

Annual School Report 2023 School Year

St Nicholas Primary School, Tamworth



143-149 Carthage Street
Tamworth NSW 2340

Phone 02 6766 1462

Web <https://stnicholastamworth.catholic.edu.au>

Principal
John Clery

About this report

St Nicholas Primary School is registered by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and managed by the Diocese of Armidale Catholic Schools Office (CSO), as the 'approved authority' for the Registration System formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act 1990.

The Annual Report provides the school community with fair, reliable and objective information about school performance measures and policies, as determined by the Minister for Education.

The report outlines to the school community information about initiatives and developments of major interest and importance and the achievements arising from the implementation of the school Annual Improvement Plan.

The report demonstrates accountability to the Federal and State Government regulatory bodies, the parish and school community and the CSO. This report, approved by the CSO, monitors school processes to ensure compliance with all NESA requirements for Registration.

This report complements, and is supplementary to, school newsletters and other regular communications. It is available on both school and CSO websites by 30 June 2024 following its submission to NESA.

The contents of this report may be tabled for discussion at various parent forums, including the School Advisory Council meetings and all information is public.

Further information about the school or this report may be obtained by contacting the school on 02 6766 1462 or by visiting the school's [website](#).



1.0 Messages

1.1 Principal's Message

There were many people who assisted in the development of the school as a Catholic learning community. In particular, special thanks are extended to the parent body and the school staff for all their generous efforts. St Nicholas Primary School is indeed blessed to have such dedicated and enthusiastic people supporting the school.

We live in a very complex world. Social media, lockdowns, global warming, the dark web, access to housing, both parents working, and vaping are extra complexities today's students are required to navigate on their path to adulthood.

These added obstacles for children have seen a shift in societal expectations with regard to the education sector. From traditionally focusing on reading, writing and arithmetic, modern day society now expects schools to educate our youth on current issues. People are vaping; schools need to teach students the dangers of vaping!

Society's expectation of schools taking on more social concerns is seen by many as education keeping up to date with the modern world. Yes, we do need students to be safe and the education sector has a role to play in educating and supporting students through these modern day issues. However, society needs to understand every addition to the school curriculum leads to potentially diluting our pillars, foundations and fundamentals.

The pillars of reading, writing and arithmetic, versus modern day complexities, is a tension every educational leader must grasp. While acknowledging this daily balance, educators will not be in a position to support students with today's complexities if they are not highly competent in literacy and numeracy.

St Nicholas Primary School is one of 24 schools in the Armidale Catholic Schools System, a true system of schools where school improvement is based on a common language and shared practices and beliefs. A system of schools that understands the tensions of educating a child in 2023, and we set the children up for success through literacy and numeracy, under an umbrella of Catholic Principles and Values.

St Nicholas Primary School is committed to the System's vision; "Literate and numerate students with a hope-filled future". This vision clearly articulates our commitment to literacy and numeracy, and makes us accountable for all Key Learning Areas and the modern day needs of students.

The system's vision is why St Nicholas is unapologetic with regard to the emphasis placed on reading. An emphasis which has led to a three-year transformation of our learning and teaching of reading. Learning and teaching is now both rigorous and sophisticated. Learning and teaching has significantly improved students' reading outcomes. Learning and teaching of which the school community should be incredibly proud.

At a time when students' literacy and numeracy outcomes are dropping across the State and Nation, St Nicholas and the Armidale System of Schools are dramatically bucking the trend. For example, the Diocese of Armidale's Year 3 students' average reading score has increased in six of the last seven NAPLAN assessments, culminating in a record high in 2023.

St Nicholas Primary School has certainly played its part in this extraordinary story of success. As the largest primary school in the Armidale System of Schools, we account for over 15% of the diocesan Year 3 students and this performance significantly impacts the system's results. St Nicholas Year 3 average, being higher than diocese averages and every state and territory average in Australia, helped push the system to this record high.

This year saw St Nicholas staff continue with the commitment to embed the same rigor and sophistication of learning and teaching reading into writing and mathematics.

St Nicholas students are being provided with the foundational skills of a quality education from any century. We are determined to provide students, every day, with the very best learning and teaching



of literacy and numeracy These foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, where we encompass Catholic Principles and Values, enable us to support students in this modern day world.

The system's vision is certainly alive and well at St Nicholas. We are producing literate and numerate students with a hope-filled future!

John Clery
Principal

1.2 A Parent Message

It is once again a pleasure to write on behalf of St Nicholas parents when reporting on the school year. The St Nicholas School community attributes a lot of success to school staff and parents understanding the importance of a quality partnership.

To support children to reach their vast potential, both the school and parents are committed to working together. Each party collaborated where voices are not only encouraged, but listened to and respected.

The Parent Teachers and Friend led and coordinated significant school events which provided connection opportunities and promoted a wonderful sense of school community. March's Colour Run was a highlight in bringing the school community together in a time of joy. The school community's response to the tragic death of three students in an aviation accident, showed how we can support each other in times of need.

The School Advisory Council supported the Principal and parish priest in offering advice and support to the strategic direction of the school. It was particularly pleasing to play a role in the development of our students' numeracy, with teachers' mathematical pedagogy now displaying greater rigour and sophistication.

On behalf of the parent community, I thank the teachers and staff for their professionalism and dedication towards St Nicholas students throughout the year.

Michael Mulligan
Chair
School Advisory Council

2.0 This Catholic School

2.1 The School Community

St Nicholas Primary School is located in Tamworth and is part of the St Nicholas Parish which serves the communities of Tamworth and district, from which the school families are drawn.

Last year the school celebrated 84 years of Catholic education.

The parish priest, Fr Chris Onuekwusi, is involved in the life of the school.

2.2 Catholic Life and Religious Education

St Nicholas Primary School follows the Armidale Diocesan Religious Education Curriculum and uses the student text *To Know, Worship and Love*, as authorised by the Bishop of Armidale, Michael Kennedy.

The school continued to incorporate the Catholic Principles and Values statements into the programs for All Key Learning Areas. The parish priest, or assistant priest, visited the school on a weekly basis



where reconciliation was administered to Years 3-6 and they had the opportunity to spend time in all classrooms engaging with the students.

Throughout the year, the sacramental programs of penance, first Holy Communion and confirmation were offered and delivered to students in Years 3-6. Parents and other family members participated through meetings and home programs. The sacrament of confirmation was supported with a retreat.

With the support of the parish, the school celebrated feast days and special events.

Daily prayer continued for staff, students and parents throughout the year. Weekly meetings, staff meetings, termly School Advisory Council meetings, and Parents, Teachers and Friends meetings began with prayer. Prayer was included in each edition of the school's newsletter.

Students in Year 6 in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Armidale undertake the Diocesan Religious Education (RE) Test annually. The test consists of 30 multiple-choice questions.

Results of the test are analysed by teachers and are used to inform teaching and learning in Religious Education.

Our School's average result (as a mark out of 30)	
Year 6	28

2.3 School Enrolment

St Nicholas Primary School caters for children from Years K to 6. The following table indicates the student enrolment characteristics:

	Year K	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	TOTAL 2023	TOTAL 2022
Male	45	45	43	44	47	44	42	310	310
Female	32	38	47	38	38	41	43	277	283
Totals	77	83	90	82	85	85	85	587	593

2.4 Student Attendance

In order for students to reach their full potential it is important that they attend school regularly. Whilst it is the parents' legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly, staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor attendance each day. The class roll is marked every day and rolls are checked each week by the Principal or their delegate. The school uses the attendance coding system adopted in all NSW schools. Unexplained absences are followed up promptly by staff. Parents are requested to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence by means such as a written note, telephone call, SMS message or email to the school, preferably on the first day of absence and certainly within seven days. The Principal is made aware of sustained student absences or absences reflecting a pattern. In these situations, the Principal or delegated staff member contacts the parent/guardian. Parents are encouraged to arrange medical and other necessary appointments outside school hours. Prolonged periods of absence occur from time-to-time for various reasons. In these cases, students and their parents meet with the Principal to discuss the leave request.

The average student attendance rate for the school during 2023 is shown in the following table.



	Year K	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	All Years
Average Student Attendance Rates	92.0%	92.0%	91.0%	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%	90.0%	91.6%

Managing Student non-attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. The school, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

School staff, under the Principal's leadership, support the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- monitoring engagement of individual students in their learning and identifying strategies to enhance engagement.
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance.
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance.
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

The Principal is responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by ensuring that:

- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented.
- intervention strategies for students with unsatisfactory attendance may include academic case management, social case management, referral to counselling and parent/ carer involvement.
- the Director of Catholic Schools or designated Catholic Schools Office Armidale officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom previous strategies have failed to restore regular attendance.

When the Catholic Schools Office Armidale is notified of a student for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and previous strategies have failed, the Principal and the System Performance Leader will convene a meeting with the family, the student, and other agencies if required, to develop a Return to School Plan.

2.5 Staff Profile and Teacher Standards

Teacher Qualifications / Staff Profile		Number of Teachers
1.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Provisional or Conditional level.	2
2.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Proficient level.	40
3.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Highly Accomplished level.	0
4.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Lead level.	0



Teacher Qualifications / Staff Profile		Number of Teachers
5.	Teachers with recognised qualifications to teach Religious Education.	35
6.	Number of staff identifying as Indigenous employed at the school.	1
7.	Total number of non-teaching staff employed at the school.	32

2.6 Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility

The school ensures that at every available formal and informal opportunity the values of respect and responsibility are promoted. We want every student to understand and appreciate that they are part of both the school and the local community. The school models and teaches students about respect and responsibility in a number of ways:

St Nicholas promotes respect and responsibility by focusing on Catholic Principles and Values. This is particularly evident through the 'Living Well, Learning Well' Initiative, ensuring students are taught, encouraged and reminded on a regular basis to display behaviour that is polite and courteous.

A member of the St Nicholas community commits to:

- Being safe
- Being valued, respected and cared for
- Being a learner

These three creeds are taught and modelled each day by teachers and students.

Good manners are regarded as showing respect for other people, but it also shows respect for good standards and behaviour. The embedded "Manners Matter " program is therefore linked to the Living Well Learning Well standard of "Being valued, respected and cared for".

An extensive student leadership program is in place which seeks to support students to develop their skills and sense of responsibility.

2.7 Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction

The opinions and ideas of parents, students and teachers are valued and sought. Their suggestions are incorporated into planning for and achieving improved outcomes for students. This year, the school used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the school from parents, students and teachers.

Parent Satisfaction

The Catholic Schools Office commissioned a Brisbane based company, Survey My School to conduct parent, staff and student surveys of the St Nicholas School Community. Areas surveyed included: School Leadership, School Resources and Facilities, Catholic Ethos and Identity, Teaching/Learning and School Improvement Processes. The results are based on a 3 point scale: 2-3 An excellent outcome, 1-2 A fair to good score, 0-1 A poor result and significant issues need to be addressed.

Of the 400 parents, 154 completed the survey (38% completion rate is considered good). In all areas of the survey parents rated the school in the 2-3 point scale range which was very pleasing. The highest commendations (2.5 or above) from our parent community were for:

- Overall, I am satisfied with the education our child/ren receive at this school



- The school is a safe place for my child
- The school communicates clearly that it has high expectations for student attendance, engagement and outcomes
- I would recommend this school to others
- I am happy with the school's facilities
- This school is well maintained e.g. clean, buildings painted etc
- I can make contact with my child's teacher or other staff easily

Parents were given the option to expand on their commendations and express concerns through a written response. This data is important in helping the school plan for the following year as well as addressing pressing concerns as soon as possible.

Student Satisfaction

Invitations containing a link to the on-line survey instrument were sent to all students in Year 4 to 6. Of the 255 students, 245 completed the survey (96% completion rate is considered excellent). In all areas of the survey, but "The homework we do helps me learn" (1.2: the school follows a no homework policy) and "I feel accepted by other students at this school" (1.9), students rated the school in the 2-3 point scale range, which was very pleasing. The highest commendations (2.5 or above) from our student community were for:

- I would recommend this school to others
- My teachers care about me
- All of my teachers encourage me to do my best
- The school Principal and other leaders in the school are approachable
- My teachers care about me
- My teachers tell us what we are learning and why
- My teacher suggests ways to improve my learning
- I receive feedback from my teacher to improve my learning
- I regularly use technology at my school
- My school encourages me to be a good community member
- Religious Education is taught well at the school
- I am encouraged to care for others

Students were given the option to expand on their commendations and express concerns, through a written response. This data is important in helping the school plan for the following year as well as addressing pressing concerns as soon as possible.

Staff Satisfaction

Invitations containing a link to the on-line survey instrument were sent to all staff. Of the 80 staff, 56 completed the survey (68% completion rate is considered excellent). In all areas of the survey, staff rated the school in the 2-3 point scale range which was very pleasing. The highest commendations (2.5 or above) from our staff community were for:

- I get a lot of satisfaction from working in this school
- I would recommend this school to others



- I have the resources I need to do my job
- Communication between the staff and school leadership is open
- School leaders at this school know me as a person and support my wellbeing
- My school encourages a climate conducive to staff professional learning and improvement in practice
- Collaborative planning processes in this school are effective
- Access to professional learning opportunities helps me perform my role well
- I am provided with opportunities to improve my teaching practice
- I participate in professional learning conversations
- There are clear expectations concerning the use of effective teaching strategies throughout the school
- This school celebrates student achievements
- Parent/teacher conferences are helpful at this school
- The school communicates clearly that it has high expectations for student attendance, engagement and outcomes
- The Pastoral Care policy and behaviour management processes are known and followed consistently
- Assessment is used to inform teaching and learning in an explicit way across the school
- There is an explicit school-wide emphasis on differentiating learning within each classroom
- The school's improvement agenda is clearly expressed and referred to often
- The school has explicit, clearly communicated school-wide targets for improvement
- The school promotes and sets targets for improving student outcomes
- The use of data to improve student learning is a strong and consistent feature of practice across the school

Staff were given the option to expand on their commendations and express concerns, through a written response. This data is important in helping the school plan for the following year as well as addressing pressing concerns as soon as possible.

3.0 Teaching and Learning

3.1 School Curriculum

The school provides an educational program based on and taught in accordance with the NESA syllabuses for Primary Education. The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. In addition, the school implements the curriculum requirements of the Catholic Schools Office Armidale.

Religious Education in Catholic schools is a mandatory KLA included in the curriculum for students in each year group. St Nicholas Primary School is committed to providing a quality education that meets the needs of all students.

St Nicholas Primary School is committed to providing a quality education that meets the needs of all students.



The school continued the implementation of a school culture of writing, with teachers delivering a sophisticated and rigorous pedagogical approach to students learning to read.

St Nicholas commenced the implementation of a pedagogical approach to Numeracy, based on the Systems MaST (Mathematics Specialist Teacher) Project.

3.2 Student Performance in National Testing Programs

3.2.1 NAPLAN

The school participated in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) with students in Years 3 and 5 tested. In Year 3, 85 students presented for the tests while in Year 5 there were 84 students.

In Literacy there were four elements tested. These were reading, writing, spelling and grammar and punctuation. In Numeracy, students were tested in number, patterns and algebra, measurement, data and space and geometry.

Commencing in 2023, NAPLAN test results are reported using proficiency levels.

Students' results show how they performed in each of the NAPLAN assessment areas against 4 proficiency levels:

- Exceeding: The student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
- Strong: The student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
- Developing: The student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
- Needs additional support: The student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

At St Nicholas Primary School, school and student performance are closely monitored. These tests are one means of gathering data on individual student and school achievement. School staff have participated in Catholic Schools Office information sessions on NAPLAN and Data Analysis workshops.

The following data indicates the percentage of St Nicholas Primary School students in the top two levels compared to the State percentage.

Year 3 NAPLAN Results in Literacy and Numeracy Percentage of Students in Levels Strong and Exceeding

Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar and Punctuation	Numeracy
79.0	96.0	66.0	61.0	80.0

Year 5 NAPLAN Results in Literacy and Numeracy Percentage of Students in Levels Strong and Exceeding

Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar and Punctuation	Numeracy
87.0	65.0	75.0	71.0	83.0



4.0 School Policies

4.1 Enrolment Policy

The Diocese of Armidale adheres to the policy as endorsed by the Bishops Commission for Catholic Schools 'Enrolment Policy' of Students in the Catholic Systemic Schools of the Diocese of Armidale. The Catholic Schools Office Armidale monitors the implementation of this policy. The policy has been developed in the context of government and system requirements. Children from families who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church may be considered eligible for enrolment. A pastoral approach is adopted for parents experiencing genuine difficulty with the payment of fees.

This school does not have any enrolment policies or support documents in addition to the Bishops Commission for Catholic Schools 'Enrolment Policy' for schools in the Diocese of Armidale. This policy is available on the school's [website](#) and the Armidale Catholic Schools Office [website](#).

4.2 Living Well, Learning Well - A Student Support Framework for the Diocese of Armidale

Living Well, Learning Well - A Student Support Framework for the Diocese of Armidale are policies and procedures justifying a model of student support that considers learning, wellbeing, school connection, behaviour, family-school partnerships and similar domains as inseparable and interrelated elements in the lives of children and young people and in the complex community that is the contemporary school.

The development goal of Living Well, Learning Well, and related policies was, and is, to ensure contemporary research and findings in fields of pedagogy, inclusion, behaviour support, pastoral care, bullying prevention and intervention, student voice, participation and connection to school, child and adolescent psychology, student wellbeing and staff collective efficacy are reflected in all language, policy, practice and protocols of the system and schools. It supports a whole-system ecological approach to understanding and acting on the complexity of factors that interact to shape and form the lives of children and young people.

At the heart of Living Well, Learning Well is a universal and unconditional positive regard for children and young people and a high regard for the collective capacity of a school staff team to increase learning, wellbeing and life-opportunity outcomes for children and young people. The full text of the school's Living Well, Learning Well procedures may be accessed on the school [website](#).

Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited in this school. The school does not sanction the administration of corporal punishment by school staff or non-school persons, including parents, to enforce appropriate behaviour in the school.

4.3 Student Protection Policies and Procedures

The role of the Catholic school in child protection is to protect children and young people and to promote and safeguard the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. This responsibility is shared with the whole community. Every school within the Armidale Catholic Schools Office (CSO) system of schools works within a statutory framework of cooperation with government authorities and other relevant agencies and with families in the care and protection of children and young people.

Schools have a key role to play in today's society by assisting students and families with child protection. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of students is given the highest priority in every preventative and protective action taken.

In caring for children and young people, we must act in their best interest and take all reasonable steps to ensure their protection. This involves sincere commitment to upholding children's rights to safety and their wellbeing, and taking comprehensive steps to create a child safe school organisation



and culture, with shared responsibility requiring all Armidale CSO personnel to work together within a comprehensive framework to ensure action and accountability for child safety.

St Nicholas Primary School is committed to fulfilling its obligations and seeks to develop best practice to identify and address risk and harm, and to promote the wellbeing of all children and young people in Armidale CSO schools. The dignity of the human person is a central truth of the Gospel message of Jesus. In respecting the dignity of all human persons, Catholic school communities are called to ensure the welfare and safety of all of their members.

The protection of the students entrusted to our care, then, is a very serious responsibility. In taking up this responsibility along with parents, who are recognised as the primary educators and carers of their children, Catholic school communities are committed to ensuring Catholic schools have at their centre the total care of the whole student.

St Nicholas Primary School follows the guideline, policies and procedures as determined by Armidale Catholic Schools Office who provides policy, procedures, forms and links to other resources relating to child protection. These resources have been developed to guide and assist staff and to inform Catholic school communities. Further details can be accessed from the school's [website](#) which includes a further [guide for parents](#).

4.4 Complaints Handling Policy and Guide

The Diocese of Armidale has established a 'Complaints Handling Policy and Guide' which is implemented by this school. The rationale for this policy is that within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of the contemporary world. The Catholic Schools Office monitors the implementation of these policies.

No changes were made to the 'Complaints Handling Policy and Guide' this year.

The full text of the school's 'Complaints Handling Policy and Guide' may be accessed on the school's [website](#) or the administration office.

5.0 School Review and Improvement

Each year, the school develops an Annual Improvement Plan indicating the intended key improvements for student learning outcomes. The plan is drawn from the school's Strategic Improvement Plan and informed by the Catholic Schools Office Annual Improvement Plan. The school engages in an annual evidence-based evaluation of its effectiveness against these external standards in collaboration with the System Performance Leader.



Key Goals Achieved and Implemented in 2023	Key Goals for 2024
<p>GOAL 1 (LITERACY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in the Teaching and Learning of Writing, whilst refining tight reading practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedded quality Learning and Teaching pedagogy of reading has led to improved student outcomes. Greater sophistication in the learning and teaching pedagogy of writing has led to improved student outcomes. <p>GOAL 2 (NUMERACY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in the Teaching and Learning of Numeracy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater sophistication in the learning and teaching pedagogy of Numeracy (Kindergarten - Year 2) has led to improved student outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WRITING: Embedding the system agreed shared practices in the Teaching and Learning of Writing NUMERACY: Embedding the system agreed shared practices in the K-2 Teaching and Learning of Numeracy (MaST), while introducing the Systems Agreed Shared Practices in the 3-6 Teaching and Learning of Numeracy (MaST) <p>The school's Annual Improvement Plan for 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulates the focuses and desired impact. Aligns each goal with the systems' improvement agenda. Evaluates current status using the National School Improvement Tool. Outlines the specific improvement process which will lead to improvement. Identifies who is responsible for each improvement process and when it occurs. Identifies the evidence which the school can use to measure our impact.

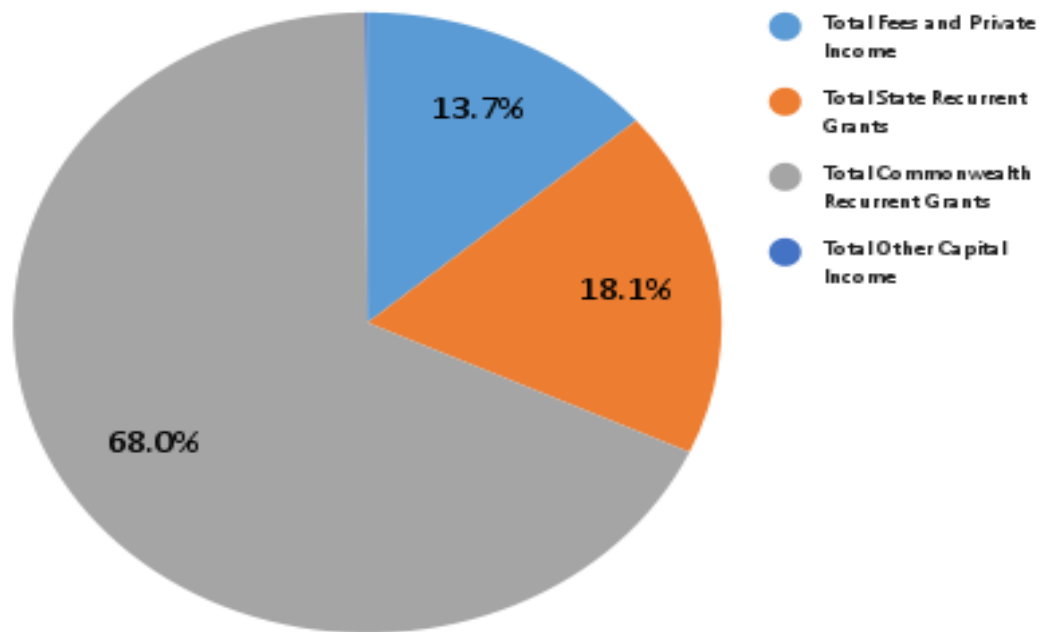
6.0 Financial Information

Catholic schools are accountable for all monies received. Each year, the Diocese of Armidale Catholic Schools Office submits to the Commonwealth Government a financial statement on behalf of the parish primary schools, K-10 schools and secondary colleges. This statement details the income and expenditure of each school. In addition, the financial accounts for each school and for the Catholic Schools Office are audited annually.

A visual summary of the income and expenditure reported to the Commonwealth Government for 2023 is presented below:



2023 Income - St Nicholas Primary School, Tamworth



2023 Expenditure - St Nicholas Primary School, Tamworth

