



PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

TO THE

SCHOOL COMMUNITY

FOR THE

2016

ACADEMIC YEAR

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

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for the 2016 ACADEMIC YEAR**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Covenant Christian School's Annual Report for the 2016 academic year.

The theme for 2016 was 'the Love of God'. The following were the selected

Term	Verse
1	"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." – Romans 5:6-8
2	"And this is His commandment, that we believe in the Name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He commanded us. Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in Him." – 1 John 3:23-24
3	"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." – Matthew 22:37-38
4	"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us." – 1 John 4:10-12

2016 was the fourth year that the new enrolment policy has been operating.

The main focus of 2016 has been the first year of operation of the Early learning Centre (ELC) consisting of a soundly Christian application of the Early Years learning Framework in the preschool and providing before- and after-school care in partnership with Sherpa Kids. By the end of 2016, the preschool had 15 students enrolled. A survey of ELC parents gave very positive feedback on the program. We were very pleased to see a high proportion of these pre-schoolers join the 2017 Kindergarten class.

Another significant focus of 2016 was successfully obtaining re-registration with the ACT Education and Training Directorate to operate a Kindergarten-Year 10 school. We were granted the full five year term before re-registration is required.

Academically, the school has managed the transition to the Australian Curriculum fairly well though we, like most schools in Australia, have been finding the Australian Curriculum has far more content than can be taught effectively in the time allocated. Currently we are streamlining our programmes to deliver a guaranteed core curriculum to prepare students well for what is expected in future years. Prime Mathematics (a Singapore-based mathematics program) and Spalding intensive phonics form the core of our numeracy and literacy curriculum in the primary years and these have proved very successful. We are continuing to refine our instruction in these key areas.

We were very pleased to be recognised by ACARA as a school that had "demonstrated substantially above average gain in NAPLAN results" in both reading and numeracy in 2016. This result confirms that we are laying a solid foundation for student success with what we are doing.

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.

COUNCIL

The Chairman's report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2016.

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.

Recurrent Income (\$) – MySchool Data (provisional)

Aust Govt	833,598
State Govt	287,677
Fees etc.	634,018
Other private	43,406
Gross	1,798,699
Deductions:	72,608
TOTAL	1,726,091

Re-registration

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

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 2016 Covenant Christian School employed 16 (10.1 FTE) teaching staff and 8 non-teaching staff (4.1 FTE). Teacher staff absences represented 4.24% 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 degree, 14 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 was 3.1:703 (FTE basis) or 4:12 by headcount. There were no indigenous members of staff in 2016.

There were a few staff changes in 2016. We were pleased to welcome Ms Yanni Xaio as the second preschool teacher early in 2016. We farewelled Mrs Helen Crow and Mrs Helen Morris at the end of the year.

Professional Development weeks

25 – 29 January 2016

- Jeremy Hopwood (School Chaplain) led staff devotions over the four days.
- Council Chair, Dr Richard James, addressed staff on Council initiatives and survey results.
- First Aid Refresher training was provided by the Red Cross and was attended by all staff.
- Staff participated in a 'Teaching Mathematics Christianly' course taught by Mr Peter Muddle, Deputy Principal of Covenant Christian School, Belrose, Sydney (a CEN school).
- Mr Chris Butler organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- In-house orientation was carried out by the Principal and Bursar.

27 June - 1 July 2016

- Pastor Ben Betz (Woden Alliance Church) led staff devotions over the four days.
- The mid-year reports were finalised during this week.
- Mr Chris Parker delivered the one-day Certificate of Christian Education (Design) course which was well-received by staff. This was accredited as 5 hours Professional Learning by TQI.
- Mr Chris Butler organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- Staff continued to work on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in unallocated time during this week.
- The ACT Government Registration Review Panel was on-site for one day (Tuesday 28 June) during this period.

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 always brought before the Lord in prayer along with other items of praise, thanksgiving and intercession.

STUDENTS

The school had 126 students (K-10) enrolled at the August census date.

The Year 10 students who left the school in 2016 enrolled in Trinity Christian School and Lake Tuggeranong College.

Student Attendance

The average student attendance rate was 94.8%. The rate in Infants/Primary was 94.0% and in Secondary 95.7%. Students at Covenant are required to be in attendance each day that the school is in operation. Students absent from school are required to furnish a reason (from their parents) in writing, signed and dated, for their absence upon his/her return. 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 with the mandatory process of SCAN identifying those most in need of assistance. The Study Skills elective option continues for students 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 our Chaplain, Mr Jeremy Hopwood. He spoke on the topic *"For the love of God, schooling is to be Christian"* which dovetailed nicely with our theme of the love of God. The annual Foundation Lecture was moved to an evening in term 2. We enhanced the evening by providing both a light meal and a supervised room for young children to encourage parents to attend. Mrs Kathy Pereira, the CEN ACT/NSW State Executive Officer spoke on the nature of Christian Education and the role CEN plays to the group of staff, parents and Council members who attended.

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. Some of the Year 10 leaders gave a devotion to the primary students at various assemblies.

The 3 day Secondary Camp in 2016 was held at the Twofold Bay Beach Resort in Eden, NSW from 9-11 March. Students were exposed to a variety of activities including kayaking, sailing, team initiatives and a visit to a Killer Whale museum. Students were accommodated in tents which worked well.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$2,501 in 2016. This fundraising effort was spearheaded by the Business Studies students under the guidance of Mrs Helen Crow. Monies were raised for our 'Compassion children', Melaku and Karla, and for 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 TAG Quest (a talent quest), a Drama and Music Festival (a new initiative related to the first year we had a Drama elective at year 9/10 level), 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 Sarah Allan 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 student activities were:

- Various sports carnivals as part of our inter-House competition – swimming, athletics and cross-country were held in 2016.
- The Secondary Art Club was held as an after school activity under Mrs Elizabeth Coleman’s instruction from term 2 onwards.
- Our school did well again in a University of Canberra Crystal Growing Competition, winning two equal first place awards in Year 7 and first place in Year 9.
- The annual Bush Dance was held at the Namadgi High School performing arts centre at the end of August.
- Year 6 Dinner was held in the school library on the evening of Thursday 8 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 9 September.
- A student choir performed at the Floriade festival in September.
- 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 Dr Peter Laughlin both gave well-received messages during the evening.

The 2016 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.

Since the beginning of 2010, the NAPLAN results have been published on the Federal Government’s “My School” website. The 2016 results were published early March 2017.

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.

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				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	90% (9/10)
Year 5	100%	92%	100%	90% (9/10)
Year 7	100%	92%	87%	94%
Year 9	93% (14/15)	87%	80% (4/5)	89%

Reading			
2013	2014	2015	2016
100%	92%	75% (3/4)	89% (8/9)
100%	100%	90%	100%
83% (5/6)	100%	100%	100%
100%	94%	100%	100%

Spelling				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 7	83% (5/6)	92%	87%	100%
Year 9	93% (14/15)	94%	94%	95%

Grammar & Punctuation			
2013	2014	2015	2016
100%	92%	100%	90% (9/10)
90% (9/10)	100%	100%	100%
83% (5/6)	96%	100%	94%
100%	94%	100%	95%

Numeracy				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 3	100%	100%	75% (3/4)	100%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 7	100%	96%	100%	100%
Year 9	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. 'Our Covenant' adds to this:

- (i) by precept and example, to confront students with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ so that in God's appointed time, they might come to exhibit the fruits of true repentance and faith in Christ, confessing Him as Lord and Saviour;
- (ii) to train students in the beginning of Christian scholarship and seek to give incentive for their continuing development as Christian scholars;
- (iii) to develop and apply principles that set the Christian ideals of citizenship, godly character and the spirit of reverence, so that personality and sense of responsibility are developed together in the entire life of the scholar; and
- (iv) to this end students will be encouraged to achieve the highest standard consistent with their capabilities in all their activities pursuing excellence for 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

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 Helen Crow, Mrs Sharyn Laughlin and Mrs Evie Burry. It proved most beneficial for the good number in attendance.

Parenting seminars using the '*Getting to the heart of parenting*' conference resources produced by Paul Tripp Ministries were run for a total of five evening sessions during term 2.

In 2016, we ran our biennial Spring Fair. Many parents, staff and students were involved in the Spring Fair which was a great attraction for people from the local neighbourhood and appeared to be more popular than previous years. This was the first Spring Fair that we had 1WayFM provide an on-site broadcast which proved valuable and entertaining. The Spring Fair is operated every second year alternating with a Car Boot Sale. With the approximately \$7,749 (net) raised, the proceeds of the Spring Fair have been allocated to providing a laptop trolley for classroom use and outdoor seating furniture for the high school.

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.

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 2016.

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

Annual surveys are carried out with the main stakeholder groups in the school community to get feedback on the performance of the school during the year. Students from years 3-10 are included in the group of stakeholders surveyed. The Council Chairman's report gives a detailed breakdown of key findings from these surveys.

Overall there is a generally positive perception of the school and its programme. The results suggest that the school is meeting the expectations of the major stakeholders in providing a Christ-centred, quality education in a safe and caring environment.

ICT developments

We have continued to improve our use of ICT at Covenant. New wireless access points have been installed throughout the campus to improve the connectivity experienced around the school as we had identified a 'patchiness' of wireless coverage which had been affecting the experience of users.

We have evaluated the 'Bring Your Own Device' (BYOD) approach which is very popular in a number of schools and have concluded that it 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 hinder the development of important skills that students need to gain in these early years of their schooling.

Our staff continue to develop their expertise in the effective use of Google Classrooms, particularly in the secondary years. We are also extending Google Classrooms use into the primary grades. Recent Professional Learning for our teaching staff was aimed to build their confidence and expertise in using the whole of the Google Apps for Education suite.

CONCLUSION

2016 continued to build upon the new 'brand' of Covenant Christian School with the addition of an Early Learning Centre; our goal is to attract families who are looking for a sound Christian education for their children from preschool through to Year 10 on the same site.

We thank the Lord for guiding us through this period of transition and we look forward to His continued guidance and blessing for the 2017 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast
Principal
29 March 2016