

# 'Blown away' by award

By Cade Lucas

Science is full of things that are small in stature but big in impact and Footscray's St Monica's Catholic Primary School just might be another of them.

Despite having fewer than 100 students, St Monica's has recently taken on and beaten much larger schools in science competitions, including being named the top performing independent school in Victoria in the science talent search competition.

St Monica's recently received the prestigious Peter Craig award for its achievements in the talent search which included a project entered by the kitchen science class as well as entries from individual students.

"For a little school of 90 students to beat all the top independent schools in Victoria is an incredible achievement," said St Monica's kitchen science teacher Jodie Donaghey.

"I'm blown away."

Making St Monica's achievements all the more impressive is the fact that this is the first time the school has entered the science talent search competition.

"We had our very first science fair this year and from there some of the students were selected to go to the science talent search competition representing St Monicas," said Ms Donaghey explaining how it came about.

"We also entered a class project. In kitchen garden science class some of the students noticed that the water was running straight off the soil and wanted to know why, so they investigated what hydrophobic means and how to fix the soil to make our garden more productive."

After designing and conducting a range of experiments over the course of a whole term, the students came up with an unusual solution.

"They discovered that worm casting or



St Monica's Primary School kitchen science teacher Jodie Donaghey (right) and students Missy, Carlos and Hannah celebrate the Footscray school's recent science awards. (Damjan Janevski) 443418\_01

worm poo was the most effective treatment for rectifying hydrophobic soil," said Ms Donaghey of the project which received a major bursary in the talent search competition.

Combined with 10 St Monica's students receiving bursaries for their individual entries, it led to the school taking out the overall award. St Monica's has also received national recognition, with the kitchen class project

coming second prize in the national science week competition.

Money won in both competitions will go towards buying more science equipment so St Monica's students can conduct more experiments.

Ms Donaghey said the ultimate aim wasn't winning competitions though.

"We're trying to encourage the students to

see that science is everywhere in everyday life!