St. Columba’s Primary School aims to foster the total development of each individual, within a loving community, that is totally committed to supporting the Catholic faith, principles and ideals within the framework of the Mercy Values.
AGM 23rd November, 2011
Principal’s Report

“You can’t teach character and you can’t teach love.
The best you can do is help create the conditions,where those things can flourish.’

Kevin Sheedy

The words of Kevin Sheedy have a tremendous connection with the values that Jesus lived throughout his life. Although it is sometimes difficult to see the sense in what Kevin Sheedy says I believe, that in this instance, he has ‘hit the nail on the head’. As a school, we are charged with this great responsibility of creating conditions where the development of love and character can flourish.

2011 has been another time of growth for our community. This is the perfect opportunity to remember that the great partnership between school, home, parish and the wider community enables St Columba’s School to achieve great things.

St Columba's motto of ‘Faith, Wisdom and Peace’ has been the cornerstone of our school for 75 years. The development of faith is a lifelong endeavour for all. Wisdom, the free gift from the Holy Spirit is developed through growth in spiritual life, through maturity and through education and Religious experiences. Peace, Christ’s legacy to us, is fostered through striving to be at peace with God, with oneself, with family and with the community. These attitudes of our motto are lived out in our vision of fostering the total development of each child within a caring community that is committed to supporting and living the Catholic principles and ideals. Through this vision the school is able to contribute to the building of a better and happier world for future generations.

School Board & Building Program: It has, once again, been an enormously busy period in the life and times of St Columba’s School and the School Board. In 2011, the Federal Government has continued to support primary schools through the ‘Building Education Revolution’ initiative. Led by our dynamic and energetic Chairperson, Rebecca Gotti, the work of the School Board has been of the highest order this year and I thank them sincerely for their hard work and the sharing of their talents for the good of the children at our school. Their commitment to the children, parents and staff is second to none.
The School Board has:

2. Financially supported the school staff in advancing the educational opportunities of the children through the provision of improved resources.
3. Supported the Catholic Education Office’s special initiative on Quality Catholic Schooling, participating in discussions and always being keen to contribute openly.
4. Worked tirelessly in the best interests of the school community.

I sincerely thank the Australian Federal Government for their support of the ‘Building the Education Revolution’ program. Without their support, the projects we have completed would not have been possible. A significant contribution from the Federal Government has ensured St Columba’s School will continue to cater for the needs of their students in an ever changing educational environment.

On behalf of the current School Board I wish to take this opportunity to thank Chenoa Anderson who will be retiring from the School Board. Chenoa has served for many years on the School Board as an elected member and the P&F Representative. I wish Chenoa all the best for the future.

On a personal note, I wish to sincerely thank the members of the Board for the ongoing support given to me in my role as the principal. Their support and professionalism have been a constant source of ‘energy’ for me and I am extremely grateful for the genuine commitment they have displayed in continuing to build strong foundations for the future. I especially thank Rebecca Gotti for her amazing leadership in her role as the Chairperson and Paul Depiazzi, our Treasurer.

Parents & Friends Association: A special vote of thanks goes to our outstanding Parents & Friends Committee who has again worked tirelessly for our children. Leesa Vinciullo, and her committee, should be extremely proud of their achievements this year, especially with their willingness to assist the school with many functions, some of which have needed to be organised at short notice. The success of their numerous ventures has enabled the Parents & Friends to commit to the purchasing of many wonderful resources this year.

The Parents and Friends Committee members have achieved many targets in both their fundraising capacity and in building community spirit. Their support for each other and other members of the community has been inspirational. I would like to congratulate and thank all members of the Parents & Friends Committee on their work this year and strongly urge all parents to become actively involved in 2012. Special thanks go to the Executive for their leadership and hard work this year, especially the president, Leesa Vinciullo, who has been inspirational in the way she has led from the front. If you need something done yesterday, ask Leesa. Further to this, the executive would not operate effectively without the enormous support from their many committee members who have tirelessly supported all initiatives.

On behalf of the school community, I wish to thank our out-going members of the Parents and Friends, Christina Bormolini, Kim Mills and Penny Pettit, who have been very supportive throughout their terms. We encourage all parents to attend P & F meetings in 2012 and become a part of what is a vibrant and exciting team. Next year, promises to be a year of adventure and excitement as we continue to broaden the experiences of our community members.

Parish: St Columba’s Parish and the school maintain a very close relationship and we have been blessed to have Father Minh-Thuy as our parish priest! He has continued to work within our classrooms, assisting students to relate to the life of Jesus in their everyday experiences. Special thanks go to Carolyn and Julie Kelly for their on-going support of the school and for continuing to build on the strong connection between the school and parish community.

We are fortunate at St Columba’s School to have a dedicated staff who enjoy working together to ensure student educational needs and goals are met. I thank all staff members for their love of St Columba’s
School. Their support for each other, and the students, is what creates strong unity. I also thank them for their high standards of work and professionalism.

**75th Anniversary Celebrations:** It has been an extremely busy year with our 75th Anniversary Celebrations. The 75th Family fun Night was a huge success with so many families attending the event and the Mass was very special to all who community members who attended. We were blessed to have Bishop Don Sproxton, former student of St Columba’s School, celebrate mass and our first Lay Principal, Ms Phil Billington, currently the Director of Catholic Education in Sandhurst Victoria, in attendance at these special events. It was also very special occasion for Sr Irena Kasprzyk, as the new library was officially named in her honour. I would especially like to thank Caroline Brewer, Alison Martin, Fran Sweetman & Trish Dawson (75th Anniversary Committee), and Leesa Vinciullo for their contributions and the many hours spent planning and coordinating the special events. The celebrations were amazing and will be remembered for many years to come.

**Staff:** In 2011, there have been many interruptions to our school programs due to the building program. Staff members have been very supportive with the difficulties experienced at the various stages, sometimes having no access to certain areas for a period of time. This required an eternal abundance of patience. The blessing has been that, through all the limitations imposed, humour has always been at the forefront.

Despite the many challenges this year, our staff members have continued to go about their business without complaint, understanding that sometimes I have been unavailable because of the demands of the building program. As the principal, I personally wish to thank all of our amazing staff members for their patience and understanding this year, especially my Assistant Principals, Megan Dwyer and Naomi Martin, who have ‘picked up the pieces’ when I have been called away to meetings or other duties. Their leadership support and understanding, throughout the year, has been of great assistance, and has allowed me to complete the numerous tasks such a building project requires, often at short notice, ensuring minimal disruption to the day to day running of the school.

**Volunteers:** Special thanks to all our parents who have volunteered to assist within the school and with the various educational programs and services, such as Uniform Shop, canteen, excursions and classroom literacy/numeracy sessions. Also special mention and thanks go to the Pastoral Care Group members who have worked tirelessly during the year to support those families in need within our community. Without parental assistance, we would not be able to achieve our aims.

**Curriculum:** As the Principal of St Columba’s School, it gives me great pleasure to report to you all our results for 2011 and the school’s future focus. Attached to my report is a summary. Please read the document when you have a free moment.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the staff, parents and the wider community for the support given to me and the on-going development of our children at St Columba’s School. We are truly blessed to be members of such a community!

I sincerely wish all members of our school community a peaceful and joyous Christmas. May we all appreciate the significance of this time of rest and renewal as we prepare for a bright and exciting 2012. I leave you all with some words of inspiration:

‘Do not tell me the sky is the limit, when there are footsteps on the moon.’

Author Unknown

Best wishes for the remainder of 2011 and the New Year.

*Greg Martin*

Greg Martin
Principal