

# Annual School Report 2021 School Year

St Nicholas Primary School, Tamworth



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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 also 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 2022 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.

The local community will often hear me state how proud I am of St Nicholas School. Proud to be your principal. Proud to be a parent of two St Nicholas children. This is because St Nicholas Primary School has a lot to be proud of, however, like any honest organisation, at St Nicholas we also have challenges. Challenges which will be opportunities for learning and growth in 2022 where we will once again commit to being even better than we are today.

In this report I highlight six areas the school community can be proud of:

#### **The students**

At St Nicholas we have great students. They are and always will be the most important and best part of the school. Every one of our students is a complex young person who is learning their way in a challenging world. In 2021, more than ever we needed to support our students with a guiding hand and loving heart.

#### **The Staff**

The staff have a universal and unconditional positive regard for children. They have a commitment to supportive relationships, student-centred learning, where they provide an inclusive, safe environment. St Nicholas staff see themselves as life-long learners. As Principal of St Nicholas I place the same emphasis on adult learning, as I do on student learning. If we want children to reach their potential, we must consistently increase the capacity of already capable staff to be skilled, helpful adults in a team of skilled helpful adults. High expectations placed upon St Nicholas staff are important, for students deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. Students deserve to be given options in their future, thanks to a quality education. Students deserve to feel valued, respected and cared for.

#### **The Parent Community**

When enrolling a child at St Nicholas, parents are asked to enter a partnership with the school in which there is shared privilege and responsibility for the child's learning and education. Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. This however does not mean parents are expected to formally educate, rather:

- Love their child
- Value education
- Work in partnership with school staff

Throughout the 2021 NSW State Government Stay at Home Orders, the critical importance of the school/parent partnership was highlighted. Never before has either party been required to trust and rely on the other so heavily.

#### **Resilience**

The St Nicholas Community can certainly be proud of its resilience. Resilience is often used in conjunction with the term wellbeing and is understood as the capacity to cope, learn and thrive in the face of change, challenge or adversity. COVID-19 is just one challenge or adversity members of the school community faced in 2021—yet in so many areas we have not just coped, we have learnt and thrived. Congratulations!

#### **Faith**



While hope may not be a strategy, hope and a trust in God is sometimes all we have. At St Nicholas, we believe a quality education involves educating the whole child. While we want students to graduate with a high level of academic achievement, we also expect them to leave St Nicholas with foundations to become compassionate citizens. We should be proud of the way our Catholic principles and values guide and support our children becoming the best version of themselves. As Principal of St Nicholas I am proud to be Principal of not just a good school, but a good Catholic school.

### **Learning**

St Nicholas Primary School is a place of learning. While the wellbeing of students is paramount, we understand the greatest thing we can do for a child's wellbeing, is to provide them with a quality education. The foundation to a quality education, whether today or 100 years ago, is the ability to read confidently as soon as possible. Reading then provides access to every curriculum. Hence, throughout 2021, I have unashamedly preached that as educators, the greatest gift we can give a child is the ability to read!

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 2021 school year. St Nicholas is a school our community is proud of and part of its success can be attributed to our school staff and parents understanding the importance of a quality partnership.

If children are to reach their vast potential, both the school and parents have a responsibility to work together. Each party needs to collaborate where voices are encouraged, listened to and respected.

In 2021, COVID-19 again restricted the physical interaction accompanied by traditional Parent Teachers and Friends (PT&F) events. It did, however, not stop the PT&F playing a significant role in fundraising and ensuring all families felt a sense of connection.

The School Advisory Council supported the Principal and parish priest in offering advice and support to the strategic direction of the school. It has been particularly pleasing to play a small role in the development of the students' reading, where teachers were challenged with their pedagogy and the school budget was directed towards creating a culture of reading.

On behalf of the parent community, I thank the teachers and staff for their professionalism and dedication towards St Nicholas students during 2021.

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, from which the school families are drawn.

Last year the school celebrated 82 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 mandated by Bishop Michael Kennedy into the programs for All Key Learning Areas. The parish priest, Father Chris Onuekwusi, visited the school on a weekly basis. Father Chris administered reconciliation to Years 3-6 and spent time in all classrooms engaging with students.

Throughout the year, the sacramental programs of penance, first holy Communion and confirmation were offered and delivered to students in Year 3 and Year 6. Coronavirus restrictions affected the services, though did not prevent or affect this holy experience for the children. Parents and other family members participated through meetings and home programs. The sacrament of confirmation was supported with a retreat.

With the support of Father Chris, the school celebrated four feast days and special events. Due to the pandemic, the platform changed in 2021, though not the significance of celebration or opportunity for reflection.

Daily prayer continued for staff, students and parents throughout the year. Weekly memo meetings, staff meetings, term School Advisory Council meetings, and Parents, Teachers and Friends meetings also began with prayer. Prayer was also 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	19

## 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 2021	TOTAL 2020
<b>Male</b>	40	44	44	50	41	54	43	316	314
<b>Female</b>	46	39	39	40	48	36	34	282	280
<b>Totals</b>	86	83	83	90	89	90	77	598	594

## 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 college 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 2021 is shown in the following table.

	Year K	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	All Years
<b>Average Student Attendance Rates</b>	94.0%	94.0%	95.0%	95.0%	94.0%	93.0%	92.0%	93.9%

### **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.	1
2.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Proficient level.	42
3.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Highly Accomplished level.	0
4.	Those teachers at the NESA Teacher Accreditation Lead level.	0
5.	Teachers with recognised qualifications to teach Religious Education.	34
6.	Number of staff identifying as Indigenous employed at the school.	1
7.	Total number of non-teaching staff employed at the school.	20

## 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' Systems 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 modeled 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



Of the parents surveyed, 112 completed the survey (37% completion rate which 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 from the parent community were:

- The School is a safe place for my child
- I am happy with the school's facilities
- The school is well maintained e.g., clean, buildings painted etc
- I can make contact with my child's teacher or other staff easily
- Catholic religious identity is a high priority in the school

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**

Of the students surveyed, 240 (80% completion rate which is considered excellent) completed the survey. In all areas of the survey, students rated the school in the 2-3 point scale range which was very pleasing. The highest commendations from the 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
- My teachers tell us what we are learning and why
- 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**

Of the staff surveyed, 52 completed the survey. In all but one area of the survey (87% completion rate which is considered excellent). Staff rated the school in the 2-3 point scale range which was very pleasing. The highest commendations from our staff community were for:

- I would recommend this school to others
- The school is well maintained e.g. clean, buildings painted etc
- The school encourages a climate conducive to staff professional learning and improvement in practice
- There are clear expectations concerning the use of effective teaching strategies throughout the school
- The school communicates clearly that it has high expectations for student attendance, engagement and outcomes
- There is an explicit school-wide emphasis on differentiating learning within the 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.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, St Nicholas remote learning platform during 2021 was titled L.I.F.T-off Learning. L.I.F.T-off Learning never attempted to reciprocate the school day, rather focus on quality learning opportunities in English and Mathematics.

#### **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, 90 students presented for the tests while in Year 5 there were 89 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.

In both Year 3 and Year 5 there are six achievement bands with Band 6 being the highest level of attainment in Year 3 and Band 8 the highest in Year 5.

The Commonwealth Government has set minimum acceptable standards for reading, writing and numeracy at particular ages.

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.

The following data indicates the percentage of St Nicholas Primary School students in each band compared to the State percentage.



Year 3 NAPLAN Results in Literacy and Numeracy												
Percentage of students in Bands 1 to 6												
BAND	6		5		4		3		2		1	
	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School
<b>Reading</b>	21.5	18.9	22.0	18.9	19.1	24.4	12.8	10.0	7.8	13.3	2.6	0.0
<b>Writing</b>	20.2	13.8	37.0	36.8	23.0	35.6	9.0	11.5	4.3	1.1	1.9	0.0
<b>Spelling</b>	23.1	13.3	23.4	25.6	20.2	33.3	13.0	15.6	6.5	5.6	4.6	1.1
<b>Grammar and Punctuation</b>	22.3	16.7	24.1	27.8	19.4	28.9	10.4	11.1	6.4	3.3	4.4	2.2
<b>Numeracy</b>	13.6	7.8	22.1	26.7	27.4	31.1	18.5	14.4	9.8	14.4	2.7	1.1

Year 5 NAPLAN Results in Literacy and Numeracy												
Percentage of students in Bands 3 to 8												
BAND	8		7		6		5		4		3	
	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	School
<b>Reading</b>	15.5	10.1	24.7	34.8	27.2	32.6	18.3	18.0	7.5	2.2	3.3	1.1
<b>Writing</b>	7.5	3.4	17.0	9.1	32.6	35.2	26.9	38.6	9.7	12.5	3.2	1.1
<b>Spelling</b>	15.1	12.4	27.5	28.1	24.4	28.1	17.2	20.2	8.2	6.7	3.8	1.1
<b>Grammar and Punctuation</b>	12.9	6.7	20.6	23.6	27.1	31.5	19.7	25.8	9.2	9.0	4.5	1.1
<b>Numeracy</b>	10.2	5.6	20.9	19.1	28.8	36.0	23.6	28.1	10.0	10.1	3.1	1.1



### 3.3 Teacher Professional Learning

The ongoing professional development of each staff member is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in services, meetings and conferences and a range of professional learning programs provided by the Catholic Schools Office Armidale. The school takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking of its staff professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development.

All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

Whole staff development day professional learning activities in 2021 were:

Staff Professional Learning Activity	Date	Presenter
Structures and Processes to embedded quality learning	29/01/2021	St Nicholas Leadership Team
CPR, Anaphylaxis and Asthma: Theory and Practical	28/01/2021	Geraldine Chapman and John Clery
School and System Registration and Compliance	27/01/2021	St Nicholas Principal
Faith Development	12/07/2021	CSO Spirituality Team
2022 Targeted Learning	16/12/2021	St Nicholas Leadership Team
A balanced Reader	17/12/2021	Carmel Small (Cengage) & Claire Ryan (CSO)

### 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 Pastoral Care Policy

Jesus Christ and his teachings are the basis of all that occurs at St Nicholas Primary School. Christ's teachings, therefore, should relate to how staff develop student self-discipline. The school community believes in a holistic approach to individual development. Such an approach aims to develop the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, moral and spiritual dimensions of a child. Staff aim to bring this about in the school by promoting self-worth and by encouraging each individual to answer to one's self for one's own actions.

All people attending St Nicholas Primary School have the right to be treated:

- justly



- respectfully
- fairly

*No changes were made to the 'Pastoral Care Policy' this year.*

*The full text of the school's 'Pastoral Care Policy' may be accessed on the school's [website](#) or at the administration office.*

#### **4.3 Student Discipline Policy**

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

*No changes were made to the 'Student Discipline Policy' this year.*

*The full text of the school's 'Student Discipline Policy' may be accessed on the school's [website](#) or at the administration office.*

#### **4.4 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy**

The Catholic Schools Office, Armidale has established a 'Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy' which is implemented by the school and all systemic schools in the Diocese of Armidale. It provides a framework for school communities to work together to prevent and address issues of student bullying, in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person. The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) monitors the implementation of this policy.

*No changes were made to the 'Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy' this year.*

*The full text of the school's 'Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy' may be accessed on the school's [website](#), the administration office or on the CSO website.*

#### **4.5 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 2021	Key Goals for 2022
<p>Under the School Improvement pillar of Literacy and Pedagogy the school achieved great success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up-skilling teacher capacity (through professional dialogue and engagement with data) in the delivery of quality learning and teaching of reading</li> <li>• Embedding quality teaching and learning practices (K-6) for reading, based on the gradual release of responsibility.</li> <li>• Implementation of the School Leadership Team supporting Learning Leaps in Reading, requiring them to support guided reading for 40 minutes Monday-Thursday.</li> </ul> <p>Under the School Improvement pillar of High Functioning Teams the school achieved great success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding the CSO Non Negotiables for learning and Teaching</li> <li>• The implementation and coordination of three way learning conferences as a way of reporting student achievement and growth to parents</li> </ul>	<p>Leading the school towards a culture of reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To implement and commence the process of embedding the learning and teaching of writing to a similar level of rigor and sophistication found in reading</li> <li>• implement an action research project into the reading achievement and growth levels of boys at St Nicholas.</li> </ul>

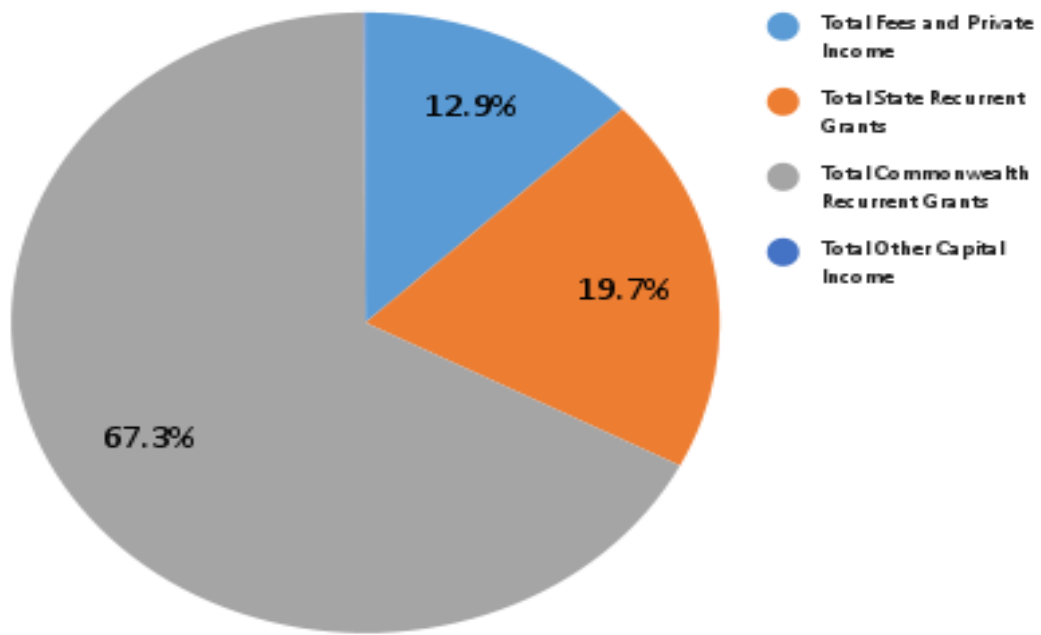
## 6.0 Financial Information

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 2021 is presented below:



### 2021 Income - St Nicholas Primary School, Tamworth



### 2021 Expenditure - St Nicholas Primary School, Tamworth

