2005 Annual Report

St Mary’s Corowa

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1. **School Profile**

1.1 **Introduction**
St. Mary’s Primary School is a vibrant Learning Community supported by the Parents and Friends of our school. The township of Corowa is situated on the majestic Murray River and hosts a diverse range of agricultural and commercial industries. The majority of the 195 students live in Corowa or nearby rural areas.

The School motto, “Love and Truth” was designed in 1969. The school believes in striving for quality education in a safe and caring environment, in all aspects of the children’s growth and development.

1.2 **Student Profile**

The following information describes the student profile for 2005:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>LBOTE*</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>192</td>
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*Language background other than English

1.3 **Enrolment Policy**

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established an Enrolments Policy which is implemented by all schools in the Diocese. The full text of this policy can be found at [http://cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au/policies.htm](http://cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au/policies.htm)

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

1.4 **Staff Profile**

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
b) have qualifications from a recognised higher education institution but no formal teacher education qualifications

c) have relevant successful teaching experience and appropriate knowledge but no formal teacher qualifications.

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
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All teachers in the school have the necessary teaching qualifications from a recognised higher education institution. Teaching standards are maintained through regular whole staff professional development in curriculum and compliance areas. In 2005, staff members received further training in the areas of Creative Arts, Religious Education, English, Information and Communication Learning Technology, Primary Writing Assessment (Basic Skills Test), Child Protection and Duty of Care, Student Welfare, First Aid and CPR.
2. Catholic Life and Mission

2.1 Catholic Heritage

The local Catholic community in Corowa built a school in 1893, with further additions in 1910, after classes were first held in the Church. The Sisters of Mercy administered the school. The present school complex was built in 1959.

The school maintains a very special place in the history and tradition of St Mary’s Parish. Many parishioners were educated at St Mary’s, and now many have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren attending the school.

St Mary’s School enjoys a continued association with the Sisters of Mercy. Three Sisters still live in the parish and reside in the Convent adjacent to the school. Regular visitors to the school, the sisters strongly support the work of the staff, children and parents. The children enjoy their visits and this helps to maintain a sense of history and Catholic tradition in the school.

2.2 Liturgical Life

In 2005 the school conducted a variety of liturgical celebrations. Each class prepared their Class Mass in Terms 1, 2, 3 and 4. Mass was celebrated to mark the beginning and end of the School Year, and the school participated in Masses at various times throughout the year to mark significant feasts and observances, including the Feast of the Assumption and the Feast of the Annunciation. Senior children attended Parish Anointing Masses during the year. Children often assisted in the preparation of Masses and were involved in Liturgy of The Word, altar service and as choristers. During Holy Week all school children participated in the Holy Week Liturgy which celebrates the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Staff and children are involved in the preparation of school and class liturgies.

The Sacramental Program included regular liturgical celebrations in students’ homes as well as in St Mary’s Parish Church, with each program culminating in the celebration of the particular sacrament (Sacrament of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation).

2.3 The School in the Life of the Parish and Diocese

St Mary’s Primary School is an integral part of St Mary’s parish and enjoys strong support from and partnership with the Parish Church community. Fr Paul Hart, Parish Priest, is actively involved in the school life of St Mary’s and as spiritual leader and pastor of the school and parish he nurtures the religious dimension of the school. St Mary’s School is represented on the Parish Council, with the Principal as an ex-officio member. Similarly, Fr Paul Hart is a member of the School Council and these two associations work very well together to ensure good communication and positive relations between the school and the parish.

St Mary’s Parish continues to give strong financial support to the school, with buildings insurance contributions and, in 2005, financing the acquisition of a portable classroom to accommodate increased enrolments. The parish also made a contribution to the refurbishment of the upper level classrooms. This involved the installation of a suspended ceiling and new air-conditioning for each classroom.

The school children visit Karinya House, the Catholic retirement and nursing home centre in town, and this provides opportunities for the school children and elderly parishioners to meet and converse.

St Mary’s School is part of the systemic school system of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. The school is administered by the Catholic Schools Office - Wagga Wagga. Each year there are many opportunities for the school to be involved in the life of the Diocese. In 2005, the staff attended the Albury Deanery Mass celebrated by Bishop Gerard Hanna.
Each year Bishop Hanna celebrates the Sacrament of Confirmation in the parish and visits the school in the week prior to Confirmation. The school is represented at special Diocesan events and liturgies throughout the year.

In 2005 the Sacramental Programme became parish-based. The school was actively involved in supporting parents and children during preparation for reception of the Sacraments. We held Reconciliation for Year Three students, The Holy Eucharist for Year Four students and Confirmation for Year Six students. The children prepared reverently for these Sacraments and grew in a deeper understanding of their faith.

2.4 Religious Education Curriculum

The school’s Religious Education Syllabus is ‘Sharing Our Story’. This Diocesan syllabus was introduced in 2004. The teaching of Religious Education occurs daily in classrooms, with children learning about their Catholic faith, and covering the strands of God, Jesus, Church, Sacraments, Scripture, Christian Life and Prayer.

2.5 Catholic Worldview

The Catholicity of the school embraces a call to action and a commitment to helping those in need around the world as well as in our local community. In 2005, Project Compassion efforts during Lent raised $507.25 for people living in poverty, especially those affected by the Boxing Day tsunami. Mission efforts during the year enabled the children to contribute to a variety of assistance programs for children and communities overseas.

St Mary’s hosted a group of children from the ‘Children First Foundation’ in April. These children from overseas have come to Australia for specialist medical treatment. The interaction between them and children of St Mary’s was something very special.

2.6 Parent Participation

St Mary’s School P&F Association:

St Mary’s School has a wonderful P&F group that raise funds for needed and /or desired amenities that will assist our school body and raise the teaching facility of the school.

Who is the P&F? Essentially you are the P&F, the parent and friends of the School, you are most welcome to attend the meetings, and become involved.

We have had a number of fund raising ventures throughout this reporting period. By and large we usually raise approximately $20,000.00 per annum, which for our school number of families is an outstanding effort.

The major fund raiser for the year is the mid-Spring Fete held in the school grounds; this usually brings in around $14,000.00 and is wonderfully supported by the School, Church and extended community of Corowa.

Other avenues of fund raising are the School canteen which is all voluntary run and staffed, as well as other raffles and bus trips.

A major achievement has been the successful relocation of a portable classroom, which includes a classroom, a second classroom / art room and a teacher resource room. We as a P&F can stand proud in our achievements to assist in this venture, however, the crowning achievement has been the air conditioning and insulation and new ceilings in the upstairs class rooms. Well done, everybody.

Again I thank those who are involved in creating a wonderful school, Father Paul, Principal Phil, teachers and support staff, the Council, the P&F and most importantly you the parents.
Thanks to the wonderful parents who assisted with the Canteen, especially Annie Hanson and her tireless dedication. Annie has decided that after years of involvement in the Canteen, that it is time to move on; we seek and plead for someone to take on this task, it isn’t difficult but does require continued involvement. Maybe it could be done on a share basis or term basis; please contact Phil if you are able to fulfil this role.

Thanks to Gail McPherson for her role as fete co-ordinator. After 3 tremendously successful fetes Gail has decided it’s time for another to be involved. Therefore here is another task for a willing participant. Again not a difficult task, because there is support from the P&F, but does require some co-ordination.

Thanks to my support executive of Secretary Julia Coyle and Treasurer Karen Lavis. Very well done Julia and Karen; my role has been made much the easier for your care and support. Finally to those who attend the meetings, thankyou.

All in all a successful year, that we hope to again improve upon next year. That improvement will hopefully come by way of more family involvement and participation throughout the whole year, and an even larger final tally at year’s end.

Ken Filcock
P&F President

2.7 Professional Learning in Catholic Life and Mission

The Diocesan Policy on Professional Requirements for the Accreditation of Teachers of Religious Education can be found at:

http://cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au/policies.htm

Seven teachers at St Mary’s School have been accredited to teach Religious Education. All teachers participate in professional learning associated with the teaching of the RE Syllabus, ‘Sharing Our Story’.
3. Pastoral Care

3.1 Diocesan Policies

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established Pastoral Care and Discipline Policies which are implemented by all schools in the Diocese. The full text of these policies can be found at:

http://cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au/policies.htm

The implementation of these policies is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

3.2 School Implementation of Diocesan Policy

At St Mary’s we consider Pastoral Care a facet of all school life. It permeates the way we set up our Discipline and Anti - Bullying Policy. It challenges the way all staff relate to children in our care and guide them to know Jesus in the face of others. The school’s Pastoral Care Policy is derived from the School Vision and Mission statement and the Catholic ethos of the school.

The school implementation of Diocesan Policy includes initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of social cruelty (bullying) through close monitoring of children’s behaviour, early intervention, professional dialogue, communication with parents, positive reward systems, time out measures and discussions with students. In 2005 professional development for teachers was undertaken with social cruelty workshops presented by Robert Pereira, who also worked with children, and conducted a parent information session on the topic also.

3.3 Pastoral Care of Families

St Mary’s School values the close partnership of home and school in the education process. Regular and good communication can greatly assist in the pastoral care of families. The school is able to engage the guidance and counselling services of Centacare in Albury for students and their families. The school counsellor visits the school regularly for provision of counselling services.

3.4 2005 Initiatives

- Anti-bullying sessions with Robert Pereira (students, staff and parents); staff professional development including strategies to use with children
- Centacare services for students and families
- Peer Support Program for senior students, assisting with self-esteem and self-awareness, communication skills, group co-operation and enhancement
- ‘Teachable Moments’ – Catholic Personal Development / Sexuality Program – parent sessions
3.5 Resolving Issues

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established a Complaints Handling Policy which is implemented by all schools in the Diocese. The full text of this policy can be found at

http://cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au/policies.htm

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.
4. Excellence in Teaching and Learning

4.1 Curriculum Overview
The school offers a full primary education curriculum as well as a Religious Education curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 6. The school utilises the Board of Studies curriculum documents in the Key Learning Areas of English, Mathematics, Human Society and Its Environment, Science and Technology, Creative Arts, Personal Development / Health / Physical Education. The Religious Education Program is based on the Diocese of Wagga Wagga RE Syllabus ‘Sharing Our Story’.

4.2 Approach to Teaching and Learning
The children are taught in a safe, collaborative, co-operative and supportive learning environment, and prepared for the changing world through the promotion of a comprehensive quality curriculum, witnessed by:

- Investing in independent thinking, and the development and application of targeted skills
- Provision of quality learning experiences in all Key Learning Areas

4.3 Significant Initiatives

- Teacher Professional Development in the teaching of English and Religious Education
- Peer Support Program
- Reading Recovery Program
- ‘Linkages’ – high school transition program
- Life Education (drug education) Program
- ‘Teachable Moments’ (human sexuality and development) Program
- Music Program
- School Musical – ‘Creepy Crawly Christmas’
- Healthy Canteen Program

4.4 Student Achievement

Literacy and Numeracy
Twenty-nine Year 3 and twenty-two Year 5 students sat for the Basic Skills Test in August. These tests are designed to provide results from a wide range of multiple choice questions, covering aspects of literacy (reading, language, comprehension and writing) and numeracy (strands of Number, Space and Measurement).

This testing enables teachers to plot where their students are achieving and where the challenges exist. The planning and programming for teaching and learning is guided by all forms of assessment, one of which is the Basic Skills Test. The school performed well in most areas of Numeracy and Literacy.
**Year 3**

In Literacy our students performed well on questions relating to choice of prepositions, use of tense, verb agreement, contractions, conjunctions and spelling conventions (Language). They performed well on questions relating to rhyming words, use of relative pronouns, linking nouns and pronouns, sequencing and locating information (Reading).

Our students were challenged by inferential comprehension questions in Reading.

In Numeracy our students performed well on questions relating to all areas of the Number strand. In the Measurement section our students performed well in questions relating to Time, Length and Area. In the Space strand our students performed well in questions relating to Graphs, 2D Shapes and 3D Objects.

Our students were challenged by some questions in Fractions and Decimals, and 3D Objects questions in the Space section.

**Year 5**

In Literacy our students performed well on questions relating to choice of prepositions, use of apostrophes, commas, pronoun selection and spelling conventions (Language). They performed well on questions relating to narration to infer and make predictions, describing to locate information, linking nouns and pronouns and use of explanation for interpretation (Reading).

Our students were challenged by some questions relating to verb agreement, use of present tense in Language, and relating to inferential comprehension questions in Reading.

In Numeracy our students performed well on questions relating to all areas of the Number strand. In the Number strand our students performed well in questions relating to Multiplication and Division. In the Measurement strand our students performed well in questions relating to Mass, Volume and Length. In the Space strand our students performed well in questions relating to Position, Graphs, 2D Shapes and 3D Objects.

Our students were challenged by some questions in Money, Length, Area and Mass, and 3D Objects questions in the Space section.

**Primary Writing Assessment (BST)**

Twenty-nine Year 3 students and twenty-two Year 5 Students sat for the Primary Writing Assessment in August. The students are required to complete two written tasks using a short stimulus paper. These results are very pleasing.

We acknowledge the enormous efforts from all teachers, Kinder to Year Six, to help our students achieve their best in the Basic Skills Tests.

**Targets for 2006**

The school aims to develop and implement the most current educational practice in Key Learning Areas and support our existing programs for quality teaching and learning in place at the school. The staff will undertake training in English and Creative Arts modules, as well as review the school’s assessment and reporting structures in light of the new Commonwealth Government requirements in this area.
4.5 Information, Communication and Learning Technologies

The school continued to integrate ICLT in the teaching and learning programs. Curriculum driven, ICLT plays an important part in the students’ research and information gathering as well as presentation of work in the Key Learning Areas. Students visit the computer lab in class groups each week, and can also access the intranet and internet using classroom computers during learning sessions. School acquisition of a digital video camera and digital projector in 2005 has enabled students to expand their understanding and use of digital technology in the presentation of their work.

4.6 Professional Learning

In 2005 Staff members were trained in modules designed by our Catholic Schools Office for the following areas of learning:

- Creative Arts
- Religious Education
- English
- Information and Communication Learning Technology (CastNET)
- Primary Writing Assessment Training (Basic Skills Test)

Compliance training was undertaken by all staff in the following areas:

- Child Protection
- Duty of Care
- CPR update and First Aid update training

The school’s Mathematics Policy documents were reviewed in 2005 as part of the cycle of School Renewal and Development for School Registration in 2006.

This professional learning in curriculum and compliance ensures that current welfare and educational practice is in place to enhance learning, care and protection for all students.
5. **Extra Curricula Program**

In December, 2005 the school children performed ‘Creepy Crawly Christmas’, a festive musical production. This production brought together many aspects of drama, music and art in the Key Learning Area of Creative Arts, and involved all students and staff of the school, as well as a number of parents.

With the purchase of six new keyboards and five guitars from the fundraising efforts of the P&F Association, students have had lessons using these instruments as part of the school music program in 2005.

The Gymnastics Program continued in 2005 with the assistance of the Albury Sports Academy. This program ran for nine weeks and proved very successful in helping children’s co-ordination, stamina and balance.

The annual Winter Sports Carnival was conducted, involving eight local primary schools in our area. We acknowledge the support of the Corowa Council, Corowa High School and Corowa Sporting clubs for their assistance. This was a very successful, fun day for all the participants.

St. Mary’s School was involved in numerous sports in 2005. Our major events were swimming, cross country and athletics. Carnivals were held for these sports with points awarded to all children who participated. Overall team winners were also acknowledged as well as age champions and children were selected for deanery carnivals.

Other sporting trials were held to select children for deanery and diocesan events such as netball, cricket, Aussie rules, softball, hockey, tennis, basketball, soccer and rugby. Students who displayed excellence in a sport or represented the diocese in the MacKillop team for 2005 were acknowledged at our school’s final assembly.
6. **Strategic Initiatives**

6.1 **2005 Priorities and Achievements**

*School Council Formation*

The school moved to the formation of a School Council, replacing the School Board which had been operating for a number of years. Whereas the School Board had an advisory and management role, the School Council has an advisory role to the Principal on matters of policy relating to the well-being and direction of the school.

*Student Leadership*

The school reviewed its Student Leadership Model, in consultation with parents, staff and School Council. School Captains are now supported by Colour House Leaders, responsible for the facilitation of a variety of school events and providing assistance to the staff. The role of Colour House Leaders has been broadened to include leadership in many facets of school life, not only the sporting endeavours. The school also established a Student Representative Council, with membership from Kindergarten to Year 6, to represent students’ interests and views at regular meetings with the Principal.

*Refurbishments*

Each of the three upper level classrooms was refurbished with a suspended ceiling and a new air conditioner. Refurbishments jointly financed by the Parish Council, School P&F Association and Catholic Schools Office - Wagga Wagga.

*Portable Classroom Acquisition*

In late 2005 the school acquired a portable classroom to meet the learning needs of the students in light of the current enrolment numbers and necessary class arrangements. The acquisition of the portable enables the class temporarily occupying the library space to be accommodated in a classroom and hence the library to be reclaimed for its intended purpose. The school is extremely grateful to the School Council and the Parish Council for securing the portable classroom.
6.2 2006 Priorities and Challenges

- Revisit the school vision and mission statement; school reality matching the statements
- School Discipline Policy review in light of school vision and mission
- School Renewal and Registration
- National Safe Schools Framework: Implement mandatory policies and practices; Criterion-referenced reporting
- Child Protection and Duty of Care: staff training, review school policies and practices
- Occupational Health and Safety Training
- Teaching and learning agenda – best theory and practice development
- Curriculum Review: Creative Arts Syllabus
- English: Finalise documentation; implementation in readiness for Review in 2007
- Mathematics: track / monitor the implementation of the Review recommendations from 2005
- ‘Firestick’ – review policy on Indigenous Education and inclusive practices in light of the Diocesan document
- Reading Recovery Program continuation
- Classroom upgrades – Commonwealth Government grant (Investing in Our Schools Program)
- Painting of classroom areas in accordance with School Maintenance Plan
- Resources / furniture upgrade for classes
- School beautification projects
7. Financial Report

**Income**

- School Fees: 8%
- Other Fee Income: 5%
- State Government Recurrent Grants: 21%
- Commonwealth Government Recurrent Grants: 66%

**Expense**

- Salary and Related Expenses: 85%
- Non Salary Expenses: 15%