St Columba’s

Curriculum Matters

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Significant media attention has been given in recent days to the Commonwealth Government’s web site MySchool. The site has been promoted as one which offers parents the opportunity to search the profiles of Australian schools and pinpoint statistical and contextual information about particular schools and compare them with statistically similar schools across the country. The site has been developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which is responsible, in part, for publishing nationally comparable data on all Australian schools. Many observers, who are passionate about education, have offered comment concerning the site. One only has to turn on the television or radio, or open a newspaper to hear or read comments from political, educational and parent organisations. Regardless of the position one may hold regarding the site’s worthiness, millions of Australians in the last week have accessed MySchool. Should it interest you, may I suggest that you consider the following in investigating data relating to St Columba’s School:

- The data used is from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) which is essentially a series of tests conducted in May each year to assess students in Australian school in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. One is wise to consider this information as a part of a wider body of evidence in relation to student achievement.
- The site compares St Columba’s results with all schools, as well as more than fifty other schools across Australia which are considered ‘statistically similar schools’. Statistically similar schools have a number of factors in common such as the social and economic background of the students, their remoteness and their proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They do not, however, have a common age or length of time a student has been at school as common factors.
- The average age of students in Year 3 in Queensland is 8 years and 3 months and they have been at school for 2 years and 4 months. This is 9 months less than the national average. By Year 9, Queensland students are close to the national average in performance, despite 9 months less in school.
- Compared to all Australian schools, St Columba’s students typically perform well. Compared to Statistically Similar Schools, typically the longer students are at St Columba’s the more they close the gap and then pass the national average. This is despite being younger and having had less time at school.
- This year, for the first time, our Year 3 students who commenced their education with the introduction of Prep, will sit the tests. This will provide yet another variation to the context when their results become available later in the year.

Hopefully this additional information will assist those who do visit the website to appreciate a little more of the story behind the picture the site endeavours to paint. Know that you are welcome to come and have a chat if you have any concerns. Our Assistant Principal, Margo Carwardine, is a good point of contact.