



**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

**TO THE**

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

**FOR THE**

**2019**

**ACADEMIC YEAR**

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

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT to the SCHOOL COMMUNITY  
for the 2019 ACADEMIC YEAR**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Covenant Christian School's Annual Report for the 2019 academic year.

This year the theme has been agreed as 'Sola Scripture – Scripture alone'. Everything rests on Scripture which is inspired by God and therefore true and sufficient for all things. following on from the 2018 theme 'Christ our righteousness'. This was the first year we adopted a theme song as a regular part of the whole school assemblies held during the year. In 2019 we adopted the hymn, 'Speak, O Lord'.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Verse</b>
1	All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.  – 2 Tim 3:16-17
2	And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.– 1 Thess 2:13
3	Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. – Ps 119:105, 130
4	How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. – Ps 119:9-11

2019 was the seventh year that the new enrolment policy has been operating.

2019 saw a continuation of the growth in the school's enrolments as our numbers increased by about 13% (it was 22% in 2018) (Years K-10) from the previous year's figures.

2019 saw the implementation of the decision to single-stream the primary grades from Year 1- Year 6. Additional staff were recruited and we started the year with four new members of staff. We are very thankful for the long-term stability we have been seeing in our staff for recruiting suitably committed and qualified Christian teachers is always a challenge for us.

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.

During 2019 we continued the implementation of the composition syllabus as developed by Andrew Pudewa's organisation, the Institute for Excellence in Writing which is based on sound classical pedagogical principles. Andrew Pudewa is a well-respected person in Christian education circles in the USA. We plan to continue to deepen the implementation of this writing program over the 2020 academic year.

The School Council authorised the expenditure of just over \$200,000 to completely refurbish the school Oval which had been languishing since the effects of water restrictions back in 2009. The oval was sprayed, the soil was refreshed and levelled, the irrigation system was upgraded and resown with a drought-tolerant grass (couch). Wooden barrier fencing has been installed to prevent unauthorised vehicle access to the oval. The new grass is

now getting established and we expect the Oval to be ready for use by students in Term 2, 2020.

As part of our future development work, the next phase of development of the site was identified as the provision of a Covered Outdoor Learning Area in the area between the existing Library and the Secondary Staff Workroom adjacent to the rear access road. This project was presented to the Block Grant Authority seeking a grant on two separate occasions – following feedback from the first round, the project scope was modified and the school’s contribution increased for the second round of grants that were available. We were notified early in 2020 that this second application was successful and we are being offered a grant of \$750,000 towards this project.

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 and enabled us to expand our staff to meet the increased demand due to roll growth.

**COUNCIL**

The Chairman’s report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2019.

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. Mrs Kerry Fitzgerald-Grigg, our part-time Policy and Compliance Officer, has been working steadily to review all our policies to align with current legislation. This work will continue into 2020 as we aim to have completed a review of all policies and associated procedures prior to the first stage of the re-registration process when documentation is to be provided to the Registration Panel.

**MySchool Data – 2019 (provisional)**

**Recurrent Income (\$)**

Aust Govt	1,304,346
State Govt	403,006
Fees etc.	925,948
Other private	55,454
Gross	2,688,754
Deductions:	251,671
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,437,083</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 2019 Covenant Christian School employed 20 (14.6 fte) teaching staff and 14 non-teaching staff (5.2 FTE) across Years K-10. Teacher staff absences represented 1.64% 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: 4 Masters degrees, 1 Grad.Dip., 16 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 5.4:9.2 (FTE basis) or 6:14 by headcount. There were no indigenous members of staff in 2019.

There were staff changes in 2019. We were pleased to welcome Mr Robbie Bernoth, Mr Garon Berenger, Mrs Sandra Giddy, Mrs Jessica Leayr, and Mrs Rachael Winslade to join our Primary teachers. Mr Jeremy Hopwood gave notice that he intended to relinquish his role as Chaplain at the end of 2019 to take on full-time teaching. We also appointed additional Teacher Aides to work with students requiring more individualised assistance.

### **Professional Development weeks**

#### **25, 29 January – 1 February 2019**

- Rev Colin Grant, pastor of the Reformed Church of Canberra in Rivett, led staff devotions over the four days.
- Staff joined other ACT Christian educators for a combined day of professional learning at Emmaus Christian School. The topic was Differentiation.
- Council Chair, Mr Jason Evans, addressed staff on Council initiatives and survey results.
- A CPR refresher for staff was provided by the Red Cross and was attended by all staff.
- Staff participated in Professional Learning on implementation of the Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) program.
- 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.

#### **24 - 26 July 2019**

- Rev Craig Johnson (Westminster Presbyterian Church, Cook) led staff devotions for part of this time.
- The inaugural ACT Christian Teachers Conference took place at Emmaus Christian School on Wednesday 24 July. Teachers from all Christian schools in the ACT were present.
- The mid-year reports were finalised during the July term break.
- Staff continued viewing video-based professional learning on IEW Structure and Style in Writing course.
- The Secondary Team organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.

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 176 students (K-10) enrolled at the August census date, 5 of whom were international students.

The Year 10 students who left the school in 2019 enrolled in Trinity Christian School (5), Lake Tuggeranong College (3), Canberra College (1), CIT at Bruce (1), Erindale College (1) and 1 student went overseas.

#### **Student Attendance**

The average student attendance rate was 93.4% (Years 1-10). The rate in Infants/Primary was 93.7% and in Secondary 92.9%. We had to address some persistent absences due to school refusal behaviour by a few students. One family was referred to the ACT Government for their action.

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 has very competently coordinated the teacher aides and ensured resources have been allocated to meet needs as these have been identified.

The new National Collection of Consistent Data (NCCD) has been implemented and ably coordinated by Mrs Kellie Inman. A focussed study support group operates 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 Colin Grant, Pastor of The Reformed Church of Canberra in Rivett. He spoke on the topic "The Foundation for Lasting Discipleship" based on Matthew 7:24-29. 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. Mr Martyn Iles, Managing Director of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL), spoke on the topic, "Unscrambling the Millennial Mind: Opportunity for Christian Education." 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 2019 was held at Camp Cooba, in the Berridale area in NSW in the period 3-5 April 2019. About 57 students from Years 7-10 attended the camp. Students were exposed to a variety of activities including dragon boating, low ropes, archery, bush games, bikes, gladiator course, big swing and some water based activities. Many of the activities had a strong team-building element incorporated. Students were accommodated in rooms in a large single facility which worked well.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$3,133 in 2019. This fundraising effort was spearheaded by senior students under the guidance of Mrs Lyons and Mr Hopwood. Most 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 a single 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 2019.
- A new initiative to engage students during lunch-times as well as contribute to the overall inter-house competition was undertaken by Mr Hopwood and Mr Winslade. In 2019 inter-house competitions in Touch, Ultimate Frisbee, and Futsal took place.
- Inter-school competitions with other Christian Schools were held in Spelling Bee and Soccer during the year.
- High School entered a boys' team and a girls' team in the inter school South-Side Volleyball competition.
- 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.
- Mrs Lesli Findlay worked with students doing the CREST Science Awards programme this year. In 2019 two students achieved a Silver Medal – these were presented at the end year Thanksgiving and Awards Evening.
- Our school did well again in the Royal Australian Chemistry Institute Crystal Growing Competition. We won three first places in the ACT competition and a first, a second and a third placing in various categories in the national competition.

- Covenant secondary students won 2 First places and 2 Second places in the National Creation Science Competition
- 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 Wednesday 11 December.
- Year 10 Graduation Dinner was held at the Southern Cross Club premises in Woden during Week 9 of Term 4.
- A Grandparents & Special Friends Day was combined with the Living Literature Day in August.
- The annual awards and prize giving gathering, known as the Thanksgiving Evening, was held at Namadgi School on the evening of Friday 13 December. Mr Jason Evans, our Council Chairman, and Rev Peter Gobbo (Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church) both gave well-received messages during the evening. Lieutenant Colonel David Wade presented the Long Tan Student Leadership Award on behalf of the Australian Defence Force.

The 2019 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. Miss Jasmine Lyons and Mrs Elizabeth Coleman did 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 2019 results were published early in 2020.

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.

The tables below show the percentage of our students who scored results at or above the National Minimum Standards (NMS). For NAPLAN results, a National Minimum Standard is defined and located on the assessment scale for each year level. Band 2 is the minimum standard for Year 3, band 4 is the minimum standard for Year 5, band 5 is the minimum standard for Year 7 and band 6 is the minimum standard for Year 9. These standards represent increasingly challenging skills and require increasingly higher scores on the NAPLAN scale. The figures enclosed by ( ) represent actual student numbers where relevant.

Writing				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Year 3	90%	100%	100%	100%
Year 5	90%	100%	93%	100%
Year 7	94%	90%	80%	100%
Year 9	89%	83%	100%	100%

Reading				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
	89%	100%	100%	100%
	78%	75%	87%	100%
	100%	90%	73%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	89%

Spelling				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	92%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 7	100%	100%	73%	100%
Year 9	95%	83%	100%	100%

Grammar & Punctuation				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
	90% (9/10)	100%	100%	92%
	90%	87%	73%	94%
	94%	100%	87%	100%
	95%	100%	100%	78%

Numeracy				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 7	100%	100%	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. 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.*

We are thankful for the opportunity to provide an education founded on God's Word as the foundation of all knowledge.

## **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 two 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). The Spring Fair is a significant public relations exercise as well as a major fundraiser for the school and will next be held in 2020, Lord willing.

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 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**

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**

All student computing has now transitioned to the Chromebox/Chromebook utilising G Suite for Education, a cloud based set of basic software tools such as Google Docs, Google Sheets, Google Slides and Google Classroom. The main computer room and the school library provide two places where there are sufficient devices for a class to use. In addition, these are supplemented by a mobile trolley with Chromebooks. The school Wi-Fi system was enhanced by the provision of comprehensive cover of all area using the Unify Access Points and associated Local Area Network switches. Internet is provided by a set of 3 Netspeed Longreach wireless bearers. These will be replaced by an NBN connection once that becomes available in early 2020.

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 hinder the development of important skills that students need to gain in these early years of their schooling.



## **CONCLUSION**

2019 saw continued 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 and began service at the beginning of the year and this additional staffing enabled us to single stream our primary 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 2020 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast  
Principal  
20 March 2020