



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
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STA LSAP Reflection - 2022

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, Bowral

Overview

St Thomas Aquinas is a two stream Catholic Primary School that is located within the Parish of St Thomas Aquinas in Bowral and is one of the 30 Systemic Primary schools that belong to Catholic Education in the Diocese of Wollongong. The school caters for students in Years K-6 and has a current enrollment of 303 students.

St Thomas Aquinas was first opened in 1903 by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in rented premises near Bowral railway line. In 1943, a new parish school was erected in Bundaroo Street, staffed by the Sisters. Further additions were made to this in the 1970's. In 1991 a school hall, kitchen, canteen and lunch area were completed, and 1994 saw an addition of four extra classrooms.

In 1976 St. Thomas Aquinas school became part of the system of Catholic schools in the Wollongong Diocese. In 1988 the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart withdrew their congregation from the school and in 1989 Mr Kevin Ryan was appointed as the first lay Principal, retiring in 1996.

In 2002 a new block containing four classrooms and multi-purpose area was built to improve the learning and teaching facilities in the school.

In 2010 the Fr Glynn Centre was built with funds granted from the Australian Government under the 'Building the Education Revolution' program. The Centre is a multi-purpose hall that is used as a learning centre and for extra curricular activities.

Today St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School prides itself on the charism of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the patronage of St Thomas Aquinas. Their spirit can be found in our students and staff, in their approach to learning, in their spiritual and other achievements and in their friendships and sport. Our community understands the importance of ensuring the school reflects its tradition of the OLSH charism which focuses on the relationship of love between Jesus and Mary,

the same relationship of love we are invited to participate in and have with each other. The Sisters' mission of "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved" holds particular relevance for the ways in which we as a school community shine the heart of Jesus on how we respond to the environmental challenges outlined in Laudato Si'.

We are also blessed to have the patron saint of our parish school of St Thomas Aquinas whose spirituality influences our daily activities and invites Christ to be gradually formed in us and in those to whom we minister. This finds an expression in the way we care for our environment. Coupled with our motto of "Truth Conquers" we understand the importance of being true in our commitment to be sustainable stewards and responsible citizens that contribute to the building of a better future for humanity and our planet.

Environmental vision

This School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) is a tool that will enable us to document, implement, reflect and celebrate sustainability as we respond to the challenges from Laudato Si' to walk our own journey of ecological conversion. At St Thomas Aquinas we understand that we have a missionary and ecclesial mandate that impels us to participate and respond to the call to care for our common home with strategic planning, formation and concrete actions and it is within this context that this SEMP is formulated.

St Thomas Aquinas School aims to provide programs and practices that care for our common home embedding within the school community a commitment to ecologically sustainable actions that promote and nurture ecological conversion.

Environmental education and action challenges our perception of teaching and school life, that we might be alert to and create opportunities through the integration of curriculum, prayer and liturgy, resource management, grounds management, whole school planning and school community that contributes to the betterment of our environment and our relationships with one another.

Since 2015 following the release of Laudato Si', Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, Bowral, has taken seriously Pope Francis' prophetic call for an ecological conversion and has proactively responded in a strategic, planned approach whereby sustainable practices and ecological values are promoted and supported across the school.

Engagement with eco-spirituality, environmental education and action is a key component of our mission, of being Catholic and is viewed as “core business”, not an “optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (LS n217)

This strategic approach has involved the embedding of ecological values into our school programs and practices that promote an ecological and sustainable culture, encouraging everyone to live out his/her ecological vocation and engage in caring for our common home.

St Thomas Aquinas Engagement

St Thomas Aquinas is involved in the Catholic Education Office ‘School Review and Improvement’ process, as are all schools in the Wollongong diocese. Through this we review all aspects of school life, seeking to make improvements in all areas to the betterment of our students. This ongoing improvement continues, especially in the area of sustainability.

This plan connects to whole school planning through the following:

- The school’s SRI plan
- Part of the school annual plan
- Reported on in the school annual report
- Integrated with curriculum program
- Links to extra-curricular activities for students

CEDoW’s [Environmental Education Policy](#) (released in 2018) outline the expectations that all systemic schools are required to address.

A key expectation involves planning and developing a School Environment Management Plan (SEMP) that: is informed by the six areas of the ASSISI Framework: *Whole School Planning; Religious Dimension; Learning and Teaching; Ethical Resource Use; Caring for Country; and Community Relationships* . It also includes actions that are informed by the CEDoW Environmental Assessment Tool. The plan is reviewed and updated on a 3-year cycle.

St Thomas Aquinas School Environment Management Plan

St Thomas Aquinas is currently into its second SEMP. There is a shared understanding amongst the staff of St Pius X, that the key role of the SEMP is to develop and implement sustainable practices in education across and the school community. These include:

- Providing students with opportunities to be involved and create materials for environmental days and celebrations
- Annual school awards for students who demonstrate commitment to the environment through actions and words
- Rotational roster system for shared environmental initiatives within the school
- Document routines and responsibilities for waste management system
- Engagement in staff spirituality day exploring ecological conversion, eco theology and eco spirituality.
- Staff to intentionally connect learning and teaching across the KLAs to the school's outdoor learning areas and gardens.
- Cross curriculum links in the program to sustainable and ecological practices
- Streamlining of whole school waste management plan
- Working towards waste free packaging from home and in the canteen
- Naming of the ecological dimension in the Vision and Mission Statement at the appropriate time
- Information via school assemblies, in School Newsletter and at Kinder Orientation about the school's Waste Free practices.
- Staff and students to reestablish and maintain the school's outdoor learning areas and gardens.

Earthcare School Catholic Earthcare Australia wants to acknowledge the good works happening in schools and nurture their development, growing abundance in addressing our ecological challenges so that we can lead by example and follow our well-formed hearts with practical steps which engage the whole community in caring for our mother earth. St Thomas Aquinas Primary School's hard work has been acknowledged and has been awarded a Level 3 Certification Earthcare School.

Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement

Inspired by Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement – Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor and Bishop Brian's Diocesan Pastoral Message, St Thomas Aquinas, have used the following two documents to guide our journey towards ecological conversion.

RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH

[Cry of the Earth](#)

Whole school systems to improve ecological footprint ie nude foods, recycling station, water hydration station

Whole school participation in system approved environmentally focused days ie Clean Up Australia Day Whole school prayer and action ie World day of Prayer for Creation

RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

[Cry of the poor](#)

Participation in system approved charities annually ie St Vincent de Paul, Caritas, Catholic Mission Action response to point of need within the local and wider community ie flood response,

Educational, Lifestyle and Spiritual Practice Inspired By The cry of the earth and The cry of the Poor

- Sustainable waste management procedure whereby most items and packaging are recycled.
- Review of canteen packaging and healthy foods.
- Connecting curriculum to sustainable and ecological ideas and practices.
- Whole day Spirituality reflections and teachings for staff.
- Whole school prayer and liturgies with a focus on environmental and ecological themes.

- Staff formation in Laudato Si', eco-theology and spirituality (Who is my Neighbour? Called to Ecological Conversion, Environmental Action Staff Meeting).
- Students take responsibility for waste recycling and disposal routines.
- Students are involved in the maintenance of school gardens.

The ASSISI Framework - Across the focus areas the goals of this plan are:

1. Whole School Planning

Environmental Plan (SEMP), Strategic Plan, Governance, Policy, Environmental Team

2. Religious Dimension

Catholic Social Teaching, Celebration, Liturgy, Prayer, Embedding of eco-theology and Catholic Social Teaching principles in RE Curriculum, Formation in eco-spirituality & theology

3. Teaching & Learning

Curriculum, Syllabus Perspectives & Materials, Professional Development, Environmental education integrated into all stages and KLAs, Scope & Sequences for environmental education, Curriculum links to environmental action in school

4. Ethical Resource Use

Individual and School Ecological Footprints, Administrative Practices, Waste Management – recycling, Green catering, purchasing, Audits

5. Caring for Country

Physical surrounds & Maintenance, Biodiversity - Grounds developed to enhance environmental education – eg. “Outdoor Living Classroom”, outdoor education, Landscaping (equipment, shade, safety and seating reflect an awareness and consideration of environmental impact)

6. Community Relationships

Networks and Partnerships, Student Life