



**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

**TO THE**

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

**FOR THE**

**2021**

**ACADEMIC YEAR**

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

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT to the SCHOOL COMMUNITY  
for the 2021 ACADEMIC YEAR**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Covenant Christian School's Annual Report for the 2021 academic year.

For 2021 the theme is 'Jesus reigns!' and the associated Theme Song was 'Christ shall have Dominion'.

We added a Key Quote for 2021 which emphasises the essence of the outworking of our theme especially in the context of a Christian School: *'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!'* – Abraham Kuyper

ESV version

Term	Verse
1	He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. – Colossians 1:15-17
2	All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For kingship belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations. – Psalm 22:27-28
3	Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.– Romans 13:1-2
4	So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." – Genesis 1:27-8

2021 saw a slight decline in the school's enrolments as our numbers levelled out during the second year of COVID-related lockdowns.

2021 was significant as the continued impact of ACT Government Public Health directives associated with the COVID-19 pandemic meant that we had a second period of online instruction in 2021 for about 10 weeks. Hygiene and physical distancing measures have continued into 2022. It also severely impacted a number of school events, many of which were eventually cancelled.

Thanks to previous investment in computer infrastructure, most particularly the investment we had made in Chromebooks and the G Suite for Education products, the School was able to provide a reasonable level of support to our families during the second period of online learning. The level of support was positively received by our parent body as the end year survey responses confirmed with 94.7% (up from 85.4% in 2020) of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement: *"The school provided good support for families during on-line learning (COVID related)."*

The Covered Outdoor Learning Area continued under construction throughout 2021 with a lengthy pause due to COVID-related restrictions and a design change. The project continued into 2022 and is now expected to be available for use in mid-Term 1, 2022.

Our staff continue to be a strength of the school; we are blessed to have such a group of committed and experienced Christian teachers. Changes to personal situations resulted in some staff leaving, but the Lord has continued to provide for our needs and enabled us to maintain our staffing to meet the ongoing demands of a school of over 200 students (KG-Year 10).

## COUNCIL

The Chairman's report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2021.

Council provides a valuable oversight and governance 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 was audited for re-registration in 2021 and was granted re-registration for the period 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2026 with no conditions noted. This was a very pleasing result and testimony to the work of Mrs Kerry Fitzgerald-Grigg, our part-time Policy and Compliance Officer, in ensuring our documentation was up to date to align with current legislation.

### MySchool Data – 2021 (provisional)

#### Recurrent Income (\$)

Aust Govt	1,594,691
State Govt	927,600
Fees etc.	1,001,438
Other private	40,063
Gross	3,563,792
Deductions:	936,718
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,627,074</b>

## STAFF

The staff are the most important part of Covenant Christian School in that they are the people who work each day 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 2021 Covenant Christian School employed 22 (15.9 FTE) teaching staff and 15 non-teaching staff (5.9 FTE) across Years K-10. Teacher staff absences represented 3.45% 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., 18 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. A specialist tutor was employed to deliver the Years 9/10 Art elective in 2021. This person was supervised by a TQI registered teacher.

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 6.0/10.0 (FTE basis) or 7:15 by headcount. There is one member of staff who identifies as part-indigenous.

There were staff changes in 2021. Mrs Sunday Ciastkowski left part-way through the year to take up a full-time position in another school. We employed four new Primary teachers who started in 2021: Miss Tamara Alberts, Ms Melanie Atkinson, Mrs Sue Chittick, and Mrs Melody Edwards. Mrs Edwards and Miss Alberts left at the end of the year to work elsewhere. Mrs Rachel Hopwood was employed as a teacher for the later part of the year to help with the Year 6 class. We also saw some changes in our Teacher Aide staff and also in Administration.

A new position has been established in our Senior Management Team. The Director of Curriculum & Learning position is designed to support the whole school in terms of ensuring we offer an effective Christ-centred interpretation of the National Curriculum. This position has become more necessary with the expansion of the school and a significant revision of the National Curriculum due to commence implementation in late 2022. Mrs Jocelyn James was appointed to this position and commenced her duties in January 2022.

The ACT Government made double vaccination compulsory for all staff working at a school with primary aged children. This created concern as some staff were hesitant about being vaccinated for COVID. Only one member of staff is currently unable to work on site due to this Public Health Direction requirement which remains in force until 12 May 2022 (though this may be extended).

### **Professional Development Weeks**

#### **25 – 29 January 2021**

- Rev Dave Brookes, Pastor of Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church, led staff devotions in the morning at Covenant.
- Staff undertook some Christian worldview related professional learning using a couple of videos from the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) series entitled ‘Worldviews and Cultural Fluency’.
- A CPR refresher for staff was provided by the Red Cross and was attended by all staff.
- The Secondary Team organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.
- In-house orientation for new staff was carried out by the Principal and Business Manager and the respective Directors of Studies.

#### **12 - 16 July 2021**

- Rev Tom Edwards, Pastor of the CityReach South Tuggeranong Church, led staff devotions for three mornings at Covenant.
- The mid-year reports were finalised and distributed during the July term break.
- The Primary Team organised a Staff/Council Breakfast.

Staff devotions have continued each morning during term time. Various members of staff are rostered to lead this profitable time of reflection and encouragement from God’s Word. A member of staff and one or more 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 each week.

### **STUDENTS**

The school had 183 students (K-10) enrolled at the August census date, 5 of whom were international students.

The Year 10 students who left the school in 2021 enrolled in Trinity Christian School (1), Lake Tuggeranong College (2), and Googong Anglican (1), McKillop College (1), Gunghalin College (1), Narrabundah College (1), interstate (1) and unknown (1)..

### **Student Attendance**

The average student attendance rate was 93.8% (Years 1-10). The rate in Infants/Primary was 94.2% and in Secondary 92.8%. The breakdown per year level is below:

#### Full Day Attendance Rate

Overall	93.8%
Boys	94.4%
Girls	93.3%
Year PR	92.2%
Year KG	92.3%
Year 1	94.1%
Year 2	94.3%
Year 3	95.1%
Year 4	94.1%
Year 5	92.9%
Year 6	96.7%
Year 7	94.9%
Year 8	93.9%
Year 9	92.9%
Year 10	89.6%

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 Sheena Mathews who worked closely with classroom teachers to ensure Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) were updated and evidence of adjustments captured. A focussed study support group operates 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 some students in a number of subjects. Tracking of all students has been maintained and students with special needs identified and helped.

### **Student Activities**

The annual Foundation Day special assembly was addressed by Rev Jack Batchen, one of the pastors at Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church. He spoke on the topic “What is the most useful thing you know?” based on Ephesians 1:15-23. The annual Foundation Lecture would normally have been held in June but due to the Public Health restrictions current at the time, we decided not to hold this event in 2021.

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.

In 2021 we introduced Primary student leadership positions – these students have been active in supporting teachers in such areas as award presentations and fundraising.

The 3-day Secondary Camp planned for 2021 was eventually cancelled after being rescheduled due to restrictions on interstate travel in force at the time due to COVID.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$850.35 in 2021. The lockdown and associated restrictions due to covid made it difficult for our usual level of fundraising to take place. The fundraising effort was spearheaded by senior students under the guidance of Mrs Lyons and Mr Swift. This was raised for our ‘Compassion children’ (Melaku and Alisson) but had to be supplemented by \$401.65 carried over to 2022.

Primary and Secondary students also engaged in various service activities both in the wider community and within the school. For example, Primary students tidied up the build-up of leaves around the school during autumn and were involved in establishing vegetable garden beds. Secondary students were limited by COVID restrictions during the service week but did manage to carry out fundraising for our Compassion sponsor children throughout the year. 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 would normally have been involved in a number of performing arts activities during the year but due to COVID restrictions, these had to be cancelled.

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 often have a drama element which involves dressing in a costume. These activities formed a break from the normal routines of study and allowed a diversity of students to shine.

Staff and Council conducted a review of our Years 9-10 curriculum and offerings with the aim of improving retention in these grades. Our elective structure was changed from 2 lines involving whole year courses to 3 lines of semester long courses which expanded the variety of subjects students could select from. A variety of new subjects were offered in 2021 including Physical and Sports Studies (PASS), Youth Leadership/Public Speaking, and Photography. In addition, Council approved a partially subsidised special excursion for Year 10 which involves spending 4 days in the Sydney area engaging in a variety of activities including some service opportunities. The excursion will be taking place late Term 3 in 2021 and will be a regular part of the offering provided each year.

Other important school activities were:

- Various sports carnivals as part of our inter-House competition – athletics, swimming, and cross-country were held in 2021. We were thankful these were able to be done even with COVID restrictions and lockdown that were applied during the year..
- Year 6 Dinner was held in the school Library on the evening of Thursday, 10 December.
- Year 10 Graduation Dinner was held at the Southern Cross Club premises in Tuggeranong during Week 9 of Term 4.
- The annual awards and prize giving was held during the day on Friday 11 December as a series of assemblies in lieu of the usual Thanksgiving Evening. Year 10 parents were able to attend in person and other families were invited to view the proceedings via Zoom. Rev David Brookes (Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church) gave a well-received message during the Secondary assembly. The ADF Future Innovators Award was presented on behalf of the Australian Defence Force.

The 2021 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 Ebony Lyons under Mrs Elizabeth Coleman’s oversight did a fantastic job of collating and editing this informative record of the life of the school and the quality of the production continues to be very high.

### Benchmarking

NAPLAN testing was carried out in 2021 after a gap in 2020.

The following tables show the proportion of the cohort who sat the NAPLAN assessment who achieved results at or above the expected level of achievement for their Year group. Please note our small cohort sizes does cause large swings at time when results are averaged over the cohort.

#### Percentage of students at or above expected level

##### Grammar & Punctuation

	2018	2019	2021
Yr 3	100.0%	91.7%	88.2%
Yr 5	73.3%	94.1%	90.9%
Yr 7	66.7%	88.9%	94.7%
Yr 9	100.0%	77.8%	86.7%

##### Numeracy

	2018	2019	2021
Yr 3	100.0%	100.0%	94.1%
Yr 5	100.0%	94.1%	100.0%
Yr 7	80.0%	100.0%	89.5%
Yr 9	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

##### Reading

	2018	2019	2021
Yr 3	100.0%	100.0%	94.1%
Yr 5	86.7%	100.0%	91.7%
Yr 7	73.3%	100.0%	100.0%
Yr 9	100.0%	66.7%	100.0%

##### Spelling

	2018	2019	2021
Yr 3	92.3%	91.7%	88.2%
Yr 5	93.3%	100.0%	90.9%
Yr 7	66.7%	94.4%	94.7%
Yr 9	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

##### Writing

	2018	2019	2021
Yr 3	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yr 5	60.0%	94.1%	91.7%
Yr 7	20.0%	77.8%	89.5%
Yr 9	100.0%	77.8%	66.7%

Common entry points into Covenant are Kindergarten and Year 7. This does explain why the Year 7 cohort has, at times, a higher proportion of students who were assessed at below the expected level of achievement for their grade. While the school continues to provide a sound academic programme, that 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 worldview 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 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 Mrs Hannah van Bentum. It proved most beneficial for those in attendance.

We have not been able to hold a Spring Fair in 2021 due to ACT Government restrictions in place at the time.

Parent/teacher interviews were scheduled to be held in late Term 1 and early in Term 3. Comprehensive Semester reports were distributed to parents at the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2 in 2021. The reports are 'plain English' report cards with A – E grades.

Regular communication with parents is via the Communicator newsletter (once a fortnight). It is distributed each Thursday afternoon by email using Adobe InDesign cloud-based software. The PCSchool Student Management System is used to facilitate sending messages to parents by both email and SMS as appropriate. Teachers are increasing their use of Google Classroom and this has a useful guardian email digest feature which many parents have found valuable. Other online systems are used in preschool and junior primary grades to facilitate parental involvement in their children's education in these early years.

## **GENERAL**

### **Chaplaincy**

The School Chaplain position has been ably filled by Mr Nate Swift. 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 2021.

Mr Swift has been able to provide pastoral advice and counselling to students as required. This has included his involvement in some overnight camps with groups of students. Overall, the school community has reflected positively on the Chaplaincy in surveys and general comments.

### **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 continues to be 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 continues to be based on the Chromebox/Chromebook devices 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 two mobile trolleys with Chromebooks which are taken into a classroom as needed. A third trolley will be purchased for use starting in Term 1, 2022. Internet is provided through the NBN which has given the school more stable and reliable access.

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.

### **Legislative concerns**

The ACT *Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practices Bill 2020* was passed into law and became effective in 2021. We have not yet seen the full impact of this legislation on Christian schools and churches as the ACT Government's Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs is still formulating policy and regulations to implement it. The stated aim of the ACT Government is to "make Canberra the most LGBTIQ+ welcoming and inclusive city in Australia".

The ACT Government is currently revising its anti-discrimination legislation as well as the Education Act. The indications are that changes are being contemplated which will further threaten our ability to employ godly Christian staff and, possibly, our ability to freely teach what the Bible says about marriage and gender. The Federal Government did consider a Religious Discrimination Bill which was designed to provide some protections for Christian schools and churches. This Bill had to be abandoned and may be reconsidered should the Liberal/National government get re-elected in 2022.

### **CONCLUSION**

2021 saw a slight decline in numbers at the start of the year. A significant aspect of 2021 was the Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA) which is likely to be in use early March 2022. It has been an exciting development but delayed far longer than we first envisaged.

Due to changes in staff, we carried out a recruitment drive which resulted in the appointment of 4 new teachers to commence in 2022. We have had significant new enrolments coming into the school combined with improved retention rates, particularly in the secondary grades, for 2022 which bodes well for our future development as a school.

We thank the Lord for guiding us through this period of transition and we look forward to His continued guidance and blessing for the 2022 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast  
Principal  
23 March 2022