Annual Report
St Brendan’s Primary School, Ganmain

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The School

This report is a summary of the 2012 School year for St Brendan’s Primary School.

St Brendan’s Primary School is situated in the small rural township of Ganmain, approximately fifty-five kilometres northwest of Wagga Wagga in the Riverina district of Southern New South Wales. The school is part of St Brendan’s Parish and the wider Ganmain community. Ganmain boasts a rich history of farming, mainly in cereal crops and sheep with the ever expanding canola now popular. Ganmain is the self-proclaimed ‘sheaf hay’ capital of Australia.

The Catholic community of is also rich in history. From humble beginnings in 1907 with the dedicated governance of the Presentation order of sisters through to the Dominican sisters and lay principals the school has always upheld and nurtured the rich faith traditions and practices and offers an educational setting for those families seeking a catholic education for their children. To this day, as a school community we remain dedicated to those ideals and endeavour to prepare our students to eventually take their place in society as confident, responsible, caring, global citizens who are well educated and grounded in faith, learning, care, service and stewardship for the good of all.

Our purpose is to educate and support each student in their academic, spiritual, social and physical development and engage them in quality educational activities that set them up for a positive future.

Catholic Identity

St Brendan’s Primary School is a Catholic systemic school administered and supported by the Catholic Schools Office Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. Further information can be found at: http://web.csoww.catholic.edu.au/

We have deep links with the local community, particularly the catholic Parish of St Brendan’s. Our school plays vital part in the Ganmain community providing a service to many organisations such as Senior Citizens, Red Cross, CWA and St Vincent de Paul. We are connected to nearby towns and hamlets.

Our school prayer states: "We are a faith filled community, enlivened by Christ and committed to the Church". We sustain this commitment through the work carried out in the school in the broader local setting

We continued to work in mutual support of our parish administrator, Father Mark Whybrow. Father Mark usually visited the school each Thursday and also visit informally at other times to spend time with each class and members of staff. Fr Mark has recently moved to the parish of Hay and we now welcome Fr Scott Armstrong.

We encourage students to be active members of the parish and to participate in parish masses and activities. We work closely with the parish priest in the preparation of students for the sacraments and for liturgies. Teacher regularly attend mass are involved in liturgies and support the work of the parish.

Our Vision embodies our enduring belief that “St Brendan's School is founded on the person of Jesus Christ and embraces his Gospel and Mission.”

Classroom teachers use the diocesan religious education program and supplementary resources to support this work.

We have continued with the Making Jesus Real (MJR) program which has been used as a way to promote the example of Jesus and the formation of positive relationships in the school. We have also adopted programs which support emotional growth and resilience, such as You Can Do It and Restorative Practice.

Students are provided with many opportunities to practise and support leadership in the service of others. In our small community personal and family connections are usually quite strong This encourages children to engage with and form firm friendships with a broad age-range of people.

Students are encouraged to strive for excellence in their work. The teachers are strong advocates of individualised programming tailored to suit the needs of their students and inclusion. The school has a strong anti-bullying policy and culture. The behaviour of the students is positive and peaceful. Students openly encourage each
other and celebrate success of all. Staff members, students and parents are encouraged to voice any concerns appropriately.

This year the children have once again participated in programs in preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Each of these occasions was celebrated with family, friends and other parish members. We are grateful for the ongoing support of teachers, parents and Fr Mark in the formation of these young students.

Throughout the year we have also participated in many school and parish masses, usually for First Friday and special feast days, the sacrament of Confession and prayer services. On most of these occasions the children participated in reading, singing, processions, preparation and serving on the altar.

As a school we celebrated paraliturgies for Lent and Easter, ANZAC Day and Advent and Christmas seasons and the year 6 leadership installations.

This year we held several ‘mission days’ to raise money for many catholic missionary projects in Australia and overseas. We are strong supporters of Children’s Mission Partners and Project Compassion (Caritas). This year as a school we raised well over $500 for these projects.

The students are encouraged have given input into the organisation and management of their fundraising activities and are also educated in the various missionary projects.

In March 2012 many local and school families and indeed the township itself directly affected by the widespread flooding on three separate occasions. Several families had their own homes deluged or cut off and become stranded. Typically the students and their families played an active role in “lending a helping hand” and supporting each other locally in a spirit of generosity and support.

A Message from key School Bodies

In 2012, the School board and P & F purchased another iPad for the use of teachers and students so both classes could benefit from this technology. They have enabled greater learning opportunities for all concerned. The library refurbishment continued with computer tables added, as well a projector screen.

Further landscaping work was undertaken involving tree removal, additional plants added under palm trees and levelling of soil in preparation for new lawn area around the Mackillop garden in the autumn months and a sandpit. A large paved chess board was laid near the COLA area. Our tennis court/netball court/basketball court lines were repainted which has made a difference.

The MacKillop garden has been paved and plants established. A plaque, seat and roses will be added next year.

The School Board embarked on a detailed program to address prospective OH &S issues before they cause concern.

Thank you to all the Board members and the P & F for their support, time and effort in fundraising, catering and working bees.

To the staff and Fr. Mark Whybrow for their dedication and care in all the work they do.

Bede Guthrie
President of the School Board.

Student Outcomes in Standardised National Literacy and Numeracy Testing

St Brendan’s Primary school has participated in BST Literacy and Numeracy since 1998 and in BST Writing since 2001 (now Naplan). The school monitors the Naplan Trend Data each year and uses that information to inform its learning and teaching practices for the upcoming year.

Comparison to Statewide Results

In 2012 St Brendan’s continued in the National Partnerships scheme and once again conducted a thorough analysis of the Naplan results for the year. It has been noted that the students have made significant growth in
the areas targeted from 2011 results and we are very pleased with the growth of students from year 3 to year 5. We are very pleased with our results in comparison to those state and diocesan wide.

After looking at the trend data and individual performance of students in years three and five, the teachers have targeted the potential growth of students as their main focus and have highlighted aspects of literacy particularly inferential reading and persuasive writing for school improvement in 2012/13. The teachers will reflect on their item analysis of Naplan to inform their teaching focus.

A school action plan has been developed. Further information on Naplan can be obtained through the My Schools website.

**Professional Learning**

in 2010 St Brendan’s staff was nominated as a National Partnerships School, low SES. This is a federally funded program designed to improve the educations prospects of students in less advantaged areas in Australia (low SES) and is fully backed by quality research and coordinated by the CSO in Wagga Wagga.

As a small rural community who St Brendan’s school we have welcomed this focus and support for our students.

Throughout 2011 the National Partnerships program has been embraced enthusiastically by the staff, and is supported by the parent body, It will run in our school for the next four years and will cover the six nominated reform agendas. These are:

*Reform 1*
Incentives to attract high – performing teachers and principals

*Reform 2*
Adoption of best practice performance management and staffing arrangements that articulate a clear role for principals.

*Reform 3*
School operational arrangements that encourage innovation and flexibility

*Reform 4*
Providing innovative and tailored learning opportunities

*Reform 5*
Strengthen school accountability

*Reform 6*
External partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services

Over the course of the year the principal, Mrs. Gaskin, and teaching staff Mrs. Kathy Sase, Mrs. Julie Guthrie and Mrs. Ros Guthrie have attended several professional development opportunities to assist them in developing leadership skills as teachers. Teachers have also had significant involvement professional development days designed to assist them in their pedagogy, at staff meetings, diocesan meetings and also with CSO support. They have also had training in First Steps Reading and have begun trialing strategies in the classroom.

Teachers are encouraged to continue their own professional development by developing ‘professional learning plans.’ We have had great success from the practice of working with teachers from other schools, visiting classrooms and sharing ideas, particularly through literacy and numeracy collegial groups.

We were very grateful for the input of John Hattie in a recent day for teachers. Central to our quest for continual school improvement is the notion that *"Teachers make the difference"* (Hattie 2005)

Next year we want to embed the many strategies more fully into the school.

In her role as administrative assistant, Mrs. Sheena Kelly has also attended SINA and SAS administrator professional learning opportunities.

Throughout the year, Mrs. Gaskin continued in her role as Principal and National Partnerships coordinator in several schools. She was involved in the development of the Diocesan Strategic Plan as a member of the steering committee.

In 2012, the staff, along with several other school staffs undertook professional learning in First Steps Reading.

**Teaching Staff**

The NSW government requires that this report detail the number of teachers in each of the following categories:
A) have teaching qualifications from a recognised higher education institution within Australia
B) have qualifications from a recognised higher education institution within Australia but no formal teacher education qualifications
C) have relevant successful teaching experience and appropriate knowledge but no formal teacher qualifications.

The NSW government requires that this report detail the number of teachers in each of the following categories:

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<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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**Workforce Composition**

St Brendan’s consists of one principal, one full time teacher and two part time teachers including a Reading Recovery teacher, one teacher assistant, one administrative assistant, a cleaner and grounds person.

**Student Attendance**

*Student attendance rates for each Year level and the whole school.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Attendance %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>95.21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>93.50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>95.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>94.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>97.25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>95.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinder</td>
<td>95.64%</td>
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</table>

**Student Non - Attendance**

Teachers mark the roll daily for both morning and afternoon sessions noting absences and filing notes. Student non attendances are recorded electronically on SAS weekly. Parent/guardian notes are expected for non attendance. A letter of request for permission for leave is required from the parent/guardian when a student is to be absent for 5 days or more. Unexplained non attendances are followed up with phone calls and notes are sent home if there has been no reason stated after two weeks. In 2013 the school will adopt the latest policy from the CSO in this matter.

**Enrolment Policy**

St Brendan’s School is open to all students whose parents seek catholic education for them. It is an expectation that the parents/guardian support the school’s religious, educational and community goals. The school has endorsed and adopted the Diocesan Policy and procedures on enrolment. The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established a Complaints Handling Policy, Pastoral Care and Discipline Policies, Professional Requirements for Accreditation. These policies along with many others can all be found on the Catholic Schools Office website at [www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au)

**Characteristics of the Student Body**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Indig’</th>
<th>LOTE*</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
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</table>

*Language background Other Than English

**Structure of Classes**

In 2012 our staffing allocation allowed us to run two class groups. The Infants class consisted of 14 students in K, 1, 2. The Primary class consisted of 18 students from years 3, 4, 5, 6.

**School Policies**

Throughout the year the staff continued to develop and review policies in each of the curriculum areas according to the diocesan plan and are compliant with Board of Studies requirements. In 2012 and audit was conducted for Creative Arts and Religious Education policies and programs across the diocese. They were both found to be compliant for our school.

Organizational policies are updated regularly and newly developed diocesan policies and procedures are adopted by the school when they are made available on the website. A paper copy of the school policies are kept in the front office and parents are welcome to view them.
Discipline Policy

St Brendan’s Discipline Policy aims to provide a safe, caring and supportive learning and teaching environment. This policy enables students to demonstrate responsible behaviour and a healthy self esteem. It encourages the students to show respect and consideration for the feelings, rights and property of others as well as themselves.

Student Welfare

Student welfare is of paramount importance to the community of St Brendan’s. Through our Pastoral Care and Behaviour Policies we aspire to effectively live out our Vision and Mission statement “to be a faith filled community enlivened by Christ and committed to the Church” and to provide a safe environment which will allow for the wholesome development of every child.

The Pastoral Care and Behaviour Policy is an expression of the aims of the school community for the development of positive and productive relationships among its members. It outlines how the school encourages a culture so that most problems are prevented and those that do occur are dealt with constructively.

The school has adopted a strong Anti Bullying policy and supports this with positive programs to enhance social and emotional development. The Road Safety Policy also assist us to ensure the students welfare remains a priority.

Complaints and Grievances

The school has adopted a proactive approach to resolving complaints and grievances that is based on procedural fairness.

It recognises that parents/caregivers/ and students must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns in a supportive and constructive manner.

Parents/students with any matter of concern are encouraged in the first instance to contact their classroom teacher. If the need then arises, contact with the Principal should be made.

The Catholic School Office is contactable if parents feel any school matter is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the parent or guardian.

Changes to School Policies

There have been no significant changes to school policy in 2012.

Improvement Targets

Target areas for 2013 are stated in the school’s Annual Improvement Plan and cover the priority areas of Catholic Identity and Religious Education, Student Learning, Pedagogy, IT, Leadership, Finances and Resources. A copy of the Annual Improvement Plan is kept on file and is available for viewing on request at the school office.

Following is an update for 2012: The training in First Steps Mathematics: Number was completed in 2010 and teachers are continuing to embed changes in the classrooms. A review of the school’s scope and sequence for Mathematics was undertaken and revised plan was adopted in 2012. This has been monitored over the year and small changes have been incorporated as needed. It has been used by the classroom teachers since Term 1.

The teachers have also continued to embed First Steps Writing strategies in areas such as spelling and grammar and composed writing. There has been some improvement in students’ writing over the past year, and this has been reflected in the Naplan results. Our goal is sustained growth in this area across the school.

Through National Partnerships initiatives the school has been able to offer reading Recovery for students and additional support of targeted groups of students.

In 2012 the staff were trained in First Steps Reading and continued with the Leadership for School Improvement modules. They also had intensive training in unpacking the Naplan data using the Smart 2 tool. The results revealed by this unpacking has justified a further focus on Reading skills across the school.

Teachers have also tapped into resources provided through the interactive whiteboard...
(IWB) and potential learning tools on the internet. They have embraced iPad as a valuable teaching and learning tool in the classroom.

With the constant outlook to upgrade technology, the students now have far greater ease of access to the internet and tools for learning. With almost one computer for every one to two students, and an interactive whiteboard and iPad in each classroom, their technology skills are developing fast. And with the clear emphasis on quality teaching and learning throughout the school, the students have shown greater enthusiasm and engagement in their lessons and are developing independence and confidence in their own abilities.

The vegetable gardens have been a resounding success in the education of our students for many reasons including education in healthy eating. Students have taken on the responsibility to care and nurture for the environment very seriously. We have all enjoyed the spoils of their labour many times, with abundant growth and the harvest of many vegetables, fruit and herbs. These in turn have been put into many dishes created in our kitchen area of the school by the students and under the guidance of the teachers.

This year we have made improvement to the external areas of the school. The garden area has been extended to the eastern end of the property, a chess board made from pavers has been constructed and a new sandpit is planned to be in place by early next year. We have asked the local Men’s Shed to make some checker pieces for play outside and we will continue the hedging along eastern front fence after Christmas. The watering system has been repaired and extended to meet the needs of the garden. There is a master plan for improvement into 2013.

School/Parish Relationship

We have worked closely with Fr Mark and the parishioners this year to build on the already strong partnership between the Parish and the School. We hope to continue to enjoy a close and mutually beneficial bond between the parish and the school.

Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility

Overall we are very proud of the way the students demonstrate care and respect for each other in and around the school. They generally work in a quiet and industrious manner and are easily disciplined. They are a pleasure to take on excursions and problems are usually addressed before they grow. Parental involvement is of a high level and teachers This year, we have actively engaged students in the development of social behaviours which promote respect and justice and workable relationships.

This is underpinned by our Christian beliefs buoyed by the school culture and modelled by the staff, parents and leaders in the school.

We have focused on anti bullying behaviour and developing positive relationships with other students. We plan to continue this focus in 2013. Programs such as Making Jesus Real and the You Can Do It support the work we do in this area.

Our school has also been involved in wide-ranging service to the local community throughout the year. We have conducted events such as grandparent’s day, visited the elderly members of the Ganmain Community at the seniors’ meals to perform several items for them and to spend time talking with the members.

As a school, we have entertained the Senior Citizens of Ganmain and surrounding districts on Senior Citizens Day and worked with the community on such occasions as St Brendan’s Deb Ball in March.

This year in May the students were involved in the deanery Catholic School’s Extravaganza in Wagga with many other diocesan schools. It was a splendid experience for them particularly as we are often isolated in our cultural events. It was important to them that they saw themselves as part of a larger diocesan entity. The quality of the items was excellent and the children were very proud of their involvement. They are looking forward to the next event in 2014.

Students performed items and prepared projects for the CWA Day. The school has also been involved in community programs
such as *Clean Up Australia Day* and supported fundraising and activities for the local Ganmain Show, Coolamon Hospital, Carols in the Park and numerous charities.

The students have enjoyed and these many and varied experiences, and the school involvement is very much appreciated by the community.

**Community Satisfaction**

The following information has been provided to the school via confidential surveys. It has been a valuable gauge for determining the level of satisfaction the community has with our school.

**Parents**
My child (son or daughter) is usually happy at St Brendan’s School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
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**Students**
I am usually happy at St Brendan’s School

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
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**Staff**
I am usually happy at St Brendan’s School

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
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**Financial Statement Summary**