



Catherine McAuley Westmead, NSW

About us

We are a large, metropolitan, year 7-12 Catholic girls secondary school located in Western Sydney, NSW.

Our approach

We believe that writing is a process that can be learned by everyone. It needs to be worked at and practiced like 'problems' in Mathematics or Biology, but it can be acquired. We avoid the word 'creative' as it conjures ideas of writing as an ethereal gift that only some have.

We emphasise that writing has building blocks (language and forms: speeches, interviews, letters, narrative and genres) that form the cornerstone of writing. We start small, with sentences and paragraphs, and build from there. We use pen and paper (no IT, at least at first), as this is the mode students will be expected to use.

We do not mark writing in the early stages. We identify one key aspect for improvement and for many of our students, this is the specificity of their language/vocabulary. We use examples to model the process of writing. Our teachers write a short piece, leaving spaces that are later filled in and edited in view of the class. Glossaries and word banks are kept in students' books.

Reading is a key input to our writing approach. To broaden the frequency of reading and the range of texts students are exposed to, we draw on everything from sport pages and articles on motor bikes to post-modern texts. We have found that more 'radical' texts resonate with our perceived 'poorer' readers and the more we expose these students to exemplar texts, the stronger their writing becomes as the parameters of their source material expand.

We ask students to spend 10–20 minutes 'homework' editing and experimenting. We link this to the problem exercises they do in Mathematics as repetition and time needs to be spent on this skill.

Organising students to invest time in English writing is key to our success.

Our profile ENROLMENTS **1,186** LBOTE **63%** INDIGENOUS **1%** ICSEA **1076**