

## Case study

### All Saints Catholic Primary School

**Founded in 1828, All Saints Catholic Primary School is the third oldest Catholic school in Australia. It is very close to a large shopping centre in Liverpool in Sydney's south west, so has limited open space. In 2010 it had 662 students. Students come from 54 cultural backgrounds and 90 per cent are from a language background other than English.**

The neighbourhood is becoming increasingly urbanised, but Liverpool City Council has a strong focus on environmental improvement in the natural areas of Georges River, Chipping Norton and Heathcote.

#### The school ethos

All Saints Catholic Primary School Liverpool is a faith community of students, staff, parents and parish. There is a strong Catholic history in the area and the motto 'Truth and Love' is reinforced in all the local Catholic schools. Teachers focus firmly on good teaching and learning and are committed to making a difference for the students. The school community has embraced the multicultural nature of the school.

The school has been transformed through sustainability activities and it now has a reputation for its environmental work. Support and leadership from the Principal drives learning for sustainability at the school and teachers with a passion for environmental education drive individual projects.

#### Getting started and governance

A quality assurance review of the school's operation (a requirement of the Sydney Archdiocese) was the catalyst for environmental action. Environmental stewardship was a key aspect of the review and the 2006 document *How effective is our Catholic School?* was used to assess the school's sustainability work. Teachers at the school reviewed themselves against the criteria and on a scale of 1-7 the initial rating in 2007 was 3, which increased in 2010 to 5.

The school's first step was to conduct an environmental audit in early 2007 to identify major strengths and areas of future focus in environmental education. The Principal, three parents and three students conducted the audit. Carbon Planet and Todae also helped with the year-long review.

All Saints created an environment plan from the audit information and priority for environmental education was built into the Annual School Plan. During the planning process the teachers developed a passion for incorporating a wide range of learning for sustainability initiatives in their classrooms.

Carbon Planet assisted with planning, and information gathered was consolidated into a staff handbook. The handbook is used to develop good practices for heating, lighting and waste. The school has focused on biodiversity through a bird survey, office purchasing guidelines and a review of how teachers incorporate learning for sustainability into the curriculum.

**"We will be successful when what are now called "environmental initiatives" becomes a normal part of everyday practice within the school."**

**Rose-Marie Hoekstra, Principal**



#### Strengths

- school ethos, governance and leadership
- focusing on curriculum organisation and teaching and learning
- accessing support and funding
- creating biodiversity in an urban area
- networks and partnerships, including a focus on parents and the home.

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## Teaching, learning, curriculum

As a result of the quality assurance review process, environmental stewardship has become a key part of the school's Kindergarten to Year 6 curriculum and classroom programs.

In 2010 each class was asked to create a SMART goal for the environment, then work out how to realise the goal. Each class project goal was then combined into a large book. They were also required to put two pieces of information about sustainability in the school newsletter.

Learning for sustainability is a key curriculum priority and is integrated in each teacher's classroom program. In an attempt to encourage individual students to take greater responsibility for environmental stewardship, students are now encouraged from a very young age to establish their 'environmental beliefs'. They record them with the teachers' assistance. Each of these beliefs becomes the launching pad for students to develop a range of individual environmental stewardship activities for which they take direct responsibility.

As a Catholic school, learning for sustainability is often linked to students' religious learning. Each class does a Religious Education unit with an environmental link. In Kindergarten to Year 6, each grade has a special theme bringing environment and creation together. The class looks at a creation theme with a focus on looking after environment so others can live.

The school found the Sustainable Schools NSW (SSNSW) website particularly helpful in the development and implementation stages of incorporating learning for sustainability into the school curriculum.

## Resource management

All Saints has received \$100,000 in grants for environmental projects. Grants have helped fund the installation of 42 solar panels and water storage facilities for watering vegetable gardens and grassed areas.

A further 26 solar panels will be installed as part of Building the Education Revolution (BER) funding. An audit revealed that the solar panels have reduced energy usage by 10 per cent, even though there is an increase in the use of information technology and equipment. Carbon credits reduced the school's carbon footprint to zero in 2010.

## School grounds

With limited grassed areas available to students, the school has been proactive in the area of grounds maintenance. The Australian government's National School Pride project contributed funds for the refurbishment of the grounds and the creation of an attractive outdoor learning area. Liverpool City Council helped students plant trees and establish outdoor learning areas to create a biodiversity space on school grounds, which has resulted in an increase in bird species and flying foxes. Students take responsibility for the maintenance of the garden shed, water storage facilities and solar panels. Tank water is used for gardens.

## Networks and partnerships

As part of the environmental audit in 2007, parents were surveyed about environmentally sustainable activities within their homes. The results were used as a basis for working more closely with the students to ensure values relating to environmental sustainability move beyond the classroom. Waste workshops for Years 2, 4 and 6 has had a positive effect on family management of waste.

Three parents were part of the initial auditing committee to identify existing environmental sustainability at the school. Parents continue to be involved in helping in classrooms and other grounds based activities.

Each week parents run a 40 minute lunchtime Green Thumb Workshop for students in Years 2 to 6. Students learn about seedling planting, organic gardens, environmental factors that impact gardens, and pest solutions.

The school has worked with commercial organisations (Carbon Planet and Todae) and Liverpool City Council to develop a School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP). The local council has donated trees for students to plant.

**'Parents have been involved from the beginning. They have been active through planning, conferences and now through Green Thumb lessons. They do need to be supported at first, but then off they go.'**

**Rose-Marie Hoekstra, Principal**

## Learning outcomes

Learning for sustainability is integrated in the curriculum through the SMART goal, heroes and religious education programs and it is embedded in a sustainability handbook. The school was also involved in the SSNSW Beyond the Fence learning communities project which enabled it to work on its environmental strengths and weaknesses with other schools in the local area. The students' capacity for understanding sustainability has grown, but it needs to be continually supported to keep the school active and focused on sustainability and environmental issues.