

Rissalah College: Annual School Report for 2006

Section 1: A message from the Chairman of the Board

The Board is satisfied with the educational progress of the school and this is reflected in the Basic Skills results. We are also planning to expand the college in the future. In 2006, we purchased a school in Hampden Road, Lakemba. It has larger playgrounds and classrooms and more facilities available for expansion of computer labs, science laboratories, library etc. It is an old school which will require a lot of renovation and modifications. This school should be operational in the year 2009. We have also purchased 6 acres in the Bringelly area which is zoned as residential. This area has a very bright future and is only ten minutes away from Liverpool. God willing, we intend to establish a primary and a high school there.

Our Basic Skills Results have continued to improve steadily in the last few years as reflected in the trend in means. This year our school means for literacy and numeracy in both Years 3 and 5 were again higher than the previous year's means. This is a reflection of the quality teaching programs and interventions we have put in place. We are working to ensure this trend continues in the future.

Comparison of the 2006 results with those from previous years shows improvement in all areas. In particular, there was an increase in the percentage of students in the top two bands for each year, for both literacy and numeracy. For Year 5, it was very pleasing to have 92% of students achieve Band 4 and above in both literacy and numeracy. In Year 3, the percentage of students achieving Band 3 and above in literacy increased from 78% in 2005 to 86% in 2006.

Section 2: School performance in statewide tests and examinations

Basic Skills Test for Years 3 and 5

In 2006 all Year 3 and Year 5 students participated in the Basic Skills Test (BST) for literacy (which covered reading, language and writing) and numeracy (which covered number, measurement, space, chance and data).

In Year 3, 100% of students achieved skill bands 2 or higher in literacy compared to 92% of the state and 95% achieved skills bands 2 or higher in numeracy compared to 91% of the state. Students performed consistently across all areas of numeracy and literacy.

In Year 5, 100% of students achieved skill bands 3 or higher in literacy as compared to 94% of the state and 100% achieved skill bands 3 or higher in numeracy compared to 94% of the state. Internal comparisons among the school aspect means showed little or no difference between Reading and Language, and little or no difference between Reading and Writing. There was also little or no difference between Measurement and Data & Space and Geometry, and little or no difference between Measurement and Data and Number, Patterns & Algebra. A comparison of results between Year 3 and Year 5 scores for these students shows a significant improvement in their scores across all areas in literacy and numeracy.

The percentage of students achieving the national benchmarks for reading and numeracy has increased to 100% for Year 3. In Year 5, the percentage achieving the benchmark for numeracy has increased to 100%, however the percentage achieving the benchmark for writing has dropped slightly from 100% to 97%. See Table 1 for further information.

Table 1: BST and PWA Results – percentages who have achieved the benchmark

2006 Basic Skills Test	Year 3		Year 5	
	Percentage of students achieving the benchmark		Percentage of students achieving the benchmark	
	2006	(2005)	2006	(2005)
Aspects of Literacy	100%	(94%)	92%	(91%)
Overall Numeracy	100%	(96%)	100%	(97%)
Primary Writing Assessment	98%	(98%)	97%	(100%)

Table 2: BST and PWA Results – percentages in skill bands

2006 Basic Skills Test	Year 3				Year 5			
	Bands 2-5		Band 1		Bands 3-6		Bands 1-2	
	School	Statewide	School	Statewide	School	Statewide	School	Statewide
Overall Literacy	100%	92%	0%	8%	100%		0%	
Writing	100%	93%	0%	7%	100%		0%	
Language	98%	90%	2%	10%	100%		0%	
Reading	97%	88%	3%	12%	100%		0%	
Overall Numeracy	95%	91%	5%	9%	100%		0%	
Number	97%	87%	3%	13%	100%		0%	
Measurement & Space	95%	90%	5%	10%	94%		6%	

Table 3: 2006 Year 3 BST Results – percentages in skills bands

Skill Band	Writing	Language	Reading	Overall Literacy	Number	Measurement and Space	Overall Numeracy
Band 5	12%	10%	7%	7%	21%	10%	10%
Band 4	36%	34%	21%	36%	22%	22%	36%
Band 3	47%	43%	43%	43%	38%	38%	26%
Band 2	5%	10%	26%	14%	16%	24%	22%
Band 1	0%	2%	3%	0%	3%	5%	5%

Table 4: 2006 Year 5 BST Results – percentages in skills bands

Skill Band	Writing	Language	Reading	Overall Literacy	Number	Measurement	Space	Overall Numeracy
Band 6	24%	19%	11%	11%	41%	32%	30%	38%
Band 5	43%	38%	32%	46%	27%	35%	14%	19%
Band 4	27%	35%	38%	35%	32%	22%	27%	35%
Band 3	5%	8%	19%	8%	0%	11%	24%	8%
Band 2	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Band 1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%

Section 3: Teacher standards, professional learning, attendance and retention rates

Teacher standards

In 2006 Rissalah College had 15 mainstream teachers, 1 Special Education teacher, a Deputy Principal and 3 Arabic/Islamic Studies teachers.

The table below only includes the details of the teaching staff who are responsible for delivering the curriculum:

Category	Number of Teachers
Teachers who have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines	15
Teachers who have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications	0
Teachers who do not have qualifications as described above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context	0

Professional learning

All teachers attended the following in-services conducted at the school by consultants from the Association of Independent Schools:

- Child Protection Workshop – covering the responsibilities of teachers and the Deputy Principal, things to look out for and the procedures to follow.
- Using the ESL Scales for planning and programming for ESL students and assessing their achievements (8 sessions). The sessions addressed the teaching of ESL students, using the ESL scales, with clear links to the subject material the teachers were using in their stage of schooling. Each session began with in-class support at 1:30 pm, followed by whole-school professional development after school.

- Ants in the Apple Reading and Spelling Program – a workshop conducted by the authors of the Ants in the Apple Program, which the school purchased and implemented across Years K-6 in 2006. The workshop explained how to use the program and the teaching resources associated with it.

All teachers also attended the following in-services at the school conducted by the Sydney South West Area Health Service

- Asthma management workshop
- Workshop on dealing with students with severe allergies that could result in anaphylactic shock

The Arabic Language teachers attended a professional development workshop conducted by the Languages Consultant, Association of Independent Schools. The workshop focused on programming.

Other programs/workshops attended by teachers at an external venue:

Professional Learning Activity	Number of teachers who attended
Learning in Early Numeracy – a three day program conducted by the Association of Independent Schools. The program covered the Learning Framework, the LIEN and LIN one to one assessment interviews, and the content of the after school professional development sessions associated with the course.	2
Civics and Citizenship: Playing your Part – a one day workshop conducted by the Education and Community Relations Section of the Parliament of NSW. The course identified the civics and citizenship education and demonstrated practical strategies for effective implementation of civics and citizenship education. Participants had the opportunity to visit the Parliamentary chambers and engage with resources to support civics and citizenship education.	2

Attendance and retention rate

In 2006 the average daily staff attendance rate was 97%. The proportion of staff retained from 2005 is approximately 95%.

Section 4: Student attendance

Ninety five percent of students attended school on average each school day in 2006. This was similar to the daily attendance in 2005.

Section 5: Enrolment policies and profiles

Enrolment policy

Rissalah College is a comprehensive co-educational K-6 school providing education underpinned by Islamic values and operating within the policies of the NSW Board of Studies. All applications will be processed in order of receipt and consideration will be given to the applicant's support for the Islamic ethos, siblings already attending the school and other criteria determined by the school from time to time. All applicants are interviewed by the Deputy Principal and are given basic literacy and numeracy tests to determine the best placement for the student, and to identify any special learning needs which need to be addressed. The outcomes of the interviews are discussed with the Principal and final approval is made. Once enrolled, students are expected to support the school's ethos and comply with the school rules to maintain the enrolment.

Procedures

1. All applications should be processed within the school's enrolment policy.
2. Interview the applicant and parent/guardian and consider the applicant's responses regarding their ability and willingness to support the school's ethos.
3. Consider each applicant's educational needs. Applicants for Years 1-4 do a benchmark reading test to assess fluency and comprehension, and a text-type writing task, as well as some basic numeracy tasks. Previous school reports, Basic Skills Test results (where applicable) and the student's portfolio including work samples across all KLAs are also collected/sighted to gather as much information as possible. Applicants for Kindergarten are given an oral test to check for school readiness, and are asked to write their own name. The test covers oral language skills and basic knowledge of letters, numbers, shapes and colours.
4. Identify any strategies which need to be put into place to accommodate the applicant before a decision regarding the enrolment is made.
5. Discuss outcome with the Principal and seek endorsement.
6. Inform the applicant of the outcome.

Student population

Rissalah College is located at 291 Haldon Street, Lakemba and 2006 was our eighth year at this campus. The school commenced with an enrolment of 127 students in 1999. In 2006, 399 students were enrolled, 180 girls and 219 boys.

Rissalah College is a co-educational school, of whom 95% of students are NESB. The majority of students are of a Middle-Eastern background with a small number from Asian backgrounds. We have no students of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent. As far as possible, we strive to have gender equity in each class.

The school's formal enrolment policy is as follows:

Rissalah College Student Enrolment Policy

Application for Enrolment

Parents must complete an Enrolment Form available from the school office. All student applicants must go through an interview and assessment process conducted by the Deputy Principal followed by approval from the Principal. This process is used to determine:

- a) for Kindergarten applicants, whether they are ready for school

b) for all other applicants, whether they have the appropriate skill levels so that students can be placed in the appropriate grade.

The assessment process is also used to determine whether the student has any special learning needs that need to be catered for. Our school has a Special Education teacher who designs specific programs to suit individual children's needs and fill in any gaps in the student's knowledge and skills. Early intervention is crucial in these circumstances.

Conditions of Entry

Parents are asked to sign a form indicating their consent to abide by the school's Discipline Policy, School Rules, Code of Conduct, Uniform Policy and School Attendance Rules.

School Fees

The school fees must be paid in the first week of each term. Any extension of times must be applied for in writing.

Privacy Act

All personal information collected regarding students and parents is kept in confidential files.

Excursions and Incursions

All excursions and incursions that are linked to the curriculum must be attended by students.

School attendance

Students must attend school during the prescribed school days and times. Students who are late must get a late note from the office stating the reason for being late. Late notes are to be handed in to the class teacher. If a student is late three times he or she will be sent home on the third offence.

Absence notes: Students are required to bring in a note explaining the reason for their absence on their return to school. Notes are to be handed in to the class teacher.

Early departure from school: Parents must come to the office and sign the early departure book before picking up their child.

Students must not arrive before 8:30 am and must leave by 3:30 p.m. as there is no teacher supervision outside of these times.

Holiday leave during term: Students who take holidays during term time must obtain permission from the Deputy Principal as directed by the Principal, who will assess the student's ability to cope with the absence from school and the possible consequences to the student's educational level.

Behaviour in Buses

Students must behave appropriately whenever they ride a bus to and from school during school excursions and everyday travel to school. They must always follow the School Code of Conduct and ensure they do not put themselves and others at risk by behaving inappropriately. Refer also to the 'Travelling Safely on School Bus' policy which is part of the school's Occupational Health and Safety Policy, for everyday travel to school by bus.

Section 6: School policies for student welfare, discipline, reporting complaints and resolving grievances

Policies for Student Welfare

The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment which:

- minimises risk of harm and ensures students feel secure
- supports the physical, social, academic, spiritual and emotional development of students
- provides student welfare policies and programs that develop a sense of self-worth and foster personal development

To ensure that all aspects of the school's mission for providing for a student's welfare are implemented, the following policies and procedures are in place:

Policy	Changes in 2006	Access to full text
Occupational Health and Safety Policy - covering the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First aid • Students with medical conditions • Administering medication • Sunsmart policy • Asthma policy • Anti-bullying policy • Canteen policy • Travelling safely on the school bus • Students with special needs • Camps and excursions 	Nil	Full text in the School's website
Student Welfare and Discipline Policy	Nil	Full text in the School's website
Uniform Policy	Nil	Full text in the School's website
Internet Policy	Introduced in 2006	All students using the internet were issued with a copy of the policy.

Policies for Student Discipline

As the school is founded on Islamic traditions, the values of social behaviour as set down in the Holy Qu'ran and practised by the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) are reflected in the **Student Welfare and Discipline Policy**. These are basically respect for self, respect for one another, respect for elders, respect for the environment and obedience. The policy is based on reward and punishment with the emphasis on reward.

Schools need to be places where every student can learn and grow with confidence. Students develop best in schools where teaching and learning occur in the context of student welfare.

Rissalah College's Student Discipline Policy ensures that no student is discriminated against on the grounds of his/her disability, sex or race. The school aims to create an inclusive environment which affirms diversity and respects difference.

Rissalah College does not have corporal punishment as part of its disciplinary processes. Corporal punishment is not permitted under any circumstances.

With the rights of students comes responsibility. Rissalah College operates in an environment of

Rights- Responsibilities-Behaviour-Consequences

Students are encouraged to own their own behaviour, respect the rights of others and build workable relationships with all. The Code of Behaviour provides clear guidelines for appropriate behaviour incorporating students' views and teacher's expectations and reflecting the values of the community.

No changes were made to the school's discipline policy in 2006.

The full text of the school's discipline policy is available on the school's website www.rissalah.nsw.edu.au.

Policies for Complaints and Grievances Resolution

The school takes all complaints and grievances very seriously. The policy for dealing with complaints and grievances is as follows:

1. Complaints from parents regarding educational issues

Parents who have issues with what their child is learning in class can approach their child's class teacher first to try and resolve the issue. If the issue cannot be resolved, it is referred to the Deputy Principal.

In general, complaints regarding educational issues are dealt with by the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal discusses the complaint with the parent, investigates the issue with teachers concerned, and then develops an action plan to resolve it. This action plan is agreed to by the parent(s) and the teacher(s) concerned.

If parents are not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to pursue the matter directly with the Principal. Upon referral to the Principal, the matter is then evaluated and a decision is made.

2. Complaints regarding student behaviour

Complaints regarding student behaviour are dealt with by the Deputy Principal. Student behaviour is addressed according to the school's Discipline Policy (refer to the school's Discipline Policy).

3. Bullying at School

Complaints regarding bullying behaviour are taken very seriously and dealt with on a case-by-case basis immediately by the Deputy Principal. Refer also to the Bullying Policy which is part of the school's Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

4. General complaints from the community about the school

These complaints are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the complaint. Letters of complaint are responded to immediately, either by letter, phone or face-to-face interviews with the parties concerned. All complaints are thoroughly investigated and resolved. Any serious matters that cannot be resolved in the above manner are referred to and dealt with by the Principal. The Principal may raise the matter with the School Board if further guidance is desired.

5. Recording complaints

A written record is kept of all complaints in the form of either diary notes or copies of correspondence. This record is filed and kept for at least 3 years.

No changes were made to this policy in 2006. The full text of the above policy is provided on the school's website www.rissalah.nsw.edu.au.

Section 7: School-determined improvement targets

Achievement of priorities identified in the school's 2005 Annual Report

- The standard of teachers' programs has improved over the year and the assessment and evaluation of teaching programs and practices continues to be a focus.
- Staff development courses: In 2006 we had a range of staff development workshops that covered different areas, from student welfare to teaching/learning programs. Refer to Section 3 which details the professional learning undertaken by teachers this year.
- Students' performance in Years 3 and 5 have improved as reflected in the Basic Skills Test results.
- Students' performance in reading has shown much improvement. This is reflected in the class results, Basic Skills Test results, and the individual student records from the MULTILIT (Making Up for Lost Time in Literacy) program administered by the Special Education teacher.
- Teaching students in Years 3-6 to learn ways to assess their own work: This target has been postponed to 2007 as the focus on 2006 was on improving teachers' assessment methods and records to ensure uniformity and compliance with the changes to student reports introduced by the NSW government.
- Resources: The use of commercial textbooks was reduced and teachers developed more of their own resources. The teachers found this more useful and the teacher-developed resources were more suited to lesson outcomes and the learning needs of individual students. Also, the school purchased many new teacher resources such as class sets of books and resources for hands-on activities in maths and science.
- HSIE: A School Parliament was established and has been running successfully. This initiative will continue next year. An explanation of how the School Parliament is set up and conducted is as follows:

School Parliament

Students in year six all have the opportunity to be part of the student executive committee. Students must prepare a speech that is delivered to the rest of the school, students and teachers. The student body votes for their preferred candidate, using the preferential voting system. The teachers then have the opportunity to vote for their preferred candidate. The teachers' and students' votes have equal weight. From the votes, the following positions are elected:

- Boy and girl captain (Prime Ministers)
- Boy and girl vice captain (Deputy Prime Ministers)
- 4 boy and 4 girl prefects (Portfolio Ministers)

These students form the main body of the school parliament.

The school parliament, which is made up of all year six students, meets once a fortnight. There are four minister portfolios:

- Grounds and Environment
- Student Welfare and Safety
- Fundraising
- Sport and Leisure

Each session of parliament is open for students of other grades to come and voice their opinions. Each class in the primary school is allowed to send two representatives to speak on their behalf at the government sitting. The issues raised in each session are taken on board by the government, which has to formulate a plan of action. The issues and their subsequent action plans are raised in staff meetings for the final approval of the staff.

- PDHPE: The Islamic School Sports Competition was discontinued in 2006 due to a lack of interest from the other schools. However, the school used an external group called Kids in Action, to conduct P.E. lessons for Kindergarten to Year 6. The lessons were in accordance with the scope and sequence of teachers' programs and the Board of Studies NSW syllabus.

Improvement Targets for 2007

- Occupational Health and Safety Policies and Procedures: Policies and procedures to be reviewed and updated to ensure they are in keeping with the most current legislation and requirements.
- Computer lab facilities: Our school is very well resourced with hardware and software and continues to cater for all students in technology which is integrated in all KLAs throughout the school. In 2007 we will focus on ways to make the best use of these resources to improve students' computer skills.
- Introduction of Ants in the Apple Spelling program from Years K-6. This is a specific skill-based sequential program that focuses on teaching spelling rules explicitly. The program runs from Kindergarten to Year 6 and will provide a whole school approach to spelling which has been an area of difficulty for our students.
- Student reports: In June 2006, the new student report format initiated by the NSW Government was first trialled in our school and was further developed in December. For 2007, this report will be further refined to ensure it meets the requirements of the NSW Government. Each KLA will be graded and have an accompanying comment, and an Excel spreadsheet will be developed to make the recording of marks easier, and enable students to be ranked.
- School values program on respect and responsibility: A program will be developed in line with the Values for Australian Schooling and the Islamic ethos.
- Our school is strongly committed to the continued development of structured and sequential programs which facilitate literacy and numeracy across the curriculum with a focus on integrated programs and specific skills-based programs for students who receive literacy and numeracy support.
- Early intervention programs in literacy and numeracy which allows for the crucial years in the students' development.

Section 8: Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

The school has continued its participation in the Inter-School Harmony Project. This is an interschool cultural exchange project between Muslim, Catholic and state primary schools. Each year several activities and projects are organised to promote respect and responsibility between children of different backgrounds and faiths. The following activities were completed this year as part of this project:

- Two of our students continued their participation in an arts exchange project which centred around the writing and production of a book under the guidance of award-winning children's author Nadia Wheatley and artist/designer Ken Searle. The book was completed this year and is due to be published by Allen & Unwin in 2007. The two students involved in the project also attended a Multicultural Day presentation in Redfern.
- A Year 4 class attended a special fun day organised by the Inter-School Harmony Project committee, to celebrate Harmony Day in March. The fun day was attended by a class from each of the eight schools involved in the Project.
- Networking between teachers: Kindergarten teachers from the eight schools involved met to exchange ideas on programming and teaching practices.
- Respect and Responsibility Forum – Students from our school attended the Respect and Responsibility Forum as part of the Inter-School Harmony Group. The forum was initiated by the NSW Premier and the Minister of Education, and was organised by the Office of the Board of Studies NSW.
- Our teachers attended a special function hosted by Al Zahra College for World Teacher's Day. This gave our teachers the opportunity to meet teachers from the other schools.

Our school also celebrated Harmony Day on 21st March with different sequential activities completed by each class with the theme of harmony, respect and responsibility. In the afternoon the school came together and each class presented the values they learned from the activities.

The school also celebrated Multicultural Day on the 24th of March where students came dressed in clothes from different cultures and brought a plate of food from that culture.

Section 9: Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

Informal feedback from parents indicates that during 2006 parents were generally satisfied with the school, particularly with the implementation of its discipline policy. The Deputy Principal has an 'open door policy' which many parents avail of. Parents feel comfortable discussing their concerns with teachers, the Deputy Principal and the Principal. The Parents and Citizens group conducted regular meetings which were attended by the Deputy Principal at the parents' request.

The introduction of the School Parliament has helped students in the senior years develop relationships with students in the junior years, and gave students a voice in raising issues, making suggestions, decisions and plans for school activities and resolving issues. The school parliament was a good forum for determining student satisfaction with the school. Most students were very proud of the school and its achievements.

Informal feedback from teachers during 2006 indicated that staff were generally satisfied with the school. Issues raised during staff meetings concerned school operations and teacher workload.

Section 10: Summary financial information

Financial Summary for Rissalah College Ltd for the year ending 31st December 2006

Income

Bank interest Received	1 500
Government Grants	2 641 581
School and Community Sources	819 636
Total	Income 3 462 717

Expenditure

Teaching and Learning	1 679 645
Excursions	37 000
Training and Development	4 318
Electricity and Gas	23 462
Books and Teaching Resources	65 755
Repairs and Maintenance	218 986
Rent and Rates	161 783
Administration and Office Expenses	1 193 444
Capital Programs	54 866
Total Expenditure	3 439 259