School Overview

St Thomas the Apostle has an enrolment of 485 students and has had steady enrolment patterns over the past few years. Our suburb is in a green belt area and there are recreational spaces and sporting facilities for students in the area. Further developments in our school has improved the school yard and has seen the introduction of more passive play areas around the school. There is now a separate prep playground and due to fundraising, we will soon see more prep play equipment set up for the students. Technology has taken another leap and all year 5 & 6 students have their own Chromebooks, which are a significant part of their daily learning.

We have 20 classes of approximately 24 in each class. The year 5 & 6 classes are in a composite structure, the remaining classes are straight classes. These classes are located in four different buildings and each building is well set up with equipment and appropriate resources for the classes. Covered walkways connect the buildings. Our Discovery Centre has been undergoing ongoing improvements over the past twelve months and we now boast a Discovery Centre with an amazing amount of resources and equipped extremely well with technology. This centre is also used to hold various extra curricula activities at lunchtime.

This Discovery Centre is used extensively as a library and a centre for interactive activities. We are working towards becoming a sustainable school and our organic garden is used by all students across the week. Students also work in the domestic kitchen which supports the Stephanie Alexander program. This kitchen is quite a big feature of our school and is always included in any major school events we hold throughout the year. In 2015 we held our Visual Arts exhibition across two nights and catering was part of the domestic kitchens’ agenda with students. In 2015 we completed and published a cook book which was connected to the garden and kitchen. It detailed the journey we have taken with our garden and cooking classes over the past few years. It was called, “Sharing Our Bounty”.

Results for literacy and numeracy are derived from NAPLAN and our own internal testing regime which occurs across every term. We have also focused on building in several special needs support programs which are to support students more at risk. This also includes providing extension programs for the students who show aptitude in literacy and numeracy. St Thomas also runs self-esteem programs and works with Swinburne University in providing extra counselling sessions from their psychology students. “Seasons” is in operation, which is a grief program and a counsellor is employed once a week from Catholic Care. We also have a relationship counsellor to support the needs of all families in our school community. We also keep a well-stocked parent library which has excellent books addressing anxiety. Parents are encouraged to borrow these books. Each week in the newsletter a book is highlighted from this library to bring to the attention of the parents. Also various parenting nights and professional learning opportunities are offered to families throughout the year.

Restorative practice is well developed across the school and recently the school has purchased buddy seats to give children opportunities to meet new friends on the yard. Peer mediation is also present on the yard and the student leadership team take extra responsibilities to support younger students who may be having difficulty in finding friends or dealing with conflict. School rules and class rules all link to our whole school vision, as well as our various supportive programs, which focus on building emotional stamina in our students.

As a school we are very aware that we work in close partnership with families. Parents are invited into many aspects of school life and we are blessed with very successful parents associations supporting the school in a variety of ways. Results in surveys indicate that parents are keen to be active members of our school and opportunities are provided for families to participate in the many and varied school activities throughout the year.
Our School Improvement Plan drives our work annually and is developed after reflecting on all school data. The learning and teaching component of our Annual Action Plan has many aspects to consider. Primarily it is about ongoing improvement in key areas of learning and teaching. Professional development for staff is also driven from the annual action plan as staff need to keep abreast of contemporary teaching styles and current thinking about best teaching practice.

St Thomas ensures that our support for students in wellbeing is at the forefront of our work. We appreciate that social and emotional support will enrich all aspects of the learning and that children need to feel safe and experience a trusting relationship with their teacher. Our staff are very capable in focusing on ensuring the wellbeing of students and are quick to address any matters that impact on learning. We have a very successful orientation program which gives new families a clear understanding of how children are guided and supported in their early transitional period starting school.

In a nutshell, St Thomas is about supporting the student, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The strategies we use are linked into our vision which focusses clearly on Gospel Values.