

Rissalah College: Annual School Report for 2008

Section 1: A message from the Chairman of the Board

The Board is very happy with the high academic standard of Rissalah College and the excellent teacher performance. Furthermore, the property that was purchased at Hampden Road, Lakemba needs to undergo significant restructuring. The project is anticipated to cost \$4-\$5 million and will include a large-scale extension and refurbishment of the building. In keeping with our vision to provide an outstanding place of learning for our students, the contemporary design of the building will feature all the benefits of modern technology. The completion of the work will see larger classrooms, an up-to-date library and a spacious hall and public areas.

The Board will keep the parents, teachers and wider community up-to-date throughout the building project development.

Section 2: School performance in state-wide tests and examinations

School Performance in the NAPLAN tests

In 2008 all Year 3 and Year 5 students participated in the NAPLAN 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 3 or higher in the NAPLAN Test for overall literacy compared to 91% of the state. Students attained 99% in skill bands 2 or higher in numeracy compared to 97% of the state. The majority of students performed consistently in literacy and numeracy reaching skill band 4 or higher. In literacy 84% of students scored band 4 or higher and in numeracy 65% of students reached band 4 or higher.

In Year 5, 100% of students achieved skill band 5 or higher in overall literacy compared to 87% of the state and 99% achieved skill band 4 or higher in numeracy compared to 94% of the state.

The percentage of students achieving the national benchmarks for literacy is 96% and for numeracy 97% for Year 3. In Year 5, the percentage achieving the benchmark for numeracy is 95% the percentage for literacy has increased to 93%. See Table 1 for further information.

Table 3: 2008 Year 5 NAPLAN Results – percentages in skills bands

Skill Band	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar & Punctuation	Overall Literacy	Number, Patterns & Algebra	Measurement, Data, Space & Geometry	Overall Numeracy
Band 8	4	29	8	8	8	17	6	8
Band 7	13	23	40	31	21	23	27	29
Band 6	19	38	29	38	46	40	23	33
Band 5	40	10	15	19	25	13	27	19
Band 4	25	0	8	2	0	6	15	10
Band 3	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	0

Table 4: 2008 Year 3 NAPLAN Results – Number of students exceeding the national minimum standard

Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar & Punctuation	Numeracy
49	49	49	49	49

Table 5: 2008 Year 5 NAPLAN Results – Number of students exceeding the national minimum standard

Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar & Punctuation	Numeracy
48	48	48	48	48

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

Teacher standards

In 2008 Rissalah College had 17 mainstream teachers, 1 Special Education teacher, a Deputy Principal and 4 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	18
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:

- Teacher Accreditation Workshop – covering the role of teachers and leaders who are supervising new scheme teachers with an in-depth understanding of the Professional Teaching Standards for Professional Competence, the accreditation process and the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the accreditation process.
- Ants in the Apple Reading and Spelling Program – a workshop conducted by the author of the Ants in the Apple Program Lyn Meeks, which the school purchased and implemented across Years K-6 in 2007. The workshop explained how to use the program and the teaching resources associated with it for the existing and new teachers.
- Guided Reading Workshops by Sarah Lehman- We purchased two new guided reading series: Pirate Cove and Clinker Castle, specifically developed for teaching K-2 classes. Two guided reading workshops and two follow-up whole day in-class services ensured all teachers in the infants department had up-to-date methods and teaching strategies when conducting guided reading lessons.
- Patterns and Algebra workshops K-6 conducted by Jan Stone- A whole day workshop from 9am-5pm, including follow up class in-service to ensure teachers are teaching and implementing this strand effectively.
- Implementation of the reviewed and up-dated Mathematics scope and sequence K-6, after consultation and workshops conducted by Jan Stone (AIS consultant) at the beginning of 2008.

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 (LIEN) & Learning in Numeracy (LIN)- 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. LIEN and LIN helped teachers to build and extend their own knowledge of mathematics, better understand how students learn mathematics so they can make sound professional judgements and plan learning experiences that build on what students already know and understand.	6
Understanding the NAPLAN School Report (AIS)-A two-hour workshop presented by Sue Bremner and Sally Egan on how to interpret the NAPLAN results.	2

Attendance and retention rate

In 2008 the average daily staff attendance rate was 94%. The proportion of staff retained from 2007 is approximately 66%.

Section 4: Student attendance

Ninety five percent of students attended school on average each school day in 2008. This was similar to the daily attendance in 2007.

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 a decision 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 1-6 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, NAPLAN 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.
6. Inform the applicant of the outcome.

Student population

Rissalah College is located at 291 Haldon Street, Lakemba and 2008 was our tenth year at this campus. The school commenced with an enrolment of 127 students in 1999. In 2008, 400 students were enrolled, 187 girls and 213 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 a discussion with 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. Requests for special considerations for families who are unable to meet school fees are put in writing to the Principal. A decision is made by the Principal following a meeting with the parents.

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 2008	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 • Sun smart policy • Asthma policy • Anti-bullying policy • Canteen policy • Travelling safely on the school bus • Students with special needs • Camps and excursions 	Updated and reviewed	Full text on the School's website
Student Welfare and Discipline Policy	Updated and reviewed	Full text on the School's website
Uniform Policy	Updated and reviewed	Full text on the School's website
Internet Policy	Introduced in 2007	All students using the internet were issued with a copy of the policy for code of conduct.

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 2008. It was updated and reviewed in February of 2008.

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, in consultation with the 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 2008. 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 2008 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.
- Student reporting using the A to E ranking for 2008 has seen major changes and further development, which ensured total compliance with the NSW Government requirements. Each KLA, including its strands were graded with an accompanying report. An Excel spreadsheet was developed on which all the students from K-6's marks, overall totals, percentages and ranking were recorded. Parent-teacher interviews are conducted at the end of each semester to discuss students' progress and their half-yearly and yearly progress reports.
- Assessment: The induction of the rubrics criteria in all assessment tasks across the curriculum was very successful. Specific indicators were used to assess whether the outcomes were being achieved. This ensured explicit, quality assessment of student learning and reporting to parents.
- Staff development courses: In 2008 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.
- Our schools values program on respect and responsibility which was developed and implemented in line with the Values for Australian Schooling and the Islamic Ethos is ongoing. Every week throughout the year a new value was introduced and taught every day at morning assembly. Teachers further discussed and addressed the value in the classroom context, to ensure that the values are maintained. In addition, our students were involved in an inter-school values program with Mt Sinai which centred around the notion that we are all Australians working together to build harmonious and tolerant communities.
- Students' performance in Years 3 and 5 have stabilised as reflected in the NAPLAN results.

- Students' performance in reading has shown much improvement. This is reflected in the class results, NAPLAN results, and the individual student records from the MULTILIT (Making Up for Lost Time in Literacy) program administered by the Special Education teacher.
- Resources: The use of commercial textbooks was dramatically 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 Shared Reading, Guided Reading and Teacher Resource books including resources for hands-on activities in maths and science.
- Computer Lab: Upgrading of the computer lab is ongoing providing every student per class, access online to the internet. The interactive smartboard is a very useful resource, aiding the teacher to produce more sound and successful lessons in technology. It also enhanced class management technique more effectively as the teacher can oversee that all students are focused and on task.
- HSIE: The School SRC has been running successfully. This initiative will continue yearly. An explanation of how the SRC is set up and conducted is as follows:

SRC (School Representative Council)

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. From the votes, the following positions are elected:

- Boy and girl captain
- Boy and girl vice captain
- 4 boy and 4 girl prefects

These students form the main body of the SRC. They are given responsibilities to perform throughout the year.

A representative from the SRC addresses the primary assembly with the concerns and ideas that have been raised in the meeting.

- PDHPE: Kids in Action has continued their P.E. lessons for Kindergarten to Year 6. This specific skill-based course provided by external instructors, has been very successful to the students' fine and gross motor skills, as well as their overall physical well being. The lessons were specifically designed in accordance with the scope and sequence of teachers' programs and the Board of Studies NSW syllabus. Students participated in the school cross country and athletics carnival. Students were chosen from these carnivals to represent Rissalah College at the ASSISA cross country and athletics carnival.
- ASSISA West: In 2008 Rissalah College affiliated with this new branch of the existing ASSISA committee. ASSISA West included: AlNoori, Arkana, AIA (Australian International Academy), Sule and Rissalah College. This included some of the Year 5 and 6 boys and girls in soccer, and cricket competitions.
- The continuation of the Ants in the Apple Spelling program which provided a whole school approach to spelling, has seen a great improvement in the students' development in the spelling strategies and mastery. This improvement was reflected in the NAPLAN literacy results for 2008.
- New Scheme Teacher Accreditation: A whole school approach for New Scheme Teacher Accreditation is ongoing. The TAA, Supervisors and mentors which were put into place last year has resulted in 2 teachers achieving their Professional Competence. They were accredited by the NSW Institute of Teachers and received their Certificate of Accreditation at Professional Competence.

Improvement Targets for 2009

- 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.
- Apply First Aid HLTF301B course: Next year all teachers will have to renew their first aid certificates. Workshops will be conducted over a two-day period, on two consecutive Saturdays at Rissalah College. Access Training Institute will do the HLTF301B Apply First Aid course, a nationally recognised qualification, which was previously known as Senior First Aid/Level 2 First Aid.
- Computer lab facilities: Our school computer lab will continue to undergo upgrades with software and will continue to cater for all students in technology which is integrated in all KLAs throughout the school.
- Reading: Guided and shared reading still forms the core of learning in all KLAs. A series of workshops will be conducted by Sue Bremner-AIS Literacy Consultant, with follow-up in-class service.
- Revised MULTILIT Reading Tutor Program Workshop: The MULTILIT program is specifically designed for teaching students in Year 2 and above who are reading at a level considerably below what might be expected for their age. However, this intensive, one-to-one program of instruction in basic reading skills is effective regardless of age. Rissalah College will continue to trial and refine our reading program. Therefore, we will have a whole-day workshop from 9am-4pm on staff development day on first day of term 2 to train all teachers K-6 in the MULTILIT program. This will be conducted by Kyle Pitt a consultant from The MULTILIT Centre.
- Continuation and improvement of a whole school approach to the Ants in the Apple Spelling program from Years K-6 with a whole staff professional development course. This is a specific skill-based sequential program that focuses on teaching spelling rules explicitly. The program runs from Kindergarten to Year 6 and has provided a whole school approach to spelling which has seen a major focus in the students achieving very sound outcomes across the school K-6, including the excellent results achieved in NAPLAN for years 3 and 5 students.
- Literacy-Assessment and Programming using the ESL Scales: Formal workshops and in-class support by Sue Bremner for Reading and Writing with ESL students for each stage, using stage specific material.
- Student reports: Our school will continue the A-E report format. For 2009, 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 further developed to make the recording of marks easier, and enable students to be ranked.
- School values program on respect and responsibility: The values program will continue to be taught and implemented every day at morning assembly.
- Whole school approach 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.
- Numeracy: A Professional Development course by Jan Stone focusing on Number and Patterns for students at risk in Numeracy. This workshop will present strategies that are proving useful to all students. The research-based content will help promote rich learning opportunities to be applied to the mathematics classroom.
- New Scheme Teacher Accreditation: A whole school seminar/workshop by Estelle Lewis-Refer to Section 3: Teacher Professional Learning.

- The SRC will continue to run in 2009. Students will meet fortnightly on a Thursday. During this meeting the two year 6 teachers will facilitate and chair the meeting. This meeting will be a forum for the students to address any ideas or concerns. The issues raised in each session will be minuted and documented to formulate a plan of action.

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.

Section 9: Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

The parents are very pleased with the overall performance of Rissalah College, particularly with the 'open door policy' which many parents avail. 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, to ensure that we have good communication channels to address issues of concern.

The SRC 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 SRC was a good forum for determining student satisfaction with the school. Most students were very proud of the school and its achievements.

Feedback from teachers during 2008 indicated that the staff were happy with the school's focus of teamwork and collaboration. This includes issues raised during staff meetings concerning school operations and teacher feedback from the deputy principal in terms of their professional development

in areas of programming across the curriculum in accordance with the mandatory requirement of the Board of Studies. The teachers are very pleased with the support they receive in their development of their teaching standards and practices.

Section 10: Summary financial information

Financial Summary for Rissalah College Ltd for the year ending 31st December 2008

Income

School fees	768 375
Government Grants	2 983 165
Other revenues from ordinary activities	125 448

Total Income **3 876 988**

Expenses

Marketing and promotion	11 476
Occupancy expenses	730 783
Employment expenses	2 415 501
Administration expenses	644 641

Total Expenses **3 802 401**

Operating income before donation and income tax	74 587
Net income for the year after income tax	74 587