



PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

TO THE

SCHOOL COMMUNITY

FOR THE

2024

ACADEMIC YEAR

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

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for the 2024 ACADEMIC YEAR**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Covenant Christian School's Annual Report for the 2024 academic year.

For 2024 the theme is 'Christ our only Redeemer' and the associated Theme Song was 'In Christ Alone.'

The term verses set for student memorisation as well as being the text for assembly devotions during the year were:

Term	Verse	Rationale
1	⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. – Gal 4:4-5	The eternal Son of God became man to be our Redeemer
2	And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. – Luke 1:31-32a	Jesus is fully man and fully God
3	⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. ⁷ If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. I From now on you do know Him and have seen Him." – John 14:6-7	Jesus is the only way to the Father.
4	Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. – Heb 9:28	Jesus is the Sin-bearer and is coming again

2024 saw the continuation of the steady enrolment growth we have been experiencing along with other independent schools in the ACT and throughout Australia.

The specialist Music facility was completed and started being used in Term 2 of 2024. This building gives us two large sound-proofed classrooms and associated storage space for Music, along with four practice rooms which provides scope for the school to have a number of itinerant Music teachers offering instrumental instruction during the school day for families who wish to enrol. The official opening was held in November by Mr David Smith, Federal MP for the Bean electorate.

The staff of the school has grown in response to increased student numbers and some new roles were established in 2024, including the appointment of a part-time Learning Support Coordinator and Inclusive Education Specialist. During the course of the year, additional leadership roles were identified as being needed and recruitment carried out in the later part of 2024 for a new Years 7-10 Student Wellbeing Coordinator and also for Years 3-6 Primary Coordinator. We also created our first double streamed Kindergarten class to commence in 2025.

Covenant Christian School continues to be affiliated to Christian Education National (CEN) which provides support and fellowship with like-minded schools, particularly in the ACT and NSW. Emmaus Christian School is the only other CEN-affiliated school in the ACT. We also maintain regular contacts with other Christian schools in the ACT through Principal and Business Manager forums. Two members of Council, along with the Principal, attended a CEN Governance Conference that focussed on risk management held in Melbourne in November.

COUNCIL

The Chairman's report covers the work of Council and its Committees in 2024.

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.

Continuous Registration

The ACT Education Act now stipulates that independent schools such as Covenant are now under a “continuous registration” regime which means that we no longer have a 5-year cycle of audits but we do have to provide a statement of compliance each year and be subject to periodic audits. We had our first audit in 2024 which reviewed the following standards:

- Schedule 2 Part 2.1 (2.3) Governance Structure
- Schedule 2 Part 2.1 (2.5) Policies and Procedures – Enrolment and Complaints Policies and Procedures
- Schedule 2 Part 2.3 (2.17) Student Movement Register (SMR)

We were able to satisfy the regulator that Covenant Christian School is compliant.

Recurrent Income (\$)

MySchool Data – 2024 (provisional)

Aust Govt	3,422,077
State Govt	841,684
Fees etc.	1,962,459
Other private	128,594
Gross	6,254,814
Deductions:	1,364,062
TOTAL	4,990,752

STAFF

Covenant Christian School's greatest asset is its dedicated staff. They work daily with students, both in and out of the classroom. We are blessed with a talented and committed team of Christian teachers and support staff who create a safe, nurturing, and God-honouring learning environment.

In 2024 Covenant Christian School employed 32 (21.0 FTE) teaching staff and 25 non-teaching staff (11.5 FTE) across Years K-10. Teacher staff absences represented 6.57% of total days worked.

All teaching staff members were deemed qualified for their positions, and are registered with the ACT Teachers Quality Institute (TQI) where applicable. The breakdown of highest qualifications held by all (non-casual) teaching staff is as follows: 6 Masters degrees, 10 Grad.Dip., 14 Bachelor degrees and 2 Diploma of Teaching. All registered 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 regular volunteers hold valid and current WWVP (Working with Vulnerable People) registration.

The ratio of male to female teaching staff (K-10) was 5.9/15.1 (FTE basis) or 7:25 by headcount. There is one member of staff who identifies as part-indigenous.

In 2024 we saw some new positions commence or more fully develop:

- Mrs Julie Prattis has done an amazing job balancing two challenging roles (Deputy Principal and ELC Director). Mrs Rachelle Potter was appointed as ELC Educational Leader and, in addition, is serving as a room leader next year.
- Mrs Kari Hunt joined us as Learning Support Coordinator & Inclusive Education Specialist this year.
- Mrs Sharyn Laughlin finished her time as Head of Primary at the end of this year having done an excellent job of leading the Primary for many years. She will be stepping into the role of Years 3-6 Coordinator supporting Mrs Jane Crawford who will be taking over as Head of Primary.
- Mrs Carmel Houghton will add the Junior Primary Coordinator role to her K-6 Curriculum Coordinator role in 2025.
- Pastor Tom Edwards stepped back from the School Chaplain role and Mrs Nancy Groves commenced as the new Chaplain supported by Mr Isaac Walters as Student Wellbeing Officer.
- A number of people joined us as Teacher Aides, Learning Support Assistants in the ELC, bus drivers, cleaners – all vitally important roles which have been expanding as we have realised the need is significant and growing.

In 2025 the following things are coming up:

- Mrs Keturah Jones joins the team as the first Years 7-10 Student Wellbeing Coordinator which will support the Head of Secondary and the Years 7-10 Homeroom teachers to provide wellbeing and pastoral care for our students.
- Mr Jeremy D'Abrera joins us full-time in a multi-faceted role as Executive Assistant to the Principal combined with providing IT support on-site and marketing expertise.
- Mr Jesh Moonsamy will be working in a number of roles: Laboratory Support, Teacher Aide and also assisting the Finance team.
- We will be having our first double-streamed Kindergarten next year with Mrs Tamara Doran and Miss Lily Horton-Hume being the teaching team for this key grade.
- Miss Hannah Pierce has been asked to take some classes in Primary (KG-Yr 4 Digital Technology mainly) under a Permit to Teach.
- Miss Lily Horton-Hume and Mrs Ebony Winnett transition from being Teacher Trainees to start their first full-time year as new graduate teachers.

Professional Development Weeks

22 – 25 January 2024

- Devotions each day were held on site led by a range of local pastors.
- Teachers were given significant time to work on the implementation of Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum.
- 2 days were spent on CEN training on curriculum design using the Big Picture approach.
- A session with a US-based trainer via webinar on CurriculumTrak was held.
- 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 the previous week.

15 - 19 July 2024

- Devotions were provided by different pastors from local supporting churches.
- A Pastor's breakfast was held in conjunction with the Staff & Council breakfast.
- Three staff attended the CEN ITEC Conference which was held in Perth (once every 4 years) 14-17 July inclusive.
- Staff were involved in preparation for Term 3 as well as various meetings.
- The mid-year reports were finalised and distributed during the July term break.

Mrs Wendy Lyons was recognised by colleagues as the Covenant Christian School Teaching Giant as part of the World Teacher's Day. This was recognised at an ACT event held on 25 October 2024.

Each school day begins with staff devotions, led by rotating team members. This time of reflection and encouragement from Scripture includes prayer for staff, school students and their families, specific year groups, a supporting local church, and other requests for praise, thanksgiving, and intercession. The School Council is also regularly lifted up in prayer.

STUDENTS

The school had 289 students (K-10) enrolled at the August census date, 9 of whom were international students.

The Year 10 students who left the school in 2024 enrolled in Trinity Christian School (4), Lake Tuggeranong College (1), MacKillop College (6), Erindale College (3), Googong Anglican School (1), Canberra College (1)).

Student Attendance

The average student attendance rate was 93.2% (Years 1-10). The rate in Infants/Primary was 92.4% and in Secondary 94.7%. The breakdown per year level is below:

Full Day Attendance Rate by grade

Year 1	92.5%	Year 6	93.5%
Year 2	93.9%	Year 7	94.7%
Year 3	91.5%	Year 8	92.7%
Year 4	90.4%	Year 9	95.6%
Year 5	92.8%	Year 10	95.9%

Students are expected to attend Covenant every day school is in session. If your child will be absent, please call or email the school before 8:50 AM. Teachers take attendance electronically each morning, submitting it by 9:05 AM. If a student is marked absent without explanation, the school office will contact their parents, usually within 45 minutes of attendance being taken.

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 Kari Hunt has taken charge of this area to coordinate the teacher aides and ensured resources have been allocated to meet needs as these have been identified.

The National Collection of Consistent Data (NCCD) is also under Mrs Hunt's jurisdiction. The team 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. Adjustments are made to learning tasks and assessments for those students identified as needing additional support. Tracking of all students has been maintained and students with special needs identified and helped.

Student Activities

We were very pleased to have a specialist guest speaker, Susan McLean of Cybersafety Solutions, who gave a comprehensive presentation to our parents on the evening of 15 February. We extended the invitation to our local supporting churches as well. The feedback we had from those parents and local church congregants who attended was appreciative but the numbers in attendance was less than we hoped. In 2025 we will be holding sessions for our Years 5-10 cohorts.

Students from Year 9 and 10 at Covenant were awarded leadership badges in recognition of their contributions to the school community. These student leaders play an important role in the school, including leading their respective House teams and serving as role models. The Student Representative Council (SRC) provides a platform for students to share their ideas and contribute to school life. All student leaders are supported and mentored by Mrs. Lyons.

Primary student leadership positions are also functioning well – these students have been active in supporting teachers in such areas as award presentations and fundraising. Mrs Laughlin as Head of Primary provides mentorship and guidance to these young leaders who provide a number of supports to staff and encourage their fellow students to do the right thing.

The 3-day Years 7-8 cohort camp in 2024 was held at again CRU Galston Gorge which was able to provide a comprehensive and soundly Christian programme for our students. This was held in May. The separate Years 9-10 camp was held 11-13 November at CRU Lake Macquarie. For 2025, both the Years 7-8 camp and the Years 9-10 camps will be held in Semester One.

The Year 10 cohort had their partially subsidised Sydney excursion at the end of Term 3. The excursion was a 4 day trip and was provided by the Urban Challenge organisation. This was a very successful event. We are working towards this being the only overnight experience for Year 10 starting in 2026.

Our CARE Ministries raised \$2,889.52 in 2024. The fundraising effort was spearheaded by senior students under the guidance of Mrs Lyons. This was raised for our 'Compassion children' (Melaku and Alisson) and also for a relief organisation (Middle East Reformed Fellowship).

Students in both primary and secondary school participated in a variety of service projects, both within the school and in the broader community. Primary students, for example, helped with groundskeeping by clearing autumn leaves and created school vegetable gardens. Secondary students dedicated their service week to on-campus projects and also raised funds for the school's Compassion sponsor children throughout the year. These activities reflect the school's commitment to a holistic education that nurtures both academic and spiritual growth. They offer students valuable opportunities to address real needs, experience the joy of serving others, and express their faith through action.

Students were involved in a number of performing arts activities during the year such as a TAG Quest and we were able to resume the Evening of the Arts – many of these were held in the COLA and were well-received by the school community.

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. For the first time we were involved in an inter-school debating competition set up between the ACT Christian schools. It was held at Emmaus Christian School and was a challenging event and a lot of fun for our students. A Soccer Gala Day was held in August and a Futsal Gala Day in October. These activities formed a break from the normal routines of study and allowed a diversity of students to shine.

The new enhanced Years 9-10 elective structure continued in 2024 with 3 lines of courses each semester which gave students a wide variety of subjects to select from. The number of courses being offered is increasing to cater for the bigger cohorts in Years 9-10 coming through.

Extension activities are offered across the school. These include but are not limited to the Ethics Olympiad (Junior and Middle School), Mathematics Olympiad and Interschool Spelling Bee.

Other important school activities were:

- Various sports carnivals as part of our inter-House competition – athletics, swimming, and cross-country were held in 2024.
- Year 6 Dinner was held in the school Library on the evening of Thursday, 11th December.
- Year 10 Graduation Dinner was held at the Tuggeranong Vikings Club premises on the evening of Friday 6th December.
- The annual awards and prize-giving gathering (Thanksgiving) was held during the day on Friday 13th December as a whole school assembly. Mr Nate Swift gave a well-received message during the Thanksgiving assembly. The ADF Future Innovators Award was presented on behalf of the Australian Defence Force.

The 2024 "Collage" yearbook beautifully captured the diverse activities and events of the school year. Mrs Sarah Collins, under the guidance of Mrs. Elizabeth Coleman, and with media contributions from Mrs. Ebony Winnett, expertly compiled and edited this comprehensive record of school life. The yearbook's high-quality production continues to impress.

Benchmarking

NAPLAN testing was carried out in 2024 using an online assessment platform.

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 (this changed to 'Strong' and Exceeding' in 2024). Please note our relatively small cohort sizes can cause large swings at times when results are averaged over the cohort.

Percentage of students at or above expected level

NB: 2024 figures are a total of 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' categories in a new style of reporting.

Grammar & Punctuation

	2022	2023	2024*
Yr 3	100%	89%	67%
Yr 5	94%	100%	85%
Yr 7	91%	96%	79%
Yr 9	78%	100.	70%

Numeracy

	2022	2023	2024*
Yr 3	100%	100%	92%
Yr 5	100%	100%	92%
Yr 7	97%	96%	87%
Yr 9	96%	100%	83%

Reading

	2022	2023	2024*
Yr 3	100%	95%	85%
Yr 5	100%	100%	86%
Yr 7	100%	100%	82%
Yr 9	93%	100%	84%

Spelling

	2022	2023	2024*
Yr 3	100%	100%	70%
Yr 5	100%	100%	86%
Yr 7	94%	96%	87%
Yr 9	81%	100%	81%

Writing

	2022	2023	2024*
Yr 3	100%	100%	93%
Yr 5	100%	100%	81%
Yr 7	82%	92%	82%
Yr 9	76%	100%	65%

Common entry points into Covenant are Kindergarten and Year 7. 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 joyfully 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.

Our **Profile of a Graduate** is a more detailed exposition of turning our Mission and Vision into reality and is being used to guide our curriculum development to be intentional about how we develop and maintain a transformative education that honours Christ. Our growing focus on implementing classical Christian pedagogy derives from this.

PARENTS

We held our first Spring Fair in October 2024 which was the first time since before COVID restriction in 2022 prevented the event being held. The COLA was a central part in this new look Spring Fair ably organised by a committee of parents under the leadership of Mrs Annie North. The Spring Fair will now be an annual event. We were very encouraged by the significant number of people from the community who attended the Fair. Once again this activity proved to be a very popular event which provides our families with the opportunity to serve the community and also showcases the school for those interested in what we do.

Parent/teacher interviews were held in late Term 1 and early in Term 3. Due to increased numbers, the secondary interviews were split between Years 7-8 and Years 9-10 for the first time. Comprehensive Semester reports were distributed to parents at the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2 in 2024. 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 on Thursday afternoon by email using Adobe InDesign cloud-based software. The FACTS 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 (StoryPark) and junior primary grades (ClassDojo) 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 Tom Edwards for the first part of the year. A new Chaplain, Mrs Nancy Groves, was appointed mid-2024 to replace Mr Edwards who needed to devote more time to his growing congregation and related preaching and pastoral duties. 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 2024. We have recently had our funding approved for 2024-2027.

Mr Edwards and Mrs Groves have been able to provide pastoral advice and counselling to students as required. Late in 2024 Mr Isaac Walters joined the Student Wellbeing Team to augment the work of the Chaplain as a school-funded Student Wellbeing Officer. Overall, the school community has reflected positively on the Chaplaincy and Student Wellbeing services 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 the Google Workspace for Education platform, a cloud-based set of basic software tools such as Google Docs, Google Sheets, Google Slides and Google Classroom. We subscribe to the Education Plus version which gave us significantly improved functionality and storage.

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 four mobile trolleys with Chromebooks which are taken into a classroom as needed. A fifth trolley is being ordered for 2025. Internet is provided through a fibre-connection to the NBN which has given the school more stable and reliable access. We have found the NBN Enterprise Ethernet service has greatly increased the capacity and stability of our internet connection.

Ipads are used in the ELC, the junior primary classes, and also in Music to supplement the learning activities in the classroom.

Our school has chosen not to implement a "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) policy for student computing, as it doesn't align with our educational philosophy. We recognize the growing body of research indicating that excessive screen time can negatively impact young people. Therefore, we strive to limit screen time to essential educational purposes. Furthermore, we believe that allowing personal devices in the classroom throughout the day would be a significant distraction from learning and hinder the development of crucial skills, particularly in the early years of schooling.

Legislative concerns

Recent revisions to the ACT's anti-discrimination legislation pose a potential challenge to the school's ability to employ staff who align with its Christian ethos. While no direct impact has been observed as yet, the school recognizes the possibility of future challenges arising from these legislative changes.

The Federal Government responded to concerns expressed following the release of a report from the Australian Law Reform Commission on protecting religious freedom and has decided not to proceed with any legislative changes in this session of Parliament. Legislation changes in this area continue to be a matter for concern and we are monitoring closely what is happening. We are hoping the Federal election in 2025 may change the ideological direction of government somewhat, particularly with the influence of recent events in the USA.

CONCLUSION

In 2024, our school continued its five-year trend of increasing enrolments. The new Music building, which opened in Term 2, has already proven to be a valuable addition. We are especially grateful for the two new classrooms and four soundproof practice rooms that this project provided. We also acknowledge the generous capital grant of \$910,000 from the ACT Government, which made this project possible.

The ACT Government has awarded the school a further grant of \$1 million towards the construction of four secondary classrooms and additional staff amenities. The aim is for this building to be completed before the commencement of the 2026 school year.

We thank the Lord for His continued mercies to the school and we look forward to His continued guidance and blessing for the 2025 school year.

Yours in Christ

Martin Keast
Principal
6 March 2025