

WestBelcommen

Inclusion
Innovation
Understanding
Respect
Education
Resilience
Try Your Best
Faith
St Thomas Aquinas
Stay Safe

2023

Friendship
Always Be Respectful
Laughter
Love of Learning
Honest
Supportive



INFORMATION BOOK

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A word from your Parish Priest

Parents are the primary educators of the child in the ways of faith.

In deciding to send your child to St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School you are saying you want your child to grow up sharing your Catholic faith. You want something more...something special for your child.

What is "special" and "different" about St Thomas Aquinas School?

The answer is firmly embedded in its basic quality as a spiritual community. This means 'in a nutshell' that it is religious, it is Christian, it is catholic and it is an integral part of the parish.

This will find its expression in family prayer; in the help you will give your child in the preparation for the reception of the Sacraments and by actively meeting Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Jesus said to his apostles: 'Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you will not have life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life and I will raise them up on the last day'.

He also said "I have come that you may have life and have it in all abundance".

We remind the children that what Jesus said applies to us all in this life and in the next.

To enrol a child for the reason 'that a little religion does no harm' or that 'there is more discipline in a Catholic School' are reasons not in keeping with Catholic Education.

Finally, I would emphasise that our Catholic faith demands that we respect the conscientious beliefs of all members of the human family, Christian and non-Christian, believers and non-believers. We are all united as children of our heavenly Father.

Give children laughter...they will live in a world that sings

Give children smiles...they will live in a world that glows

Give children your hands...they will live in a world that stands strong

Give children your faith...they will live in a world of love, justice and peace

Reverend T Thornton, PP.



St Thomas Aquinas West Belconnen

25 Lhotsky Street, Charnwood ACT 2615

Dear Parents and Carers,

Our school motto 'To Care' is at the heart of everything we do at St Thomas Aquinas, West Belconnen. Inspired by the life of St Thomas Aquinas, we seek to deepen our knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ and celebrate our own human flourishing. Situated on Ngunnawal land in the centre of West Belconnen, we are a supportive, inclusive and multicultural community that welcomes all students from a variety of backgrounds. The school is an integral part of the St Thomas Aquinas Parish and students attend the Parish mass every Friday. The school provides a rich Religious Education program, which includes a Sacramental program for children in Year 4 and Year 6.

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School takes its name from the great Doctor of the Church, St Thomas Aquinas, who lived in the thirteenth century. St Thomas Aquinas is known primarily as a brilliant theologian and philosopher who, among other achievements, wrote extensively on the person of Jesus Christ and famously came up with five arguments for the proof of the existence of God. Fittingly, St Thomas Aquinas is the Patron Saint of universities and scholars, and serves as a fitting ambassador of education and our school.

The current enrolment from Preschool to Year 6 is 394 students. Our professional staff are committed to the development of the individual child; academically, socially and spiritually. Staff regularly engage in professional learning to ensure they are implementing the most up-to-date, research-based educational practices.

In 2020, staff at St Thomas Aquinas embarked on a journey to introduce teaching and learning practices based on the Science of Learning. At St Thomas Aquinas, staff use this knowledge, including their knowledge of Cognitive Load Theory, to inform their planning and selection of resources. As a result of embedding these practices, we have seen an improvement in student academic performance over the last two years. These practices included the introduction of InitialLit from Kindergarten to Year Two, and Direct Instruction and Daily Review in Mathematics from Kindergarten to Year Six. In 2022, we introduced Spelling Mastery across Years Three to Six. Students with learning needs are supported by intervention programs, including MiniLit, MacqLit and intervention in Mathematics. Students requiring extension are provided with a variety of in school and inter school experiences including the DaVinci Decathlon, Mathematics Olympiad and the Rostrum Public Speaking competition.

St Thomas Aquinas enjoys expansive grounds and recently refurbished ovals for students to play on. We provide opportunities for students to participate in a variety of sports and sporting clinics. Students also have an opportunity to play and compete in a variety of inter school sporting competitions and gala days.

Classrooms are well resourced with interactive LED boards in every classroom and all year levels have access to iPads or Chromebooks. Students at St Thomas Aquinas participate in specialist Science, Arts and Physical Education and Health programs. STEM is well supported at the school with specialist Science lessons, in-class Design and Technology lessons, and resources including 3D printers, Spheros, EV3s and Mbots, MakeyMakeys, Green Screen capability and a programmable drone.

St Thomas Aquinas is part of Harvard University's Caring Schools Network and works in collaboration with Harvard University to 'make caring common' across the school. All staff are trained in Trauma Informed practices having completed the Berry Street Education program and use these practices in their classrooms. Our Year Six Leadership program provides an opportunity for every student to be a Leader in their final year of Primary school. Students in Year 6 are involved in one of four portfolio areas: Faith; Environment; Sport; or Hospitality and Media. All Kindergarten students are part of a buddy program where they are paired up with a student in Year 6 to support them to settle into school.

Before and after school care, and holiday care programs are provided by OSHClub. This service caters for Primary School students from Kindergarten to Year 6 and is available from 7am to 8.50am and 3pm to 6pm during term time. OSHClub also operate a school holiday program during term breaks and for part of the Christmas holidays.

St Thomas Aquinas is supported by an active Community Council that provides advice on procedures and policies, organises community events and fundraisers to help provide resources for students and improve the school environment.

I look forward to working with you and your family.

Yours sincerely

Leah Taylor
Principal

St Thomas Aquinas Purpose. Vision and Mission Statement

St Thomas Aquinas
West Belconnen



We are a community *inspired*
by St Thomas Aquinas to deepen our *faith*,
to seek *knowledge* and to *flourish*.

In partnership with families and the community,
students are encouraged to be:



Compassionate



Resilient



Inclusive



Engaged

ENROLMENT

Application and Criteria for Enrolment

St Thomas Aquinas is a Parish School and as such its purpose is to serve the parishioners. Consequently, first preference is given to the baptised Catholics who live within the parish and whose parents have a commitment to the faith.

ELC Students should have turned four and Kindergarten children must have turned five years of age by 30 April in the year of enrolment. Proof of age will be required. If there are less places than the demand in any year the following priorities will apply:

- Baptised Catholic children who are members of the designated local parish communities.
- Siblings of children already attending the primary school.
- Baptised Catholic children from other parishes who cannot obtain places in their local parish primary school.
- Baptised Catholic children whose parents/guardians seek to enrol them in a parish primary school outside their own parish but who can obtain places in their own parish primary school.
- Other children whose parents/guardians desire and are committed to a Catholic Education.

All children who attend a Catholic ELC will be given preference for Kindergarten enrolment at a Catholic primary school in their parish.

The process of enrolment involves the school and parents working together to provide an effective educational environment. The following processes will normally occur:

1. The parents complete an online enrolment form from our website www.staquinas.cg.catholic.edu.au, scan and attach relevant documentation and pay the enrolment fee of \$50.00 online. Alternatively, you may attend the school requesting an Application for Enrolment Form.
2. On receipt of the completed form the school will contact parents who are new to the school to arrange an interview. The school will need to sight the original birth certificate, baptismal certificate (if baptised), immunisation records and proof of residential address.
3. The interview provides an opportunity to discuss your child's / children's enrolment and needs. If a child has a particular learning need, every effort will be made in the interview to begin planning for the student's success at St Thomas Aquinas. As a consequence, our Diverse Learning Coordinator, as well as a CEO Representative, may also be present at the interview to lend support.

Although the students in the school will be predominantly Catholic, children from other faith backgrounds are most welcome to attend St Thomas Aquinas.

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten - Year 6 Buddies

At the Early Bird Orientation program Kindergarten children will be matched up with a Year 5 child who will be their special buddy for the following year. This relationship assists with creating a smooth transition into primary school. The system eases the Kinder child's anxiety during the first few weeks by knowing a familiar face. This relationship is fostered throughout the year by working together in groups and other vertical grouping activities.

CURRICULUM

Religious Education

We aim for the children to be nurtured in the Catholic faith and tradition within a Catholic Christian community. Catholic values drive our school culture and students are consistently provided with opportunities to learn about as well as experience the Catholic Faith. Religious Education programming is based upon the Brisbane Curriculum and is taught through High Impact Teaching Practises that explore the concepts presented in the curriculum. Where possible Religious Education Programs offer opportunities for students to develop connections between curriculum areas.

When restrictions allow, parents are invited to whole school gatherings which are held for significant events including St Thomas Aquinas Day, Easter Liturgies, Advent Liturgies NAIDOC Week and ANZAC Day. In recent years students have been attending Mass at St Thomas Aquinas Parish Church each term with their Year group. Our school has a tradition of gathering together to celebrate Mass every week which we hope to reinstate soon.

The format for the Sacramental Programs at St Thomas Aquinas is;

Reconciliation and Eucharist	Year 4
Confirmation	Year 6

Sacraments are very personal and unique to each individual. In this way if children are considered not to be ready for a particular Sacrament, they can receive the Sacrament at a later date, after consultation with Fr Tom.

Our Parish-based Sacramental program aligns with the Catholic Church's teaching that parents and carers are the first educators. Families play a significant role in the preparation of their children for each Sacrament. Classroom programs support the student preparation as part of the Religious Education curriculum. As a community, the school and parish do their utmost to aid the families in any way they can. All our Sacraments are celebrated in St Thomas Aquinas Parish Church.

Other Key Learning Areas

The Australian Curriculum forms the basis of classroom teaching and learning and is organised with explicit content descriptors of what is to be taught to students and what is expected of their learning at every year of primary schooling.

The curriculum identifies essential content that all students should be taught and ensures that there is time to pursue deep learning of that content. The Australian Curriculum also allows flexibility for schools and teachers to include local and topical content. Achievement standards have been set to ensure they are challenging and contribute to all students receiving a quality education.

The Australian Curriculum also pays attention to how seven general capabilities and three cross-curriculum dimensions (listed below) contribute to, and can be developed through, teaching in each learning area.

The general capabilities are:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and Communication Technology
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding
- Personal and Social Capability

The three cross-curriculum dimensions are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia
- Sustainability

Greater detail of the content of our curriculum can be easily accessed by visiting the website www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/

PROGRAMS OCCURRING ACROSS ALL YEAR LEVELS

Teachers at St Thomas Aquinas employ a Direct and Explicit Instruction approach for the teaching of English and Mathematics. Students participate in Daily Review which supports students in moving new knowledge from their short term to long term memory. All staff are trained and conversant in Cognitive Load Theory and understand the importance of explicitly teaching small chunks of knowledge and regular review of new and prior knowledge to ensure do not forget information previously taught.

St Thomas Aquinas is beginning to introduce Core Knowledge Curriculum across Learning Areas such as History and Social Studies as a way of supporting a knowledge rich curriculum.

English

At St Thomas Aquinas, we are deeply committed to delivering on the promise of education and equipping every child with the ability to read - and read well! Learning to read is such an essential skill to not only find success in school and to thrive in society, but to also experience the joy that reading brings to life. We want every child to be successful in reading. The research that we base our teaching on is called the 'Science of Reading'.

Code Emphasis in Primary Grades

In Kindergarten to Year 2 we focus on acquiring the skills to crack the code of our alphabet to the speech sounds in English. (There are 44 speech sounds in English and 150 ways to read and spell them) Kids must first learn to decode/sound-out words before they can understand the meaning of text, therefore, we will emphasise instruction in 'cracking the code' in Kindergarten to Year 2. Explicit and systematic phonics instruction. We will have an order or continuum of phonics skills, progressing from simple to complex, which will be followed throughout the early grades. Students will progress through the continuum as they master skills. In the intermediate grades (3-4), word study will continue with more grammar and morphology (learning about word parts such as Greek and Latin roots).

Early intervention

If we see any signs that your child may be struggling with the foundational skills of reading, we will not take a 'wait and see' approach; we will immediately implement interventions and monitor their progress. The best solution to the problem of reading failure is early identification and intervention. This intervention will usually be through small-group access to the Minilit Sage Intervention program.

Phonemic awareness. This is the ability to hear and know to the individual sounds in words by listening and to identify and manipulate those sounds orally. While this skill will be emphasised in Kindergarten to Year 2, we will continue to work with students who have not acquitted this skill beyond Year 2. Students in the intermediate grades may need to practice these skills

until they have firmed up this foundation of reading. Students who have not acquired phonemic awareness by Year 3 will likely access small-group intervention access to the Macqlit program.

Decodable Readers

All early years readers are decodable readers. These are books or passages that only include words that the students can 'decode' (sound-out) according to the skills they have been taught thus far. Our students need practice with the phonics skills they are learning, and these books and passages provide that practice. So be aware that at times, your primary students may be bringing home a sheet of paper with a passage for practice rather than a book.

Assessments

Your child will not be assigned a PM reading level, such as 5, or 15, or 25 (or any level 1-30) as in the past. Students will be assessed on the Oral Reading Fluency rate for their grade level. These nationally normed one-minute assessments give us a good indication of how easy or difficult reading is for your child. From there, we will give diagnostic assessments in word reading and nonsense word reading to find out which areas in the continuum of phonics skills they need help with. Students in Years 3-6 will be given a Spelling Survey that will show which phonics patterns they are able to apply in their writing and they will also be assessed on Phonemic Awareness so we can make sure they have those crucial foundational skills. As students become proficient word readers, comprehension is a natural outcome. Comprehension will also be checked with a norm referenced assessment known as PAT Comprehension. If your child shows a weakness in any area, they will be progress monitored and given interventions to help them become stronger in their area of weakness.

Levelled Readers

Your child will not be assigned a reading level that corresponds to a number. They will work with a variety of texts. Some texts may address specific phonics needs, some may be grade level text to build knowledge that is pertinent to their grade level, some may be interest-based, some will be at a determined level for fluency practice, but they will not be confined to a certain 'level.' Kindergarten and Year One students will not bring home books with patterned sentences that are easily memorised.

Knowledge Building and Vocabulary

Research has indicated that reading comprehension is closely connected to the background knowledge we have on a topic we're reading about and by understanding the vocabulary contained in the text. St Thomas Aquinas is in the process of working with Catholic Education and an educational research group called Ochre, to develop a knowledge-building curriculum for students. Our students will have the opportunity to build a broad knowledge base of history, science, and the arts. Students have access to complex text, often read aloud by their teacher, and in the process, gain more complex vocabulary. The research tells us that building knowledge and vocabulary contributes significantly to their reading comprehension and should be taught beginning in the earliest grades.

Comprehension

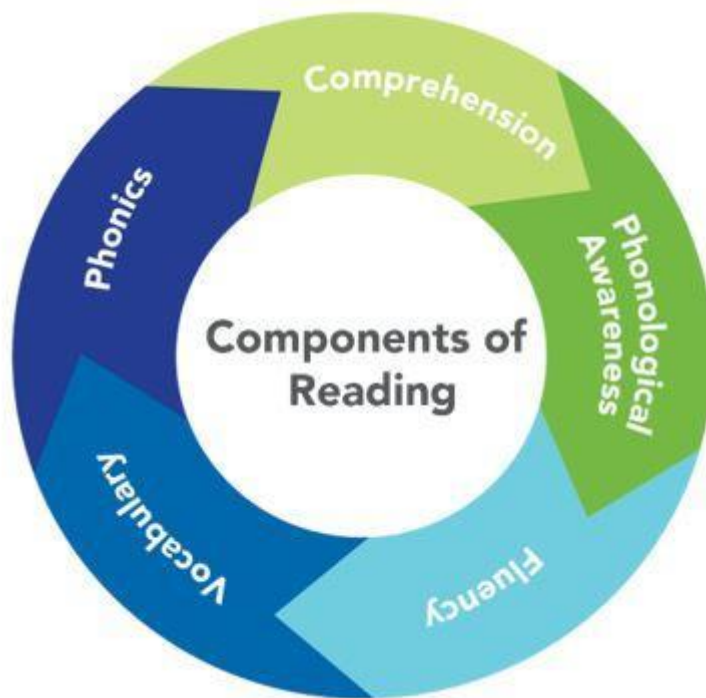
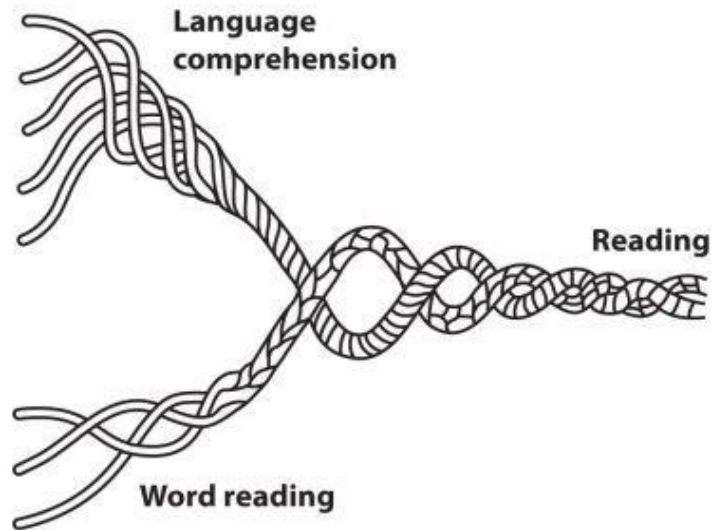
The ultimate goal of all reading instruction is for students to understand what they read. The model of 'The Simple View of Reading' demonstrates that reading comprehension occurs only when students have both Decoding/Word Recognition Skills and Language Comprehension skills. Children need the essential skills to get the words off the page as well as knowledge, vocabulary, and a good understanding of how our language works in order to comprehend what they read. We must provide instruction that will help students achieve these goals.

Simple View of Reading



Scarborough's Reading Rope

- Activating word meanings
 - Understanding sentences
 - Making inferences
 - Comprehension monitoring
 - Understanding text structure
-
- Letter-sound knowledge
 - Accurate word decoding
 - Automaticity in decoding



Programs

Programs used at St Thomas Aquinas are well researched and support the Science of Reading.

All teachers of Kindergarten to Year 2 follow the Initialit program as the main resource for teaching English. Initialit is an evidence-based whole-class literacy program providing all children with the essential core knowledge and strong foundations to become successful readers and writers. Initialit is a three-year program, covering the first three years of school.

Students in Years 3-6 participate in Spelling Mastery lessons. Spelling Mastery builds dependable spelling skills for students through a highly structured method that blends the following approaches:

- Phonemic approach - helps beginning spellers learn the relationships between spoken sounds and written letters and then apply them to spelling
- Morphemic approach - exposes advanced spellers to prefixes, bases, and suffixes
- Whole-word approach - gives spellers at all levels the meaning and root of a word and shows how the word's spelling is influenced

Students are supported to develop their vocabulary through a knowledge rich curriculum, and whole-class novels and texts.

The Writing Revolution is used from Kindergarten to Year 6 as the main resource to support writing instruction.

Mathematics

At St Thomas Aquinas we follow the Australian Curriculum Mathematics. All classes employ daily review in Mathematics to ensure that students retain and can build on existing knowledge. The school is currently working with COGLearn to support teachers in developing their practice in Daily Review and employs an Instructional Coach to work alongside teachers as they master this skill.

As with English, the Mathematics program is carefully laid out in a comprehensive scope and sequence so that students are introduced to and master simple skills and knowledge before moving onto more complex concepts.

Diverse Learning

Intervention is provided for children who have difficulty in acquiring the skills of literacy and numeracy. Our Diverse Learning team is trained in a number of intervention programs including Minilit, Macqlit and Reading Tutor. Student's literacy and numeracy is monitored and tracked using a variety of standardised tests including: DIBELS, WARP, PAT Maths, PAT Comprehension and PAT Spelling.

Chinese

The Australian Curriculum Languages is designed to enable all students to engage in learning a language in addition to English. At St Thomas Aquinas the students participate in Chinese online lessons to experience language activities through the teaching of a second language. Students from Years 3 to 6 participate in the Chinese language program.

Arts Lessons

The children in Kinder to Year 6 are provided with a variety of experiences in Visual Arts, Media Arts, drama and music by a specialist Arts teacher.

Sport and Health

A specialist teacher provides hour-long sport and health lessons for all students from K-6. This program is complemented by sport lessons run by the classroom teacher as well as specialist clinics in a range of sports including tennis and athletics.

Library

Children visit the Library on a regular basis each week for borrowing and returning books. Each child's borrowing records are kept on the computer system. The Resource Centre is opened at lunchtimes and recess for children to borrow, to sit quietly and read or share a book with a friend.

STEM, Science, and Digital and Design Technologies

At St Thomas Aquinas, we recognise that STEM skills are first developed through a thorough knowledge of each discipline and then through a practical application and integration of these knowledge and skills.

The teacher librarian and ex-Questacon program writer, conducts regular science lessons with all classes. These sessions are not isolated lessons but form part of a cooperative program plan with the class teacher.

Digital and Design Technologies is well resourced within the school. Students have access to 3D printers, Robots including Beebots, spheros and EV3s, Makeymakeys, a Green Screen and a programmable drone. Classroom teachers develop programs and teach Digital and Design Technologies, often working in consultation with the Specialist Science Teacher as part of an integrated STEM program.

Excursions

All classes at St Thomas Aquinas are involved in excursions that enrich and support classroom learning. These excursions are to local venues, with the Year 5 and Year 6 students also attending overnight camps.

Homework

St Thomas Aquinas does expect that homework is a part of the learning process but it is not considered overly demanding and excessively difficult to complete. All students from K-6 are encouraged to read each night. Occasionally children may also be asked to complete an assignment at home.

Teaching Staff

All teaching staff are qualified teachers and are employed by the Director of Catholic Education on behalf of the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and are registered with the Teacher Quality Institute.

St Thomas Aquinas teachers are supported to develop their skill in Direct Instruction and Daily Review by an Instructional Coach. St Thomas Aquinas employs two instructional coaches to work with teachers on a regular basis. Teachers also have opportunities to observe other teacher's classroom practice and to learn through peer observation.

EXTRA CURRICULA ACTIVITIES

St Thomas Aquinas prides itself in being a place where each child is able to become involved in a wide variety of educational, sporting and cultural pursuits. Interested staff and parents ensure that cultural, academic, as well as sporting activities are available to all students. Some of these activities are listed below:

- DaVinci Decathlon
- Inter-school sport competitions
- Maths Olympiad
- University of NSW Competitions Mathematics, English, Science and Digital Technology
- Sporting Gala days
- Boorowa Touch football and Netball Carnival

Year 6 Leadership

All Year 6 students are inducted as school leaders and work in one of four portfolio groups to take an active leadership role in the school. These groups are Faith and Social Justice, Environment, Hospitality and Media, and Sport. At the end of Year 5, students are invited to apply for one of these portfolio groups. A teacher works with each group to support them with the implementation of student-led projects throughout the school. Students going into Year 6 are also invited to apply for one of two School Captain positions. Students from Kindergarten to Year 6 vote on who they believe will best represent them. An Indigenous Elder is also selected from among Indigenous students in Year 6.

Sport

St Thomas Aquinas provides the students with many other opportunities to participate in sport representing the school. These sports include:

- Netball
- Swimming
- Soccer
- Athletics
- Cross Country Running

We also provide students with opportunities to learn a variety of sports through sporting clinics run by expert coaches. These include:

- AFL
- Rugby Union
- Tennis
- Athletics

Parental Involvement

Many activities at our school require parental involvement, which we see as being of great assistance to our students. At this age children love to see Mum, Dad, carers and friends doing something with them or supporting them in some of their educational adventures. To help us provide the best possible education for your children, your involvement as parents is always welcome. Help can be in many forms:

At home:

- helping children come to know and love God by taking children to Mass and celebrating the Sacraments
- ensuring that homework is completed
- working with the teachers to ensure that your child is happy at school
- ensuring that your child is enjoying reading and/or being read to each night (or regularly); and talking with your child about school (highlighting the positive aspects)

At school:

- participating in the Sacramental Program
- assisting the class during Literacy and Numeracy sessions
- assisting on excursions
- attending School Community Council meetings
- support and attendance at school functions
- offering to help in our library
- helping with the second-hand uniform pool

Visitors & Volunteers Policy

Visitors and volunteers are welcome to the school but are required to obtain and wear a 'Visitor' label during school hours whilst on school property and observe the sign in/out policy and procedures. This includes parent helpers and volunteers, visiting tradespeople, CEO staff, teachers and parents.

Volunteers are required to apply for a Working with Vulnerable Peoples Card. These forms may be obtained from the following website: http://www.ors.act.gov.au/community/working_with_vulnerable_people/forms_and_fees

The school offers guidelines to volunteers, coaches and managers for working with students in order to provide positive learning experiences.

COMMUNICATION

Newsletter

The Newsletter is emailed to families weekly. It contains information from the Principal and staff, School Community Council, ELC and a variety of notices from the wider community. Notices for the newsletter should be sent to the front office no later than 10:00am Monday morning prior to publication. This newsletter can be accessed on the school website. www.staquinas.act.edu.au or via Schoolzine (an online and mobile phone application).

Contact with the School

Parents are always welcome to visit St Thomas Aquinas to speak to the Principal, Assistant Principal, Diverse Learning Teacher or Class Teachers. It has been our experience, that when free and open communication is maintained, any perceived problems are more readily resolved.

For practical reasons it is essential that an appointment be made for all such meetings, except in an emergency. The school secretary can arrange an appointment with the Principal or Assistant Principal at a time convenient to both parties. Parents can be assured of the Principal's interest in any aspect of school life that is of concern.

Appointments to see one of the teachers should be made for out of teaching hours, which are before 9:00am or after 3:30pm, and can be done via a note, email or by contacting the teacher directly.

Formal home-school contact

Formal reports on student progress will be sent home towards the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2 each year. In addition, you will be given the opportunity to attend Parent/Teacher Interviews or 3 Way Conferences throughout the year.

Reporting to Parents

This is accomplished in the following ways:

- Early in the school year parents will be given the opportunity to meet their child's teacher and to familiarise themselves with the class routines and curriculum.
- Parent Teacher Interviews and conferences, known as 'Three Way Conversations', which involve parents, the student and the teacher, are held during the year. Written reports are provided at the end of each semester and follow the Government's A-E reporting format.
- Please feel free to approach your child's teacher regarding his/her progress. Open lines of communication assist both parents and teachers and ultimately benefit the child. Quite often a word from parents can help teachers to understand marked changes in behaviour and attitude.

Attendance at School

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Act parents are asked to train their children in the habit of regular attendance. Generally, each day's work builds upon the previous day's work and loss of time may upset the teaching/learning situation for the student and teacher. However, a child when ill, or disturbed through family trauma, does not participate well and should be kept at home to receive the care needed for recovery.

For many reasons, teachers are concerned if a child is absent from school and no explanation is received. When a child returns to class after an absence, a note of explanation, stating the day and date of the absence must be presented to the class teacher. This is a legal requirement.

The school will always endeavour to contact parents or an emergency contact in the event of illness. It is most important that all our information on your child is up to date and accurate. An information sheet is sent home at the commencement of each year to allow parents to update our records. If a change occurs during the year, a note to the office or a phone call will allow us to ensure our records remain accurate.

When families are moving on from our school community, formal notification to the Principal is required. For school records and schooling transfer requirements, this notification needs to include a forwarding address, the name and location of the child / children's new school and the date of departure. Parents are asked to please ensure that all library books and classroom books are returned and outstanding school fees are paid.

STUDENT HEALTH

IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS

In the interests of your child please ensure that the school always has up-to-date information about:

- your current address;
- your current phone contacts - home, work and at least one emergency contact;
- If medication is to be taken by your child, the school requires written permission.

Medical Information

Immunisation information: It is an ACT Government regulation that all children attending schools in the ACT be immunised. The school is obliged to formally collect from parents duly completed forms that verify immunisation. Where parents object to immunisation, a formal letter indicating this objection must be provided. In such cases, the ACT Health Department will be notified about your child's lack of immunisation. In the event of a contagious illness being reported at school, children without the appropriate vaccinations will be excluded from school. We strongly urge all families to fully immunise their school age children.

Medical service

ACT Health visits the school each year. Only Kindergarten will receive a thorough medical screening. Other children will be seen on request. After consultation with parents any child with a specific need is referred to appropriate specialist services.

Accidents and Illness

Every care is taken to make sure that children are attended to in the event of an accident. Minor accidents, cuts and bruises are treated by staff who are first aid trained. Any injuries are treated and the parents are contacted. Parents are also contacted where the injury is considered to be of a more serious nature. In the event that a serious accident occurs, parents are immediately contacted and, if necessary, medical attention is sought. The school will, in extreme circumstances, ring directly for an ambulance whether the parents can be contacted or not. Parents should note: it is Ambulance Service policy to provide free transportation for any accident occurring on the school grounds or on a school excursion within the ACT. Any child who becomes ill at school is taken to the First Aid room and parents or emergency contacts will be called. This highlights the importance of having current contact details at the front office.

Anaphylaxis

The school aims to work with parents with the management of those children who have a severe form of allergic reaction to certain triggers, which is life threatening if not treated immediately.

The school understands that it must take reasonable steps to promote the health of students at risk of severe allergic reactions including arranging emergency care when it is needed.

The school can help by assisting the student in the avoidance of allergens and ensuring that an emergency response plan is in place for all activities. The early recognition of the signs and symptoms may save lives by allowing the earlier administration of first aid and contact of the appropriate emergency services. Planning to assist staff to deal with unexpected situations forms part of the responsibility of the school and parents of children who have severe allergic reactions.

All staff have a duty of care. Staff are to exercise common sense which dictates that in an emergency, while they should not act beyond their capabilities and qualifications, they are expected to do what they can to take appropriate action.

Nut Free Policy

Nuts have been identified as a major trigger for an allergic reaction by students in our St Thomas Aquinas community. Your support in refraining from sending peanut butter and nut products to school in lunches and snacks is sought. The staff will talk to the children and it is most important that you also impress upon your child the importance of following this request. All children need to be aware that they must only eat from their own lunchbox.

Illness Exclusion Table

The following illnesses are common in early childhood. This is a guide to the time which the child should be away from school should an illness occur.

Chicken Pox / Mumps:	Exclude until fully recovered. Contacts not excluded.
Measles:	Should be excluded for at least 7 days from the appearance of rash or until a medical certificate of recovery is produced. Contacts not excluded.
Ring Worm:	Re-admit when appropriate treatment has commenced, supported by a medical certificate upon request. Close contacts should be inspected regularly.
Conjunctivitis:	Until the discharge from eyes has ceased.
Impetigo:	Until sores have fully healed. The child may be allowed to return, provided appropriate treatment is being applied and sores on exposed surfaces such as scalp, face, hands or legs are properly covered with dressings.
Head Lice:	Exclude until hair is completely cleaned; neither eggs nor lice being present.
Diarrhoea:	Exclude until diarrhoea ceases.
Rubella:	Exclude until recovered or for at least 4 days after the appearance of the rash.
Whooping Cough:	Exclude for at least 5 days after starting antibiotic treatment.
Hepatitis A:	Exclude for at least 7 days after the onset of jaundice and a certificate is furnished by a medical practitioner stating that the person is no longer infectious
Vomiting:	Exclude for 24 hours after child has last vomited.

Accident Insurance

Catholic Churches Insurances is now providing students' personal accident and disability cover for all primary school children. This will cover medical expenses up to \$5,000 (provided no Medicare benefit is payable for the service or treatment), emergency transport up to \$1,000, home tuition if the child is unable to attend school for more than 5 days, up to \$1,000, school fee relief in the event of the accidental death of the person who pays the child's school fees, and monetary amounts for death and certain bodily injuries.

COUNSELLOR

Marymead and the Catholic Education Office provide the school with a Counsellor for 5 days per fortnight. The Counsellor will be available to parents, students and teachers who seek advice or help for the emotional, social and educational well-being of students. Parents may request an interview with the Counsellor, whilst teachers may at times refer students to the Counsellor with parent permission. Parents are contacted before their child sees the Counsellor and must give permission. This service is a positive aspect of the school community. Before contact with the Counsellor can be arranged, parents are requested to contact the office for a referral to be returned to the Principal.

STUDENT WELFARE AND SCHOOL WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR PROGRAM

Our School Pastoral Program aims at keeping students and teachers safe so they can learn and teach in a safe, supportive environment. The main objective is that students will recognise their responsibility both for their own behaviour and for the natural and logical consequences that flow from it, empowering them to become responsible community members.

To achieve this we endeavour to create an environment within the classroom that is warm, encouraging and consistent. At the beginning of every year, every class participates in an orientation program where they are explicitly taught and practise expected classroom rules and procedures. Students are again reminded of these expectations at the beginning of each term.

Most minor incidents are dealt with by the classroom teacher usually through a rule reminder, a short detention or brief removal to another class. Where a student continues to display inappropriate behaviour or the behaviour is more serious, they are referred to a member of the school's executive. Instances of violence or continual inappropriate behaviour or disruption is referred to the Principal.

In all instances, students are encouraged to restore the harm when an incident occurs and to reflect on occasions where they were able to make a positive choice.

St Thomas Aquinas is part of Harvard University's Caring Schools Network. Through this network, the school is supported with training and resources to support the teaching of kindness throughout the school. Teachers include lessons on empathy, tolerance and acceptance of diversity as part of their Health programs. More information about the Caring School's Network can be found at <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/research-initiatives/caring-schools-network>

SCHOOL HOURS

Supervision

Supervision by teachers is provided daily from 8:30am until 3:20pm.

School lessons commence at 8:50am when the students are required to line up for assembly. Students arriving at school after 8:50am must report first to the front office with their parent /carer where they are required to be signed in through Compass.

Lunch is at 11:00am – 11:40am. Afternoon Tea is at 1:20pm – 1:50pm. A 10 minute supervised eating time occurs at the start of lunch and of afternoon tea. Children are dismissed at 3:00pm.

For legal and safety reasons, children should not be on the school premises before 8:30 am and must depart the school grounds as soon as they are released from school, unless they are attending our Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) facility, ELC or are involved in sports training.

No child is permitted to leave the school grounds during school hours. Parents wishing to collect their child early must first report to the front office where they will sign the child out via Compass.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)

Commonly known as OSH Club. Their motto is ‘Happy Children Learning’. Friendly and qualified staff provide stimulating craft and sport activities in an atmosphere that is relaxed and homely.

The program is great value and most families get a childcare benefit discount (CCB) on fees and the 50% Tax Rebate as it’s not means tested. All food is healthy, fresh and nutritious.

Operation Times – Before School Care 7.00 – 8.50am; - After School Care: 3.00pm-6.00pm.

School holiday programs are also available and will be advertised via the school newsletter.

Wet Weather

In the event of rain, morning assembly is not held. Children go straight to their classrooms in wet weather. In the afternoon students who are collected via drive through will be taken to the undercover area and called when their parent or carer arrives. Teachers will escort children who will be attending OSHClub and bus children to the appropriate areas.

School Buses

Timetables for Action bus services and other route information are available from ACTION offices. There is no specific school bus for students at STA. Whilst the school has no direct control over the services, parents may advise the school of any problems and support will be given using the assistance of ACTION bus supervisors.

If there is to be any variation from normal travel arrangements for your child, please send a note, not a verbal message. This is most important with small children. Bus routes are normally published in the Canberra Times the week before school resumes or on ACTION website.

The Murrumbateman Bus collects children each afternoon at approximately 3.30pm.

SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

School Community Council (SCC)

The School Community Council exists to support the school in the following ways:

- Provide a meeting ground for parents and friends;
- Provide an educational forum for parents;
- Provide the opportunity for the Principal to report on the school’s activities;
- Organise social activities for the parent body;
- Conduct fundraising.

Meetings are held regularly in the Staffroom (refer to the School Calendar).

Canteen

The school uses the local Subway outlet to provide an alternative to home made lunches. This service is available Monday to Friday each week. Envelopes with correct cash payment should be completed the day before and left in the box at the front office. Orders may also be made online directly to Subway.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Enrolment at St Thomas Aquinas indicates that each child will abide strictly with our school's dress code. This code dictates that each child will wear full and correct uniform to school each day. The only exceptions to this are when the school holds an "out of uniform" day for fundraising purposes. Parents are asked to strongly support this rule, making sure that shoes are of the correct type and kept clean.

Children are generally expected to wear their full school uniform three days per week and their sports uniform two days per week. This may be amended according to a particular year's programming and timetabling needs for sport and gymnastics. The Physical Education program requires some sporting activity every day so older children should bring their gym shoes in their school bags and wear the correct shoes to and from school. At times children are asked to bring in football boots, mouth guards etc for sports teams. These should be kept in separate bags.

All items of uniform **MUST** be marked clearly with your child's name.

Summer Uniform to be worn in Term 1 & Term 4

Boys Powder blue polo shirt with school logo and navy shorts.

Girls Blue checked dress or navy dress shorts and sky blue polo shirt with school logo.

Winter Uniform to be worn in Term 2 & Term 3

Boys Long sleeve powder blue shirt or powder blue skivvy, or long sleeve powder blue polo shirt with school logo and long navy trousers.

Girls Long sleeve powder blue blouse with Peter Pan collar or powder blue polo neck skivvy navy slacks or Navy dress Clearon fabric 9046.

Items common to both Uniforms:

Maroon jumper with school logo or Maroon polar fleece with school logo.

Maroon sloppy joe with school logo.

Black leather school shoes (summer & winter) - not sport shoes.

White ankle height socks.

Navy bucket Hat (with school name printed) as recommended by Cancer Society to be worn by all students when out of the building at all times. Hats may be purchased from the Front Office for \$15 in 2022. A navy polar fleece beanie may be worn by students in June and July in accordance with the Sun Smart Policy.

Sports Uniform:

Summer Both boys and girls will wear the same sport uniform. Navy blue shorts (optional navy skorts skirts for girls) and navy/sky polo knit shirt with school logo.

Gym shoes for sports days only.

Winter Navy tracksuit with navy/sky polo knit shirt with school logo. Gym shoes for sports days only.

PRESCHOOL Uniform

Both boys and girls wear the same sky blue and navy polo shirt year round. They also have a navy bucket hat with the school logo.

Makeup

Makeup and fingernail polish are not part of the school uniform and are not to be worn.

Hair Ties

Hair ties should be in keeping with the school colours.

Jewellery

The school policy is that the only jewellery students are allowed to wear to school are watches, stud or sleeper earrings to be worn in a maximum of 2 holes per earlobe. Wearing of other jewellery including rubber wrist bands and friendship bands can become a safety issue.

Coats/ Scarfs

Children are permitted to wear any coat or scarf in the colder months. We do not have a school specific coat or scarf. We ask that children only wear these outside and remove them once they are inside the school building.

Uniforms can be purchased from MacDonald's School Wear located in Jamison. This supplier will only sell the correct uniform as they have all been notified of our current school uniform requirements.

SCHOOL FINANCES

The school draws its finances from various sources. It is important that parents understand the need to pay fees in a Catholic school. Traditionally Australian Catholic schools have been built and operated with money provided by the parents whose children are enrolled in the schools. The Federal and the ACT governments contribute to the economic viability of our schools, but we still rely heavily on school fees collected from parents to ensure a level of staffing and resources comparable with the government schools. Additional funds need to be raised through the School Community Council to ensure that our school is appropriately resourced.

Fees

The Catholic Education Commission sets school Tuition and Building Fund fees for all ACT Catholic Schools annually. As well as these payments, the St Thomas Aquinas SCC sets a School Services Levy which covers Operations, Excursion/Performances, ICT, Maintenance, Art/Craft, Bookpack and Fundraising fees. These payments are part of the process of setting the annual school budget.

The Operations fee refers to the costs associated with running the school itself. These include cleaning, groundsman, electricity, phone, mowing, waste disposal, loan repayments, administration costs, office stationery, etc.

Excursion/Performance Fee covers all excursions, special school activities, Book Week guests, visiting performers, and costs of St Thomas Aquinas athletics, swimming and cross country carnivals.

Bookpack fees refer to all stationery, text materials, classroom paper and sundry items purchased for the children and the classes.

The Fundraising Levy is an alternative to running lots of different Fundraising activities throughout the year. It means the school can focus on our Annual Fete as the main fundraising income source and families then also contribute a small amount each term to support the SCC related funding of school resources eg playground equipment, landscaping etc.

Payment of Fees

Fees may be paid annually, by term, month, fortnight or weekly. Credit Card, Direct Debit, Direct Credit and Bpay arrangements are an ideal way to make regular payments. Please contact the school early in Term 1 to discuss your fee situation if you wish to pay by instalments.

A schedule of school fees is provided by request from the school office or is available on our website. It is the policy of the Catholic Education Office that no child will be denied a Catholic School education due to the inability of parents to pay school fees.

2023 School Fees

School fees for 2023 have not yet been determined by the SCC, however, they will generally increase in line with the CPI Index, usually between 3% and 5%. The fees for 2022 detailed below can be used as a guide.

The following tables show the school fees payable in 2022 for families with one to three children. (Fourth and subsequent children are not charged any fees other than the stationery component and camp fees where applicable.)

The overall fees paid by the parents are actually split into two parts – tuition fees and building fund contributions, which are paid to the Catholic Education Office, and operating charges that are retained by the school to meet its running costs.

Book Packs (including software licence fees) are now included in the fees and apportioned over the four terms as part of the school services levy. These are provided to families at cost price. Stationery costs for 2022 are \$132 per child from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Contributions to the **Canberra Catholic Schools Building Fund (CCSBF)** are voluntary for 2022 and are tax deductible. The level of contribution for 2022 is \$188 per family per term.

The Catholic Education Office has recommended a 3% increase to the level of **local levies as a reasonable guide** for 2022. The Catholic Education Commission has recommended a 20% discount to tuition fees for the first child at a catholic systemic primary school where there is a sibling in an Archdiocesan Secondary College.

The total cost to families per term is summarised below:

	First Child	Second Child	Third Child
Money paid to the Catholic Education Office			

Tuition	\$449 (\$359)*	\$135	\$90
Total	\$449	\$584 (\$494)*	\$630 (584)*

Money retained at St Thomas Aquinas to run the school

School Services Levy Fee Total	\$395	\$268	\$226
Sub Total Fees	\$844 (754)*	\$1247 (1157)*	\$1519 (1473)*
Catholic Church School Building Fund (Voluntary and Tax Deductible)	\$188	\$188	\$188
Total Term Fees payable for families	\$1032 (\$754)*	\$1435 (\$1157)*	\$1707 (\$1473)*

Students in Year 5 and Year 6 will also have the annual school camp added to their fees in Term 1 Only. In 2022 this will be \$450 for Year 5 and Year 6.

** Please note that the asterisked fees in brackets show the discounted rate (20%) for the eldest child where a sibling attends an Archdiocesan Secondary College. The Catholic Church School Building Fund is not paid at Primary school in this instance as it will be paid at the Secondary School.*