



Connected

School Community News Northern Beaches Sydney

www.covenant.nsw.edu.au



Café serves up a treat

IMAGINE good coffee, friends and a welcome place for young children. That's Cafe Covie in Belrose.

Each Wednesday morning the main basketball court at Covenant Christian School on Sydney's Northern Beaches has café tables and chairs set up. The café is open for two hours and serves parents, staff and senior students.

Café Covie manager Suzanne Bennett leads a team of dedicated volunteers. As well

as lots of regulars, the class parents or year parents organise social gatherings to meet at the Cafe. Being a fenced in undercover basketball court it's an ideal space for parents with young children and toys are provided.

Mrs Bennett explains "the café serves a very significant purpose in the life of our school. My heart is to create a space where parents connect. My own children went through Covenant so I know

how important it is for parents to chat with, and encourage, one another. I also love a good coffee so running the café is a dream role for me." The café serves a range of food, hot chocolate and baby cinnos for toddlers. The café also opens for many school functions.



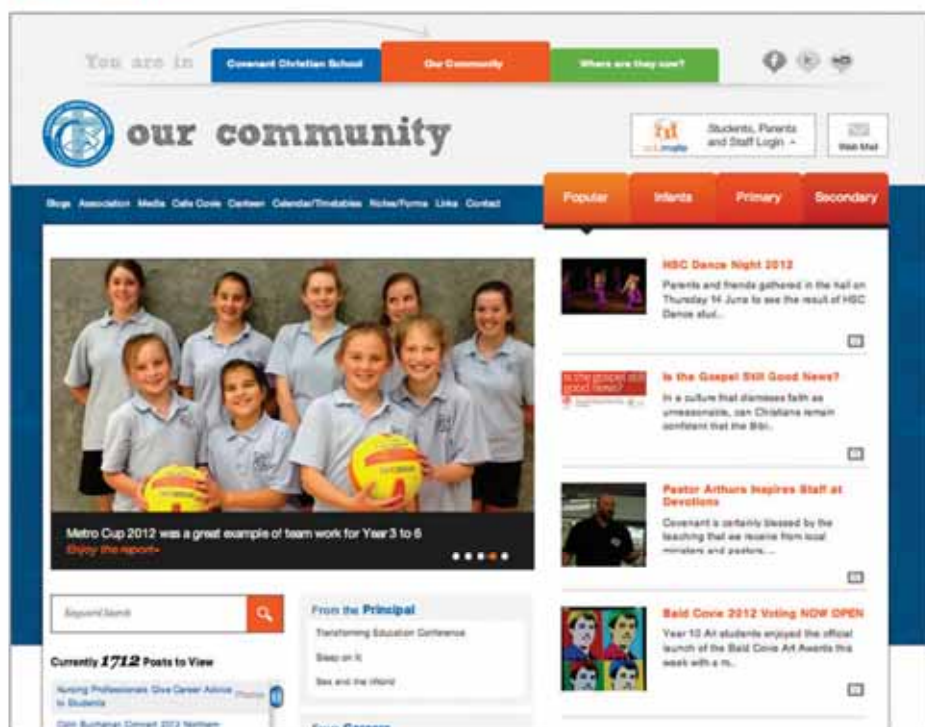
FREQUENT SIPPERS CARD

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Group Bookings - Suzanne at sbennett@covenant.nsw.edu.au

Connecting our community

COMMUNITY



Blogsite opens window for community

WITH over 5,000 visits each week, Covenant's website is helping connect the school community. The website won a National Award in 2009 for its innovative approach. The heart of the school website is a blog. Based on popular news websites, the site has averaged two new stories each school day since it was launched in 2008. The thousands of photos and hundreds of videos have helped current and prospective parents discover more about what is happening at school.

The mission of the school is to assist parents in the nurture of their children. The blog helps parents by sharing regular news and photos, plus allowing comments. Take a look at ourcovenant.com.au and youtube.com/covenantschool



by Kiralee Smith SKC

TECHNOLOGY

Technology builds relationships

SKYPE is now pre-installed on all laptops issued to Year 10 students. This online service is making it easier for students to work together on projects. Head of ICT Dave Youl runs a Digital Discipleship course for all students before they are entrusted with a laptop. "Technology is a great tool. Taking time to teach students the benefits and pitfalls is time well spent. We work with parents and include them in the education process."

Online canteen helps parents

AT COVENANT the canteen only operates on Monday and Friday. Canteen Manager Gail Ecob explains, "as a school community we didn't want all our parent help being swallowed up with canteen duty. We would rather our parent community were helping in classrooms, on camps and excursions and interacting with students and staff.

"The introduction of online ordering has been very helpful in streamlining the process. "It also means parents know what their children are eating. That is important to us," says Mrs Ecob.

COMMUNITY



Photo: Brianna HENDERSON

Students develop love of Aboriginal community

STUDENTS at Covenant Christian School Belrose have had three options of how to spend the last week of first term. Year 10 could choose a trip to serve an Aboriginal community in Queensland, a cycling camp around Canberra, or a hiking camp. Giving choices recognises each student has different gifts, personalities and interests.

Students have described the trip to Cairns as life changing. The annual event has proven so popular for students, staff and the Yarrabah community that two trips are now offered. Students raise their own funds. In addition, the school community donates to a Bible College serving the local Aboriginal community.

After months of team building and training, the students spend a week running kids programs, performing dramas and leading small group discussions. Teacher Tanya Hammond is a regular visitor to the community. "The week is both fun and challenging. Students share the gospel in word and action. It's a two way learning experience. Many special friendships are made as students learn a lot about themselves and Aboriginal culture."

TECHNOLOGY

What is a QR code?

QR CODES are popping up in many publications and advertisements. QR Codes are those funny little squares and stands for Quick Response. Using a smart phone camera and free app, the Code is scanned and prompts an action. With an increasing number of people accessing the internet via mobile their popularity is set to grow.

Scanning a QR Code can open a website, open an email, make a phone call or link direct to an online video. It is a quick and easy way of adding life and interaction to your printed materials.

Covenant Christian School on Sydney's Northern Beaches uses them in advertising, giving direct access to promotional videos like "What parents love about Covie".



What do parents love about Covenant?



HISTORY



High School demand creates waitlists

RECENT growth at Covenant has concentrated in the secondary school. With waiting lists from Year 5 onwards families are re-discovering afresh the importance of Christian education.

Neil Pierson, Storyteller for the school, has researched the school history meeting several of the pioneers. “The over demand for high school places is actually quite different to what the founders believed was most important” he says. “They understood a child’s early years are when they form their worldview. As parents, the role models they chose to entrust their young children to were extremely important. Many of these pioneers were Dutch immigrants who believed the secular education system was undermining their parental responsibility. They decided to create a school where home and school could work in partnership. Being affordable for families was also important.”

Interestingly Mr Pierson reminds prospective parents that the pioneers thought the school would eventually grow to about 300 students. “They are both surprised and delighted it has grown to over 800 yet kept the same passion for a distinctly Christian education.” No doubt part of the reason is the healthy growth of local churches. School families represent over 120 churches.

One of the important decisions the pioneers made back in 1978 was to be clear on who the school was for. They stipulated that all teaching staff, and a minimum of 85% of parents, would be active practising Christians. That remains the vision. Currently it is around 90% of parents. Mr Pierson says “this is a real distinctive for families when they are comparing schools. It helps build community and unity of vision.”

Growing demand from parents for the Christian high school reflects their strong desire for community, values and academics during the teenage years. Meeting this demand and helping new students settle in to the school culture is an exciting challenge.

ENTERTAINMENT



Colin Buchanan in Concert

POPULAR children entertainer Colin Buchanan’s concerts at Covenant Christian School often sell out. Events Coordinator Suzanne Bennett believes they are a positive introduction to the school and its community. “We love Colin’s songs. To us it is more than a concert” she says. “The Café is open, there are games, free pre show and after show entertainment and we have even added a treasure hunt.”



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COMMUNITY

Our Community



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Biggest Morning Tea

EDUCATION

Why Christian Schools videos

WHY have Christian schools is something many people question. Around Australia 34% of parents are currently choosing a non-government school for their children and most are faith based. In Sydney it is even higher at 44%.

Principal Bill Rusin is well aware of the trend and not surprised it continues. "The responsibility for raising children is not given to the government or the church. It is parents' responsibility. Schools like Covenant were started by and for parents." He believes "these pioneering parents felt the deliberately secular education being given to their children in the public sector was incompatible with their home life."



As a service to the wider Christian School community the school created the WhyChristianSchools.com.au project. It deliberately doesn't promote Covenant and is being used by many schools. It has inspired similar projects in Canada and USA. The six YouTube videos, booklet and DVD are designed to help parents discuss and consider many of the most common questions about Christian schools. "Many Christians haven't known where to ask for advice. These videos help."

EDUCATION

Christian curriculum

MATHS teacher, rugby coach and dad of three girls, Pete Muddle, is a man on a mission. His role at Covenant Christian School is helping other teachers discover fresh ways to teach from a Christian perspective.

"As a registered school we must teach the Board of Studies curriculum. We do it well and although we are not driven by academic results, we perform well in external examinations" says Mr Muddle. "However, our parents aren't choosing our school simply because of our academic record. They expect more from us. We want our students to live out their Christian faith, and to acknowledge God in all of life" He recognises the challenge to go beyond the curriculum and engage students in deeper thinking about life issues.

He believes there is no such thing as neutral education. "We educate because we believe it is important. Yet everyone's beliefs determine what they decide is important. Our teachers don't just have the opportunity to bring Christ into the classroom – it is expected, a mandate, if you will." A growing number of staff are participating in Professional Development sessions where teachers share ideas of how they are being faithful in the task of Teaching Christianly.

WHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS?

Parents & teachers answer common questions about Christian Education

- Watch online
- Embed videos in your school website
- Order DVD & booklet

www.whychristianschools.com.au

BELROSE

Primary school transformed



15 NEW CLASSROOMS

LOCALS and former students are amazed at the changes at Covenant Christian School in Belrose. Having started with 19 students in 1978 the school now has over 800 students from Preschool to Year 12.

Principal Bill Rusin is delighted with the new building projects. "Going from having nine demountables to 15 new Primary School classrooms within three years is very exciting for our students, families and staff".

Back in 1999 the school board was approached to purchase the adjoining Belrose Nursery. The nearly \$1m price tag was a big commitment at the time. The school only had 642 students. A new air-conditioned gymnasium and school

hall was about to be built. Finances were tight. Fortunately the board decided to proceed with both the land purchase and the hall construction.

The Belrose Nursery continued to operate for another ten years while plans for the land were considered. Plans for six new Infants classrooms and a multi-purpose Rumpus Room were finalised just as the Building Education Revolution was announced. The government's stimulus package benefited schools around Australia. For Covenant the timing was perfect. They had already been saving towards the building for years. The government's \$2.5m grant was a bonus. Unlike many BER projects the school was able

to choose the builder. Business Manager Andrew Lowry said "we ended up with a brilliant building as the builders delivered great value for money." The Infants complex, complete with six classrooms, playground, mini field, huge sandpits and toilet block, was opened in 2010.

In 2010 the original school building was gutted and four new classrooms created. As more families have since chosen Covenant the demand for more space continued. Plans for the next building were brought forward five years. The new performance space, five new classrooms and new Junior Library complete the strategic plans well ahead of what was expected.

CREATIVITY

Dance Academy open to public

AFTER school dance classes are proving popular at Covenant. As well as offering Dance for the HSC and school sport, the Dance Academy is open to the community. Dance styles include ballet, hip hop, jazz, tap, physical culture and even acrobatics.



Book a School Tour

TAKE a closer look at Covenant Christian School. Check the website for group tour dates, organise one with friends, or book a personal tour. Contact Wendy Boase to book. Call 02 9450 2688 or email enrolments@covenant.nsw.edu.au.

212 Forest Way Belrose Sydney



www.covenant.nsw.edu.au

DRAMA

Musicals add colour



MUSIC and creativity plays an important part of life in the Christian community so it is natural that it would be encouraged in a school like Covenant. A school musical is held each year. One year it is a whole Junior School production. The next year it is High School's turn. Past musicals have included *Meet the King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Peace Child* and *Pirates of Penzance*.

Request a copy from
Covenant Christian
School Belrose Sydney