school also expended \$550 per teacher above that expended by the CEO. These funds included professional development in THRASS for six teachers, attendance at the ORIGO Mathematics Conference for six teachers, two staff attending the two day Apple Conference for educators, two Numeracy Co-ordinators attending two days of professional development and professional development in contemporary reading practices for three New Scheme Teachers. Staff also completed professional development in the culture and tradition of first century Palestine and its connection to the Gospel, the introduction of Godly Play in Religious Education in Years 3 to

6, First Aid and CPR, Head of Professional Practice training with Notre Dame University and Web 2.0.

### Teacher Standards

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

Teacher Qualifications	Number of Teachers
1. Those having formal qualifications from a recognised higher education institution or equivalent.	24
2. Those having graduate qualifications but not a formal teaching qualification from a recognised higher education institution or equivalent.	0
3. Those not having qualifications described in 1 or 2 above but having relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate relevant knowledge.	0

Staff are also engaged in external professional development opportunities. In 2010, one staff member completed the Certificate of Gifted Education with the University of New South Wales and another completed the Graduate Diploma of Religious Education at the Australian Catholic University.

### TEACHER ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

The average teacher attendance rate during 2010 was 96%. This figure does not include teachers on planned leave. The teacher retention rate from 2009 to 2010 was 100%. The permanent staff remained stable at the end of the year. Permanent staff on maternity leave have returned to work in a part-time capacity.

### STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The average student attendance rate for the school during 2010 was 96%. School attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group	
Kindergarten	95%
Year 1	97%
Year 2	95%
Year 3	96%
Year 4	95%
Year 5	95%
Year 6	96%

School attendance is generally good at Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst. However, a large number of students are persistently late arriving to school due to local traffic conditions. Prolonged periods of absence occur from where students travel overseas. In these cases parents seek written approval from and / or meet with the Principal to discuss their request for leave. Parents are encouraged to arrange medical and other necessary appointments outside school hours. Student absence due to whooping cough and influenza was higher than usual this year. Class teachers follow up unexplained absences with a school letter requesting an explanation for the absence.

## **SCHOOL POLICIES**

### **Enrolment Policy**

The school follows the Archdiocesan Enrolment Policy. The policy has been developed in the context of government and system requirements. Children from all families who are prepared to support Catholic ideals and principles may be considered eligible for enrolment. Priority for enrolment is given in a specified order as outlined in the full policy document; however special consideration may be given to individual cases.

All parents are provided with an enrolment package that includes CEO and school policy statements. Total fees are made up of the Archdiocesan tuition fee, the parish school levy and local fees and charges. A pastoral approach is adopted for parents experiencing genuine difficulty with the payment of fees.

The commencement of the enrolment period occurred in mid-March with Catholic Schools Week. Parents and new families interested in enrolment had the opportunity to visit classrooms during the Open Day held during Catholic Schools Week. A range of planned activities takes place during the day. A school brochure with current information is also available at any time for families interested in enrolment. The school takes enrolments for other grades at any time of the year.

Information about enrolling in a school within the Archdiocese of Sydney can be accessed via the link: [CEO public website](#).

The full text of the Archdiocesan Enrolment Policy may be accessed via the:

- school website [www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au) in the link to Policies
- school administration office
- parent handbook, also available on the school website.

## **Student Welfare Policy**

The Student Welfare Policy is based on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Care document *Pastoral Care Guidelines for Catholic Schools (2003)* which can be accessed from the [CEO public website](#). In this document, the dimensions and features of Pastoral Care are described, as well as approaches to policy formulation, review and implementation. This document is the key reference point for the school's Pastoral Care Policy. Related documents include: *Countering Harassment of Different Kinds, Dealing with Illegal Substances in Schools, Dealing with Prohibited Weapons in Schools, Strategies for Dealing with Cyber bullying, Disability Standards 2005 and Management of Students with Challenging Behaviours: Guidelines for Primary/Secondary Schools (2007)*.

The school's Pastoral Care policy is based on the principles of restorative justice and procedural fairness. The policy reflects the vision and mission of the Catholic Church and is characterised by safety, trust and mutual respect. The rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community are acknowledged in an environment that is conscious of the need to build the self-esteem of all individuals. To live this policy, the school has adopted various programs, which aim to help students value themselves and experience well-being. These programs focus on self-esteem, social relationships, personal development, anti-bullying, health and personal safety and resilience building. This year, the school has had a major focus on Restorative Justice with Marist Youth Care providing staff, parent and student workshops.

The full text of the school's Pastoral Care Policy may be accessed via the:

- school website [www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au) in the link to Policies
- school administration office
- parent handbook available on the school website.

## **Discipline Policy**

As a Christian community, we believe discipline is founded on a philosophy of Pastoral Care where we recognise and respect the rights of the individual. The principles of Restorative Justice are used in all matters of discipline. 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.

At Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst the school rules are based on our beliefs that:

- All people have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- All people have the right to feel and remain safe.

- Discipline means guiding the child towards self-control and self-direction, by promoting constructive and positive behaviour and attending to misbehaviour with the ultimate goal being to develop in children a sense of responsibility for the actions they choose.

In helping children to develop socially acceptable behaviour and to grow in responsibility and self-discipline, it is essential that the school, home and community work together. The children in our care are entitled to expect the security, which comes from knowing what is expected of them through the provision of a safe and consistent environment.

The full text of the Student Discipline Policy may be accessed via the:

- school website [www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au) in the link to Policies
- school administration office
- parent handbook available on the school website.

In 2010 the Anti-Bullying Policy was changed to include the use of photos in cyber bullying.

### **Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy**

The school adopts the Archdiocesan *Guidelines for Resolving Concerns and Complaints at Sydney Systemic Catholic Schools (May 2007)*, available on the [CEO public website](#) in the development of its school policy. The scope of the guidelines encompasses children's learning, behaviour and welfare, school organisation and management, and student health and safety issues.

The school policy is based on procedural fairness and recognises that parents and caregivers must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns in a supportive and conciliatory environment. Any concerns raised are responded to promptly and fairly and confidentiality is always maintained. Pathways for raising concerns are set out in the information brochure available from the parent handbook available on the school website.

The full text of the school policy is available from the:

- school website [www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mdblakehurst.catholic.edu.au) in the link to Policies
- school administration office
- parent handbook available on the school website.

### **SCHOOL DETERMINED IMPROVEMENT TARGETS**

Each year, the school develops an Annual Improvement Plan indicating the intended key improvements for student learning outcomes. The plan is drawn from the school's Strategic Management Plan and informed by the indicators of effectiveness for Sydney Catholic Schools as

specified in the key CEO document *How Effective is Our Catholic School?* The school engages in an annual evidence-based evaluation of its effectiveness against these external standards in collaboration with the school's Regional Consultant.

School priorities in 2010 focussed on continuing to provide a curriculum that engages students more actively in their learning across a range of curriculum areas. The focus on LFTT and THRASS is assisting students across the school to demonstrate spelling and writing skills above an age appropriate level and across a range of text types. Staff are more skilled in the explicit teaching of writing and spelling and student enthusiasm for spelling has greatly increased.

A continuing focus on improvements in the acquisition of numeracy skills has been supported by the use of *Mathletics* from Kindergarten to Year 6. The numeracy scope and sequence was revised and there has been a noticeable increase in student enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Mathematics. This was demonstrated by their active participation in the World Maths Day - *Maths Trail* activities.

In 2010 the upgrading of building resources, with the building of a new library and refurbishment of seven classrooms and the multi-purpose centre, was identified as an area of major focus. At the end of the year the classrooms were complete and the Mary MacKillop Library was nearing completion. These new areas will provide much-needed contemporary learning centres for the school community.

Staff understanding of effective teaching practice in literacy, numeracy and gifted education related to ICT has been a priority. As a result, students have demonstrated the effective use of ICT skills through the use of flip video and digital cameras in creating animations and movies, and the use of mp3 players and Easi-Speak microphones to record and increase their engagement in the learning process. Student skills in the use of interactive white boards have also continued to improve. The students in Year 6 have continued to improve their skills in robotics through their successful participation in *Robocup Dance*.

## **INITIATIVES PROMOTING RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Students at Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst have been regularly involved in a range of activities that promote the values of respect and responsibility. We commence each school week with an acknowledgement of the traditional peoples, followed by the singing of the National Anthem. Each week we sing our school song, which highlights many of the values our school. Students, teachers and parents are regularly reminded of the school commitment to these and other school values by newsletter items, assembly messages and by the nature of our interpersonal relationships. Each week students, parents and staff are encouraged to nominate students for the

School Peacemaker Award, which is presented to the student who most displays Gospel values in their daily interactions with others. In addition to the school merit awards, sport awards and class of the week awards we have awards for outstanding academic achievement, bookwork and environmental stewardship.

Our SRC meet regularly and discuss our school values and ways of encouraging them more effectively within the school environment. The SRC members play a key role in developing and monitoring the school rules and in seeking feedback from students. The School Captains also speak at the Kindergarten Orientation night and share their experiences of life at Mater Dei Primary School, Blakehurst with the new and existing parents. This year, due to building commitments, our Sports Captains have taken responsibility for a roster for the equitable distribution of playground equipment and space.

The focus on Values for Australian Schooling has continued through to 2010 with a regular focus on specific values and the presentation of awards throughout the year. Our SRC members identified students who were worthy of recognition by living out the values. Students and staff contributed generously to social justice appeals, including *Shades for Aides*, the Sydney Children's Hospital and the collection of Christmas hampers for families in need.

Respect and responsibility are fundamental to the school's restorative justice approach to discipline and this has been promoted through Parent Workshops and ongoing professional development of staff. All teachers are trained to use Restorative Justice practices in conflict situations. This fosters the responsibility of all to build and maintain positive relationships and to accept responsibility for our actions. This year, all Year 5 students were also trained in Restorative Justice procedures, so that they can become Peer Mediators on the playground in 2011.

## **PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION**

Throughout the year parents, staff and students have the opportunity to provide feedback and express ideas and opinions about a variety of matters. This is done at meetings, during informal conversations, through letters to teachers and the Principal and through written surveys. Parents have frequently commented on and written about the extraordinary dedication of the staff, their great care for the children and their professionalism and approachability.

Parents applying for enrolment have the opportunity to provide reasons for wishing to enrol their child at the school. The reasons given indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the good name of the school and its level of care and educational provision. Parents of new families applying for enrolment comment that the school is very welcoming and has been highly recommended to them

by parents of students currently enrolled. Parents frequently expressed their appreciation in writing for the dedication and kindness of staff towards themselves and their children. After sacramental programs and liturgies, parents expressed their appreciation for the care, compassion and guidance provided to all students and for the wonderful organisation and support by all staff.

Parents stated their satisfaction with the communication channels provided which include weekly newsletters, monthly Principal's Reports at P & F meetings and the myclasses parent page (a secure website where information pertaining to school events is located). Parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's teacher and are frequently provided with opportunities to meet with teachers before and after school.

Despite the disruptive building project, staff morale continued to be good. This is evidenced by the willingness of all to volunteer for extra programs and tasks. Three staff provided outstanding dedication and leadership of the forty-two students involved in *SPLASH*. Staff members show initiative in designing exciting and engaging activities that complement class programs such as the Choir and Art Club. Students expressed their great appreciation for the commitment of the staff and the wonderful mosaics they were able to design for the new library garden.

At the end of the year, staff, students and parents were invited to contribute to the Christmas 'Gratitude' tree. Much appreciation was expressed for the wonderful staff and their contribution to the students, their families and the school. Students were also appreciative of the parent contribution through 'Dads on Canteen', the Mary MacKillop Garden, assistance with sporting activities, excursions and fund-raising. Our Kindergarten and Year 1 students also loved and valued the help provided by their Year 5 and Year 6 'buddies' throughout the year.

Year 6 students expressed their appreciation for the many wonderful and engaging learning opportunities they received in their final year of primary school. Particular note was made of the excursion to Canberra, the unit on Rainforests, their real life Money Makers and Architecture units in Mathematics, *SPLASH*, Confirmation, Robocup, the CWF Day for schools and the sporting carnivals.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Catholic schools are accountable for all monies received. Each year, the CEO, Sydney submits to the Federal Government a financial statement on behalf of the 147 parish primary and regional secondary schools. This statement details the income and expenditure of each school and for the Archdiocesan system of schools. In addition, the financial accounts for each school and for the CEO, Sydney are audited annually.

A summary of the income and expenditure reported to the Federal Government for 2010 is as follows:

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>\$million</b>	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>\$million</b>
Parents' Contributions 1	\$119.4	Education and School Support	\$130.3
Federal Government 2	\$555.0	Total Salary Costs	\$500.4
State Government 2	\$132.4	Capital Expenditure	\$189.7
Government Targeted Grants	\$27.9	Surplus	\$29.6
Interest and Other	\$15.3		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$850.0</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$850.0</b>

### Notes

1. Parents' contributions include Archdiocesan tuition fees of \$54.6 million, School Charges & Building Levy and P&F contributions of \$ 64.8 million.
2. Income from Federal and State recurrent government grants is received by the Catholic Education Office on behalf of the schools. Staff Salaries are paid from this income.

Parents' contributions to our school as reported in the school's annual Financial Questionnaire for 2010 was:

Archdiocesan Tuition Fees received	\$267,372
School Based Fees	\$292,117
Other Income (eg. Parents & Friends, Trading & Building Levy)	\$100,034
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$659,523</b>