



**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

**TO THE**

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

**FOR THE**

**2018**

**ACADEMIC YEAR**

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

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT to the SCHOOL COMMUNITY  
for the 2018 ACADEMIC YEAR**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Covenant Christian School's Annual Report for the 2018 academic year.

This year the theme was 'Christ our righteousness' following on from the 2017 theme 'God is sovereign'.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Verse (taken from the ESV)</b>
1	<i>"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.' – Jeremiah 23:5-6</i>
2	<i>For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. – Romans 3:20-22</i>
3	<i>What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." – Romans 4:1-3</i>
4	<i>For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. - Romans 5:17-18</i>

2018 was the sixth year that the new enrolment policy has been operating.

2018 marked a significant change in the school's enrolments as our numbers increased by about 22% (Years K-10) from the 2017 figures. The impact of this change has been far-reaching as we had to make adjustments to cope with larger classes, more students with learning needs and have had to make decisions about how to make best use of the additional funds that came with the growth in numbers.

In anticipation of further growth, the school commissioned SQC Architects to carry out a revision of the school's Master Plan. Part of this process included identifying current utilisation of classrooms and other rooms and preparing forecasts of future roll numbers over a 10-15 year forward planning window. We have been pleased to see this trend of increased enrolments has continued into 2019 though at a reduced rate of around 13%.

A key decision was made in 2018 to single-stream the primary grades from Year 1- Year 6 commencing in 2019. In order to do this, we needed to find the equivalent of 3 full-time staff members in addition to our current primary teaching staff. We started recruitment in the second half

of 2018 and are very thankful that we were able to engage four committed Christian primary teachers (some full-time, some part-time) to allow us to single stream through the whole of primary.

The Preschool has continued to be a very effective draw for new students and we are continuing to see this trend continue with a high proportion (around 80-85%) of preschool students remaining with Covenant for the Kindergarten year.

Academically, teaching staff have continued to refine their instruction to align with the core of the Australian Curriculum and seeking to ensure that we continue to interpret the national curriculum through a soundly Christian and Biblical world and life view. During 2018 we identified the need to enhance our writing instruction, particularly at primary level. Staff have enthusiastically embraced the programme developed by the Institute for Excellence in Writing (Andrew Pudewa) which is based on sound pedagogical principles. Andrew Pudewa is a well-respected person in Christian education circles in the USA. We plan to fully implement this writing program over the course of the 2019 academic year.

Our staff continue to be a strength of the school with few changes. We are blessed to have such a group of committed and experienced Christian teachers. The Lord has continued to provide for our needs

### **COUNCIL**

The Chairman's report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2018.

Council provides a valuable oversight for the school and has sought to give wise and God-honouring direction in all its deliberations. Please continue to uphold these faithful servants of the Lord in your prayers.

### **Re-registration**

Covenant is due to be audited for re-registration in 2021.

### **MySchool Data – 2018 (provisional)**

#### **Recurrent Income (\$)**

Aust Govt	1,120,741
State Govt	344,746
Fees etc.	752,657
Other private	42,292
Gross	2,260,436
Deductions:	154,565
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,105,871</b>

### **STAFF**

The staff are the most important part of Covenant Christian School in that they are the people who day by day work with the students in the classroom and elsewhere around the school. The Lord has blessed us with a group of very competent and committed Christian staff – both teaching and non-teaching. Their work has continued to make Covenant a school where young people can be nurtured in a safe and caring learning environment that seeks to honour God in all that is done.

In 2018 Covenant Christian School employed 16 (11.8 FTE) teaching staff and 13 non-teaching staff (5.2 FTE) across Years K-10. Teacher staff absences represented 2.73% of total days worked.

All teaching staff members were deemed qualified for their positions, and are registered with the ACT Teachers Quality Institute (TQI). The breakdown of highest qualifications held by staff is as follows: 1 Masters degrees, 5 Grad.Dip., 8 Bachelor degrees and 1 Diploma of Teaching. All teaching staff achieved at least the minimum approved professional learning as required by TQI during the year and

were thus able to renew their practising certificates for the following year.

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

The ratio of male to female teaching staff (K-10) was 4.4:7.4 (FTE basis) or 5:11 by headcount. There were no indigenous members of staff in 2018.

There were a few staff changes in 2018. We were pleased to welcome Mrs Katrina Luu as a part-time primary teacher to provide some additional support for the increased number of students in the primary grades. We also welcomed Mrs Kerry Fitzgerald-Grigg on a part-time basis to help with policy and compliance work. Mr Dereje Aby served for one year as a part-time Technology teacher and Mrs Rachael Winslade provided relief cover for Mrs Laughlin while her voice recuperated.

### **Professional Development weeks**

#### **29 January – 2 February 2018**

- Rev Craig Johnson, one of the pastors of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Cook, led staff devotions over the four days.
- Council Chair, Dr Richard James, addressed staff on Council initiatives and survey results.
- A full day First Aid Certificate training was provided by the Red Cross and was attended by all staff.
- Staff participated in Professional Learning on Principles of Classical Pedagogy.
- Staff and Council members joined to discuss Strategic Directions.
- Primary teachers joined colleagues at Emmaus Christian School for a day of networking and joint professional learning.
- The Primary Team organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- In-house orientation for new staff was carried out by the Principal and Bursar and the respective Directors of Studies.

#### **23 - 27 July 2018**

- Pastor Peter Gobbo (Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church) led staff devotions for part of this time.
- The mid-year reports were finalised during this period.
- Staff continued viewing video-based professional learning on the topic of 'Principles of Classical Pedagogy'
- Staff began investigating the Institute for Excellence in Writing methodology through a video-based lecture from Andrew Pudewa.
- The Secondary Team organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- Staff continued to work on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in unallocated time during this week.

Staff devotions have continued each morning. Various members of staff are rostered to lead this profitable time of reflection and encouragement from God's Word. A member of staff and two school families are brought before the Lord in prayer along with other items of praise, thanksgiving and intercession. A member of the School Council and a year group are prayed for once a week.

### **STUDENTS**

The school had 150 students (K-10) enrolled at the August census date, 1 of whom is an international student.

The Year 10 students who left the school in 2018 enrolled in Trinity Christian School (2), Lake Tuggeranong College (3), and Ginninderra College (1).

### **Student Attendance**

The average student attendance rate was 94.4% (Years 1-10). The rate in Infants/Primary was 95.9% and in Secondary 92.1%. Students at Covenant are required to be in attendance each day that the school is in operation. Parents are requested to telephone (or email) the school before 8:50am if their child is going to be absent. Each morning, the teacher marks the electronic roll and submits it by 9.05am. The school office contacts parents if a student has an unexplained absence from the school – this is usually done within 45 minutes of the rolls being marked each day.

### **Students with Special Needs/ESL**

Students with special needs have been well catered for by a team of very competent teacher aides who have assisted the teaching staff address the range of needs typical of an inclusive classroom situation. Mrs Rachel Hopwood very competently coordinated the teacher aides and ensured resources were allocated to meet needs as these were identified.

The new National Collection of Consistent Data (NCCD) has been implemented and ably coordinated by Mrs Kellie Inman. A focussed study support group continues for those students in Years 7/8 needing special help to organise their workload and ensure assignments are completed by the due date. Modified levels of work have been applied to students in a number of subjects. Tracking of all students has been maintained and students with special needs identified and helped. An Afternoon Skills Programme for primary students with special needs was operating each day and this has proved very beneficial for these students.

### **Student Activities**

The annual Foundation Day special assembly was addressed by Rev Craig Johnson, one of the pastors of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Cook. He spoke on the topic “It’s all about Jesus” based on Col. 1:15-20. The annual Foundation Lecture was held in June. We enhanced the evening by providing both a light meal and a supervised room for young children to encourage parents to attend. Dr Ben Myers from Christian Heritage College’s Millis Institute spoke on the topic, “Two Visions of Education” in which he contrasted the modern progressive (Rousseau) view of education with the Christian and classical one. His talk was well-received.

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

The 3 day Secondary Camp in 2018 was held at Camp Longreach in the Batemans Bay area in NSW 21-23 February 2018. Students were exposed to a variety of activities including bushcraft, beach carnival, raft building, snorkelling and surfing. Students were accommodated in cabins which worked well.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$5,207 in 2018. This fundraising effort was spearheaded by senior students under the guidance of Mrs Lyons and Mr Hopwood. About half the monies raised were for Loga Gandhi and family while the remainder was raised for our ‘Compassion children’ (Melaku and Karla) and Bibles for distribution around the world (Bible League).

Secondary students also engaged in various service activities both in the wider community and within the school. We see this as a practical outworking of an education that is both academic and spiritual in nature and engages the whole person. These projects provide a great opportunity for our students to give of themselves practically to meet needs that exist and enjoy themselves serving God at the same time.

Students were involved in the performing arts this year through various annual events such as the Music and Drama Festival and the Evening of the Arts (a variety evening involving students and staff). We are blessed to have the services of Mrs Wendy Lyons and Mrs Claire Caine who both put a lot of effort into these events.

Students were also engaged in activities that involved developing and wearing a costume –the Living Literature Day in August gave students the opportunity to dress in a favourite character from a work of fiction. Primary assemblies, particularly for Year 5/6, often have a drama element which involves

dressing in a costume. These activities formed a great break from the normal routines of study and allowed many students to shine.

Regular Chaplain's Breakfasts were held during the year for one year level at a time to hear from a teacher who is from a different part of the school. These were well-attended and enjoyable. Our Chaplain, Mr Jeremy Hopwood, provides a very well-received service to the school community.

Other important school activities were:

- Various sports carnivals as part of our inter-House competition – swimming, athletics and cross-country were held in 2018.
- The Secondary Art Club was held as a once-weekly after school activity under Mrs Elizabeth Coleman's instruction during Term 2 and Term 3.
- Our school did well again in a University of Canberra Crystal Growing Competition, winning various awards at the ACT level and a first place at national level.
- The annual Bush Dance was held at the Namadgi High School Performing Arts Centre hall at the end of August.
- Year 6 Dinner was held in the school library on the evening of Thursday 12 December.
- Year 10 Graduation Dinner was held at the Southern Cross Club premises during Week 9 of Term 4.
- A Grandparents & Special Friends Day combined with open classrooms was held on Friday 7 September.
- Mrs Jocelyn James, one of our secondary teachers, was awarded a Gandel Holocaust Studies Scholarship which including travelling to study at Jerusalem over the summer break.
- The bi-annual Spring Fair was held at the school on Saturday 27 October.
- A new Senior Student Climbing Structure was commissioned and installed for student use – the work was completed at the beginning of Term 4.
- The annual awards and prize giving gathering, known as the Thanksgiving Evening, was held at Namadgi School on the evening of Friday 9 December. Dr Richard James, our Council Chairman, and Rev Peter Gadsby both gave well-received messages during the evening.

The 2018 edition of the Covenant Christian School yearbook, the *Collage*, once again provided a colourful and comprehensive snapshot of the various activities that happened during the year. Mrs Elizabeth Coleman does a fantastic job of collating and editing this record of the life of the school and the quality of the production keeps improving.

### **Benchmarking**

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sat the NAPLAN national benchmarking tests in reading, writing, spelling, grammar & punctuation, and numeracy. The following table compares these results, showing the percentage of our students who scored results at or above the national benchmarks. From the tables you will note that the school has achieved some very good results.

However, as with any statistical analysis, there are many variables that can affect the results and the result of any student in any given year eg. being recently arrived from overseas with minimal English skills; having had a death in the family. League tables, made from such information by the media, do not take into account such variables nor do they attest to the faith-based nature of many schools where the teaching of certain values is of the highest priority. While they may laud a school with one cohort of students, they might just as easily do the opposite with another.

Since the beginning of 2010, the NAPLAN results have been published on the Federal Government's "My School" website. The 2017 results were published early March 2018

2018 was the first year that all NAPLAN assessments were done using computers with the exception of Year 3 Writing which will continue to be paper-based. Our new Chrome devices made this form of on-line testing very easy to set up and administer.

The tables below show the percentage of our students who scored results at or above the National Minimum Standards (NMS). The figures enclosed by ( ) represent actual student numbers.

Writing				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Year 3</b>	100%	90% (9/10)	100%	100%
<b>Year 5</b>	100%	90% (9/10)	100%	93% (14/15)
<b>Year 7</b>	87%	94%	90% (9/10)	80% (12/15)
<b>Year 9</b>	80% (4/5)	89%	83% (5/6)	100%

Reading				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
	75% (3/4)	89% (8/9)	100%	100%
	90%	100%	100%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	93% (14/15)
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Spelling				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Year 3</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 5</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 7</b>	87%	100%	100%	73% (11/15)
<b>Year 9</b>	94%	95%	83% (5/6)	100%

Grammar & Punctuation				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
	100%	90% (9/10)	100%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	100%	94%	100%	87% (13/15)
	100%	95%	100%	100%

Numeracy				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Year 3</b>	75% (3/4)	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 5</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 7</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Year 9</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

While the school continues to provide a sound academic programme, it is not the most important thing. The school's purpose, as stated in our Constitution, "to encourage ... the pursuit and dissemination of true Christian scholarship in all areas of the school's curriculum and interest, so as to establish a truly Christian world view in all disciplines of life," is what matters. The School's Mission and Vision Statements developed in 2018 illustrate this:

**VISION:**

*In dependence on God's grace, Covenant Christian School will nurture and equip students with a heart to glorify God by serving Him and living according to His Word.*

**MISSION:**

*Covenant Christian School is a safe, caring and loving community. In partnership with parents we cultivate Christian character in our students and equip them to serve God and contribute positively to society. This is achieved through a Christ-centred approach where the gospel is central. God's Word is applied to all areas of learning and experience. Students and staff are challenged, encouraged and supported to love learning and pursue excellence to the glory of God.*

Might we be ever grateful to our wonderful Heavenly Father for the opportunity He has provided through the school to grow our children in His ways.

## **PARENTS**

A few members of staff, parents and supporters gather for a monthly Saturday morning prayer meeting to pray for the needs of the School community. This is usually held on the first Saturday of each month during the school term.

A Reading Success seminar for parents was held over three evenings in late February/early March led by a team consisting of Mrs Sharyn Laughlin and Miss Hannah Hopwood. It proved most beneficial for the good number in attendance.

In 2018, we ran our biennial Spring Fair and raised \$7,950 (net). A Car Boot Sale operates every second year alternating with the Spring Fair (which raises a lot more money but is also a lot more work). The Spring Fair is a significant public relations exercise as well as a major fundraiser for the school. 1WayFM radio were on-site broadcasting during the event.

Parent/teacher interviews were held in late Term 1 and early in Term 3. An interim written report was forwarded to parents prior to the interviews held late term 1. Comprehensive Semester reports were distributed to parents at the end of both Semesters 1 and 2. The reports are 'plain English' report cards with A – E grades.

Weekly communication with parents is via the Communicator. It is distributed each Thursday afternoon by hard copy and email. In 2018 we started utilising the PCSchool system for communication with parents. Teachers are increasing their use of Google Classrooms and this has a useful guardian email digest feature which many parents have found valuable.

## **GENERAL**

### **Chaplaincy**

The School Chaplain position has been ably filled by Mr Jeremy Hopwood. Funding for this position is through a special grant which is provided by the Federal Government. In 2015 this funding commenced being administered by the ACT government and this arrangement has worked well into 2018. The funding arrangement has been renewed for 2019.

Mr Hopwood has organised a series of 'Chaplain's Breakfasts' which have been well-attended by students. In addition he has been able to provide pastoral advice and counselling to students as required. The school community has reflected positively on the Chaplaincy.

### **Surveys**

The annual Parent and Staff Surveys were conducted this year. Overall, the results from both surveys were overwhelmingly positive, but did identify some areas for improvement. The outcomes are summarized below:

#### **Agreed Strengths**

- Covenant is a Christ-centred school.
- A Christian worldview comes through clearly across the school's program.
- The school has a good academic program.
- Senior staff are competent and approachable.
- The Chaplain's role is beneficial to the school community.
- The school's teachers give good pastoral care.

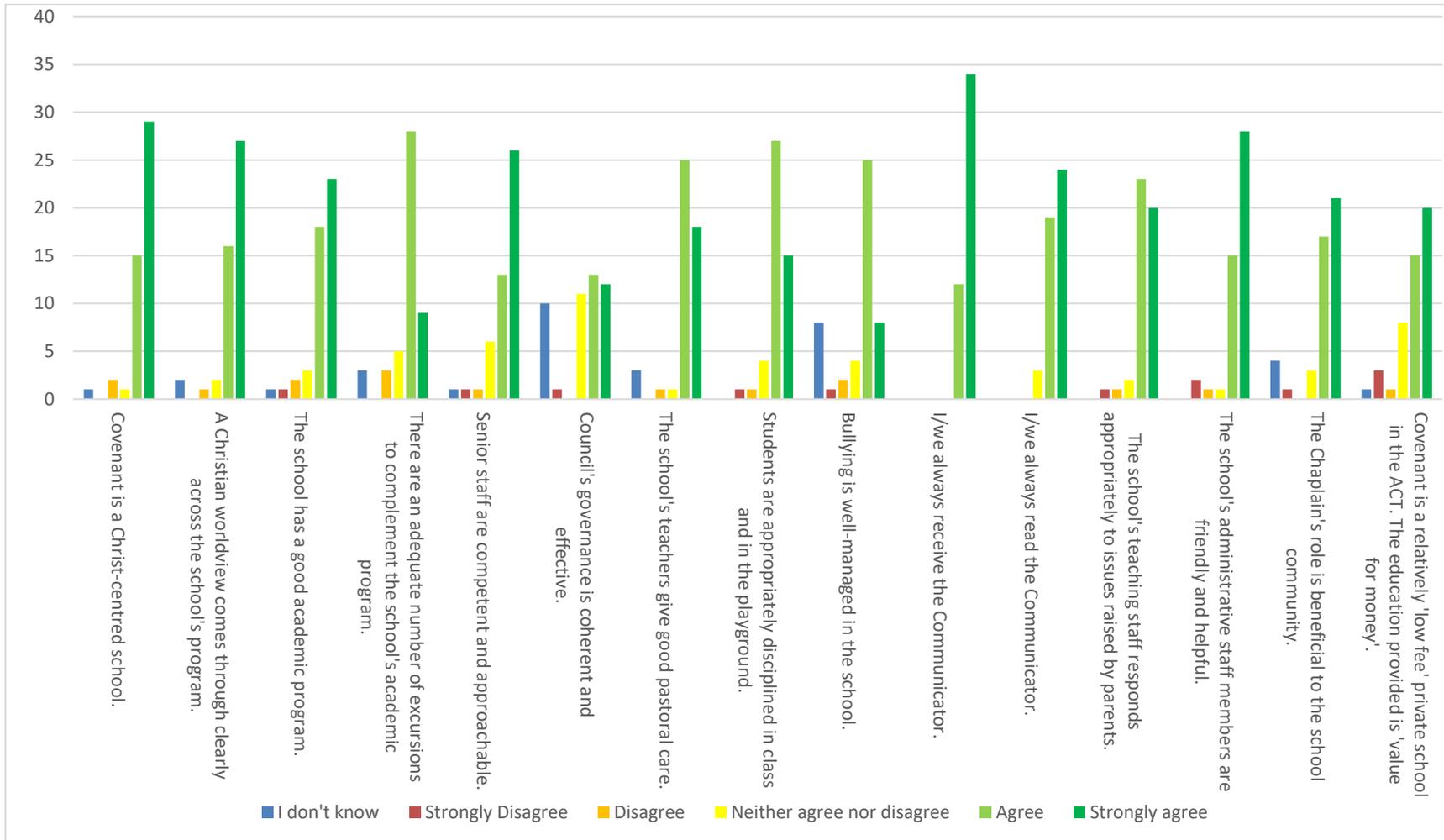
### **Agreed Areas for Improvement**

- Google Classrooms usage
- Special Needs Students management
- Website usefulness
- Sports Program

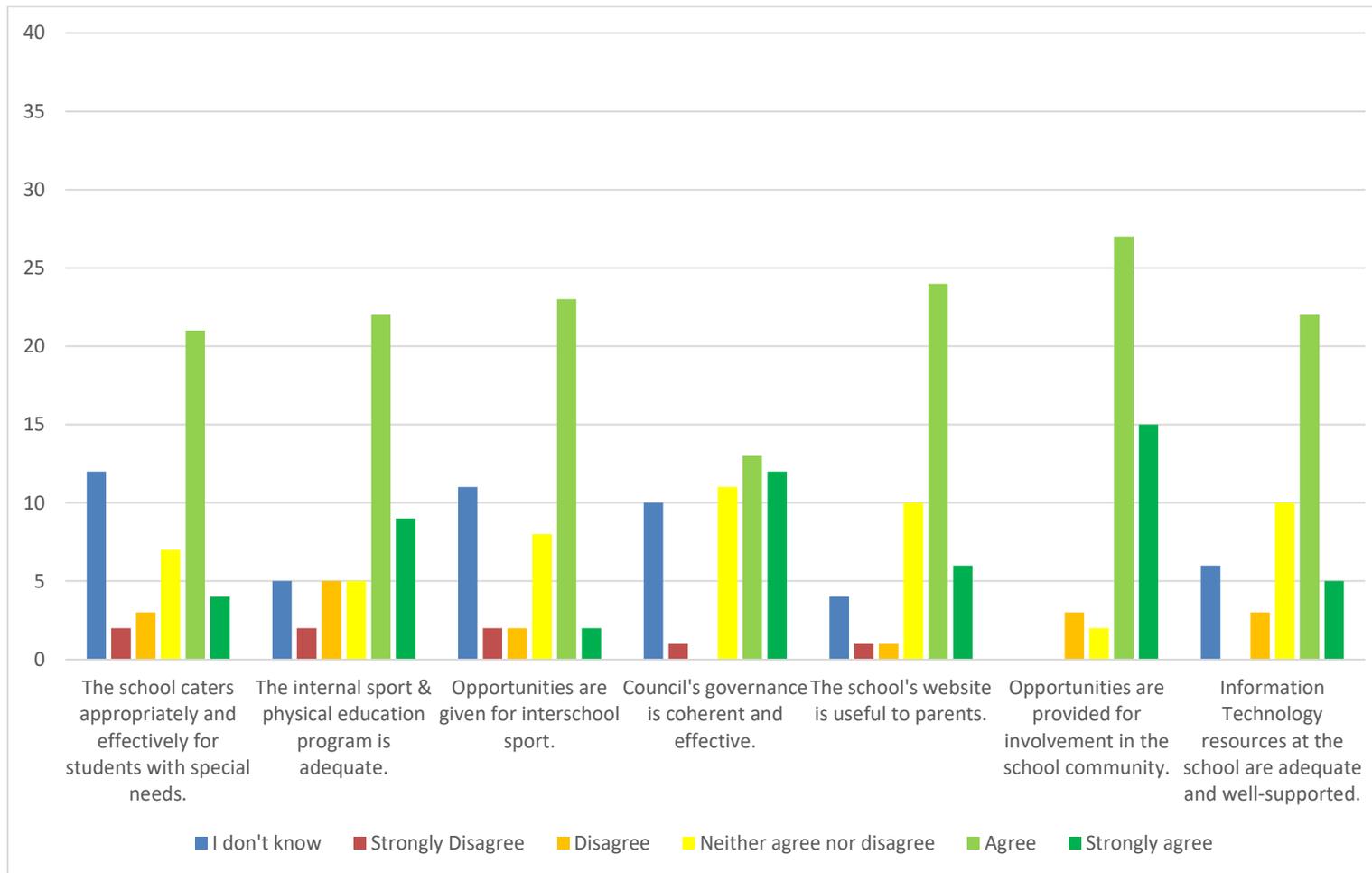
### **Extracts of Parent Survey Comments:**

- “We have appreciated the willingness of the teaching staff to promptly respond to a couple of issues we have raised”
- “My daughter’s reading and comprehension improved a lot and all is because of the great teachers Covenant has! We will continue to send our daughter as much as we can for us to be able to provide her with good future!”
- “We love the School and the strong Christian message and role modelling by teachers that is pervasive through the school”
- “I think Covenant Christian School is fabulous, and would definitely recommend to other families.”
- “I love the basic teachings of manners and Christian values. The staff certainly lead by example and then the academic achievement is automatic.”
- “...the leadership is proactively maintaining the strong Christian ethos and values of the school community”
- “Amazing school and exceptional staff and Principal. We are very lucky to be part of the Covenant school and community. “

## Parent Survey - Strengths



## Parent Survey – Weaknesses



### **ICT developments**

We have continued to improve our use of ICT at Covenant. In 2018 school management made the decision to undertake the conversion of all student computing to Chrome devices . By the end of the year the main computer room was completed and an order placed to replace the laptops in the trolley with Chromebooks.

We continue to maintain that a 'Bring Your Own Device' (BYOD) approach does not fit with our school philosophy. BYOD effectively means students will have an electronic device on their desks for most of the school day and we believe this would only become a source of distraction away from classroom instruction and thus hinder the development of important skills that students need to gain in these early years of their schooling.

### **CONCLUSION**

2018 was a year of significant enrolment growth for the school which has created some challenges for the school as we expand to meet the increased demand. Additional teaching staff were recruited to commence in 2019 to enable our primary composite classes to be converted to single year level classes.

We thank the Lord for guiding us through this period of transition and we look forward to His continued guidance and blessing for the 2019 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast  
Principal  
22 March 2019