



Melbourne Archdiocese  
Catholic Schools

# 2023

## Annual Report to the School Community



### St Mary's School

2 Mansfield Street, THORNBURY 3071

Principal: Christopher Ray

Web: [www.smthornbury.catholic.edu.au](http://www.smthornbury.catholic.edu.au)

Registration: 1108, E Number: E1097

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## Principal's Attestation

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I, Christopher Ray, attest that St Mary's School is compliant with:

- The minimum standards and other requirements for school registration and school boarding premises (if applicable) as specified in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic).
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2023 school year under the Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) and the Australian Education Regulations 2023 (Cth).
- The Child Safe Standards as prescribed in Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises.

Attested on 09 May 2024

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## About this report

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St Mary's School is registered by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). The Annual Report to the School Community (ARSC), provides parents and the wider community with information about the school's activities and achievements throughout the year including information about various aspects of school performance. The Report is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the school community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning and wellbeing of its students. Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can also be obtained from the [My School website](#).

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## Governing Authority Report

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When Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) launched our inaugural strategic plan MACS 2030: Forming Lives to Enrich the World just over a year ago, I spoke about the need for our whole organisation to reflect on the biggest challenges that confront us, and to work at speed to find practical, ambitious, student-centred solutions.

As a relatively new governing authority, 2023 set us on the path to achieving our first goals, as we focussed our efforts on building strong foundations for success. The four pillars of MACS2030 – Inspired by Faith; Flourishing Learners; Enabled Leaders; and Enriched Communities - serve to guide our work on how we achieve our strategic intent.

When we surveyed our teachers in late 2022, over 80 per cent told us that they want access to quality teaching and assessment resources. So in January 2023, we secured a system-wide licence for MACS primary and secondary schools to access the Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) assessment suite. The inclusion of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Survey allows schools to monitor the wellbeing of their students and target resourcing to specific areas of need. Together, these tools provide a coherent and systematic approach to student assessment.

In partnership with Ochre Education, we began work on F-6 Mathematics curriculum resources, being developed in a phased approach over three years, and delivered the first tranche for F-2. A key consideration in developing the materials is ensuring teachers retain autonomy to tailor curriculum implementation to meet the individual and local needs of students.

This is an exciting development for our MACS community, clearly demonstrating the commitment we all share to delivering the best possible education opportunities for our 120,000 students and supporting our 10,000 classroom teachers to be the very best that they can be.

Archbishop Peter commissioned a comprehensive review of Religious Education curriculum, the first in over a decade. It offers us some challenges, but fundamentally is a hope-filled report that invites a path of ongoing work to develop a new RE curriculum for all Catholic schools. We continued Working Together in Mission with Parish Priests throughout the Archdiocese, including through regular roundtable discussions.

Across greater Melbourne, one in five students attend a Catholic school and 2023 saw steady growth in enrolments across our system, demonstrating the value families place on a Catholic education and the high quality, holistic education MACS schools provide.

As a system of schools, we can be better together, reducing the administrative load on our schools and freeing our teachers and principals to focus on what they do best.

I would like to pay tribute to our MACS school and office colleagues who have worked so hard to achieve our goals. We look forward to further strengthening those partnerships as we work together to deliver an education that inspires young people to enrich the world.

Yours sincerely

Dr Edward Simons

Executive Director

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd

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## Vision and Mission

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St Mary's Parish Primary School Thornbury, as a sign of the presence of God, proclaims gospel values centred on Jesus Christ as the model for life.

We are a welcoming spirit-filled community that views the future with optimism.

By respecting the diversity and uniqueness of each person, we promote the self worth and connectedness of individuals.

We value shared leadership that creates the structures for a broad, inclusive and developmental curriculum within a safe, supportive and well-resourced environment.

Together with parents, we strive to provide lifelong learners with the strategies and skills that instill confidence, equip them to journey towards their future and positively contribute to a changing world.

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## School Overview

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### "Learners Inspired To Learn"

- During 2023, St Mary's Parish and School celebrated 100 years of serving the Catholic Community of Thornbury.
- In 2023, St Mary's School had an enrolment of 189 students.
- The students were organised into 9 class groupings: 1 x prep; 2 x Yr 1/2; 3 x 3/4; and 3 x 5/6.
- The school had 36 staff made up of 11 full-time teaching staff (including the Principal and other leaders), 7 part-time teaching staff (3.8 FTE), 3 part-time Administration Officers (1.56 FTE) and 11 part-time learning support staff (5.55 FTE).
- Our staff Leadership roles included a Deputy Principal; Learning & Teaching Leader; Learning Diversity Leader; Literacy Leader; Mathematics Leader; Religious Education Leader; Student Wellbeing Leader; and ICT Leader.
- Weekly specialist lessons were offered in Digital Technologies, Performing Arts, Physical Education/Sport and Italian. We also had a Visual Arts Specialist Teacher working with children from across the school.
- Our families have a wide selection of excellent Secondary Schools from which to choose to further their children's learning. We are a priority Parish for Santa Maria College, Academy of Mary Immaculate College and Parade College, with children also having access to other Catholic Schools in our region. Local Government Secondary Schools include the highly regarded Thornbury High School, Northcote High School and Preston High School.
- During 2023, St Mary's School implemented the second year of our 4-year School Improvement Plan.
- A significant focus for the school has been to develop ourselves as an 'Evidence-Based Learning School'. We plan for learning based on the evidence of what children have demonstrated they already know and can do. Learning is student-centred. Children are supported to learn at their point of need.
- Our historic building houses modern learning spaces.
- ICT is used across the school to enhance learning and engage learners. Children have the opportunity to develop their ICT skills appropriate to their age and ability. Children from Years 3 - 6 have their own chromebooks to enhance their learning.
- Before & After School Care is provided on-site by OSHClub.
- We work closely with our Parish to promote Faith and to build links with our broader Parish Community.
- St Mary's Parish and School continued to work strategically with our partner Parishes and Schools - St Joseph's Northcote, Holy Spirit Thornbury East and St Anthony's Alphington.
- St Mary's is an inclusive community. We warmly welcome all who want to join us.





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## Principal's Report

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Having begun as Principal of St Mary's at the start of 2021, I entered my third year as Principal of St Mary's with great confidence that every child enrolled at our School would be given every opportunity to learn to their potential. We were looking forward to continuing to rebuild connections and community activities post-COVID, and ensuring all students were engaged in their learning.

I continued to be impressed by the dedication of the staff, their eagerness to prepare thoroughly for the children's learning, and their willingness to support each other to meet the needs of the children. I am very happy to be a part of this team.

Two years into my time at St Mary's, I was no longer surprised by the fact that there is something special about the children at St Mary's. They have a genuine gratitude that is on display to each other and to all they come into contact with. They have a desire to be the best learners they can be and to help others to be their best.

Our Parent Community is supportive and acts in the best interests of all the children. I believe the community at St Mary's epitomises the concept of "It takes a village to raise a child".

There is a focus at St Mary's on genuine learning and on the wellbeing of our students. These things are easily seen and heard constantly around the school. We can see the emphasis on learning dispositions, and the children are able to articulate the importance of each of the dispositions. The children are able to talk about their learning in such a way that clearly demonstrates they understand how they learn best. The children support each other in their learning and in making good behaviour choices. These things haven't come about by accident. The staff place great importance on developing these dispositions, these positive, growth mindsets with the children. And our parents are a wonderfully positive support for the children and staff.

I am grateful that I am the Principal of St Mary's and I am very much looking forward to building upon the wonderful things in place here.

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## Catholic Identity and Mission

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### Goal

- To strengthen our Catholic Identity by nurturing the faith formation of students, staff and families.

#### Intended Outcome

- That we are witnesses to the mission of the Church.

### Achievements

In working towards our intended outcomes we continued to develop an environment that:

- is transitioning into the Mission Model with the four Schools and Churches within our Parishes.
- provided authentic learning opportunities for faithful spiritual beings by holding significant prayer formation sessions on a weekly basis. This allows staff and students to take part in developing their ongoing prayer life.
- enhanced the prayer life of the school community by providing and modelling various forms of prayer.
- enhanced the teaching and learning of our Religious Education Curriculum, by beginning our thinking around the pedagogy of encounter.
- supported our Social Justice thinking to include a strong indigenous perspective for staff, students and the wider community.

St Mary's Catholic School continued to work to enhance its Catholic identity and deepen its faith journey. We work closely with the Religious Education Leaders of the other schools in the four Parishes of our Mission and our two Parish Priests by meeting twice each term. We met with the Parish & Priests, to plan, organise and sustain an ongoing sacramental faith journey. We continually engaged in a dialogical setting as a Parish and School team to ensure faith and life found a meeting place. Developing a connection to church life again has been a challenge for us since COVID restrictions have lifted and we have offered Masses where students have a role to play, especially within our sacramental life. Here, we strived to provide opportunities for all stake-holders to be hope-filled agents and faith-filled followers of Christ, who are outward-looking and brave, as we work together to make our school communities and the world a better place. This is our calling in Jesus's mission to share the light of the world today.

Our 'Social Justice Team', in their second year, had a clear 'lens' of outreach support, to Catholic and secular initiatives, across the year. It was decided that there are two elements within this Team's work - one is the call to action and the other is education. The team worked closely with the MACS staff member, Leila Gurruwiwi, on Aboriginal perspectives and our place today. The aim was for our staff and students to recognise traditional owners and knowledge of Country, cultural values and traditions that influence our urban community; the Wurundjeri country which covers most of the area now known as greater Melbourne and includes the City of Darebin. To celebrate this unbelievable journey all students had the opportunity to work with an artist in residence and create a mural that demonstrated our journey of enlightenment.

Our Religious Education curriculum and Pedagogy of Encounter at St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a call for a faithful community that drives a sense of mission, the Traditions and Catholic Identity of our school.

We continued exploring the concept of 'going deeper' within Religious Education sessions by:-

- using provocations - fertile and rich questions were posed as well as tapping into student questions to identify 'where to next?' in their learning
- ensuring rich Gospel Values sessions occurred
- incorporating sacramental learning across all levels, Prep - grade 6
- implementing P-6 big concept 'I can' statements to assist learners to reflect on their learning
- using the head, heart, hands model (Knowledge, Reasoning/Responding and Community Engagement) when planning, assessing and reporting on units of work

This type of thinking is developed by having regular facilitated planning sessions within our collaborative planning process where teachers are encouraged to enter into dialogue around the learning, and at times they become the learners themselves to attend to their own professional development. Following this, our aim is to create deep learning and powerful teaching to animate learners in Religious Education.

Our school-based Sacramental Programs for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation were all taught across the year and candidates were well prepared for their sacrament. We were able to present all Parent and candidate formation opportunities for all Sacraments. This allowed time for the parents to reflect and talk about the importance of journeying with their child at this time of preparation. Parent feedback told us that the sessions were meaningful to them.

Praying together was a major focus for us and, as a staff, we prayed together weekly with thought and consideration. There is evidence that the time and thought being placed on this has made prayer a visible element in our staff room, and classrooms, which has enhanced

the classroom prayer experience for our students, and we know from MACSSIS data that the students want more of this.

We prioritised our Professional Learning in Religious Education and targeted specific learning for teachers on site.

The learning for staff has been in -:

- creating Learning Intentions and Success Criteria related to learning in Religious Education, allowing students the opportunity to know how they can be successful.
- deepening our knowledge about the Pedagogy of Encounter led by our MACS RE advisor.
- the development of shared assessment proformas and data spreadsheets for Prep-6 pre and post testing for Religious education units
- moderating of assessment during facilitated planning with staff
- unpacking scripture in a meaningful way for young learners
- increasing our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal perspectives with MACS advisor Leila Gurruwiwi.

### Value Added

- Rich dialogue around how to use the new Religious Education Framework and the progression levels in real units of work.
- Deep thinking and learning have driven our robust and rigorous Religious Education curriculum.
- Religious Education is integrated throughout our school life and key learning areas and is based on the Horizons of Hope - Pedagogy of Encounter.
- A student Social Justice Team was in place again in 2023, under the guidance of key staff members, creating opportunities for fundraising, resourcing and awareness-raising for local and global community causes with a strong educational element to the action.
- Morning prayer routines and reflections established in each classroom.
- Personalising of Religious Education lessons, making connections to students' own faith journeys.
- Staff prayer and reflections were scheduled weekly, led by members of staff.
- "Life and Faith" Family sacramental nights were run in collaboration with students, staff, parish priests and families.
- Use of rich provocations and visual templates in Religious Education lessons for students' faith formation and development.
- Level Masses were celebrated throughout the school year with parish.
- Liturgical celebrations were led by students for Holy Week and other special events.
- Fortnightly facilitated planning was conducted for Religious Education programming with our RE Leader.

- Altar server training was conducted, and a roster system developed for senior students to serve at weekly class Masses.
- Establishment of strong literacy links to Religious Education planning, including the use of stem sentences when responding to scripture readings.
- Celebration of Parish Centenary Mass, with members of school staff joining the organising committee.
- 'Action in Faith' award presented for deserving Year 6 students.
- Designated personalised prayer spaces in classrooms and acknowledgment to country plaques.
- Regular meetings with parish, parish schools, Education in Faith leaders and Parish Priests.

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## Learning and Teaching

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### Goal

- To improve staff capacity in the use of data and pedagogy - by engaging staff in teacher inquiry

#### Intended Outcomes

- That staff are empowered to drive learning outcomes through strong pedagogical practices
- That learning growth improves in Writing & Numeracy

### Achievements

In working towards the intended outcomes the school continued to develop strategies that:

- ensured that explicit teaching was targeted at the needs of the student in both English and Numeracy by using agreed-upon data.
- ensured teachers actively participated in weekly planning across four curriculum areas facilitated by Leaders of learning areas.
- implemented quality Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, Learning Dispositions and Capabilities, so that learning was visible for all students.
- supported teachers to generate and plan for the next steps of learning, by using data to inform teaching.
- continued to focus on developing teacher capacity around writing, to increase student engagement and motivation and build writing stamina.
- planned and implemented oral language stations to build vocabulary and support speaking and listening.
- re-energised our Evidence-Based Learning elements, such as: 'self-regulated learners' and the 'School Learning Model' to guide teachers and students in their learning.
- tailored 'Learning Sprints' that catered to individual needs of students in English and Numeracy to improve their specific learning outcomes.

Learning and Teaching has continued to be a significant focus at St Mary's and was led by a dedicated Learning and Teaching Team. Student learning was targeted, explicit and differentiated for all students. Teachers and Learning Support Officers were provided with learning opportunities through professional learning days and being part of Professional

Learning Communities. Wellbeing of both staff and students remained a priority for Learning and Teaching, and staff worked in partnership with the Wellbeing Leader.

St Mary's has continued to foster collective efficacy and strong relationships between staff. Weekly Facilitated Planning took place, whereby teams used formative and summative data to inform the next steps of learning for students and plan quality learning experiences. Learning Intentions and Success criteria were generated to make learning visible and clear for students. There was a strong focus on planning and implementing small group focus where explicit teaching occurred and observations and next steps of learning were documented.

As an Evidence-Based Learning school, the continued focus has been on impact, by intentional design of practice and utilising data and evidence of student achievement to drive our learning and teaching. Learning Intentions and Success Criteria have become embedded practice over a number of years at St Mary's and the teachers continue to develop their skills and capacity. To support the embedding of Evidence-Based Learning, the school redesigned the learning routines, structures and strategies that improve learning for students and staff. There was time spent unpacking the Learning Dispositions and how they are used to support learners. The focus was to make them a habit for all learners within the school community. There were new school based posters and other resources to be more child-friendly and colourful.

St Mary's staff continued to embed an Evidence-Based Learning Structure and Framework, with an emphasis on English and Numeracy. This has continued to engage students with their learning. Staff have been provided with regular opportunities to engage in Professional Learning around high-impact teaching strategies and the implementation of these in their practice. In Writing, regular samples were collected to analyse by using the St Mary's Writing rubric. This data drove the next steps of learning in Writing. Junior staff participated in Professional Learning about the "Bookmaking" approach while the middle and senior staff continued to implement the 'Seven Steps to Writing Success' strategies in their practice. Both pedagogical approaches aim to teach students to think like writers and write in a creative, engaging and purposeful way. The focus was on having 'choice' and 'voice' in writing, in order to motivate students and build writing stamina.

We continued the use of Essential Assessment Mathematics pre and post test data to ensure that students can view their progress and next steps of learning. Teaching staff also found gaps, trends and growth of cohorts of students. Our aim was to ensure excellence in practice and teachers developed a shared understanding of what explicit teaching looked like within small focused groups. Learning was driven in level teams to ensure that maximum learning occurred, and helped us to develop collective efficacy. Students were empowered to have a voice in their learning by actively setting goals for their next steps of learning. Teachers were introduced to the OCHRE resources which are supported by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools to increase teacher productivity in planning mathematics learning. These resources helped by providing learning sequences and resources for each Mathematics

lesson while also encouraging teachers to be creative when applying these resources to their different contexts.

To highlight students being self-relegated learners, the school used Student-led conferences as the first formal contact with families about learning. There is now an established framework for sharing student learning and goals with their families. This puts the students in charge of the parent-teacher conversations.

The school continued to use the Victorian Learning Commissioners program, where a small group of our students was taught how to collect and analyse data based around school safety. This group took this job very seriously and, as a school, there was an application and interview process. During 2023, the Learning and Teaching & Wellbeing Leaders, rolled out and implemented the school's learning model and philosophies. This was implemented in all classrooms where students were encouraged in their learning based on the dispositions of Independence, Perseverance, Curiosity, Reflection and Collaboration.

## Student Learning Outcomes

2023 NAPLAN data indicates that the school mean scores were above the National mean scores in Reading (Gr 3 & 5), Spelling (Gr 3 & 5), and Numeracy (Gr 3 & 5). The school's mean score in Gr 3 Writing was slightly below National Mean but the mean score in Gr 5 Writing was higher than the National mean score.

Analysing 2022 and 2023 NAPLAN data, which provides data from different cohorts of students at the same year levels over the two years, the greatest areas of growth were in Numeracy in both Grade 3 and 5. The areas with the largest negative growth were in Grammar and Punctuation and Spelling in both Grade 3 and 5..

As well as the annual NAPLAN testing, the school continues to practise, collect and analyse data throughout the year to inform the next steps in student learning. Some actions the school has undertaken to improve student learning outcomes are as follows:

- The school uses a whole-school assessment and data schedule which is used to constantly monitor student progress.
- All staff, including LSOs, can complete running records and analyse the evidence. This then gave teachers a quick and accurate record of what the next step of learning would be for students in Reading.
- Pre-tests have been used to inform teaching so that they are more certain of each child's strengths and challenges in learning.
- A focus on students viewing their pre-test and developing SMART goals thus ensuring that they are developing their capacity to be self-regulated learners.
- Post-tests help the teachers measure learning growth and to evaluate teaching strategies and approaches.



- 'Getting Ready In Numeracy' (G.R.I.N) sessions for students who need extra support in order to get to the standard in their learning.
- The school has implemented learning sprints at all year levels. A Learning Sprint is a short (3-5 week) intervention focusing on extra support and tuition targeted at particular students with an assessed learning need.
- Intervention programs such as 'Eriksen' have two dedicated educators to teach selected students phonological skills within class time.
- The continued pedagogical approach of 'Bookmaking' in the Junior year levels to increase engagement in Writing.

<b>NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards</b>			
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Year level</b>	<b>Mean Scale score</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	394	48%
	Year 5	491	71%
Numeracy	Year 3	420	74%
	Year 5	497	77%
Reading	Year 3	411	77%
	Year 5	513	90%
Spelling	Year 3	412	63%
	Year 5	499	86%
Writing	Year 3	412	75%
	Year 5	502	86%

\*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2023 due to participation not meeting these criteria or no students were assessed. Participants include students who were assessed, including non-attempt, or those exempted from the test.

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## Student Wellbeing

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### Goals

- To increase student ownership of their learning - by ensuring that students have a voice in their learning.

#### Intended Outcome

- That students are self regulated learners.

### Achievements

Developing the wellbeing of our students is central to our purpose as a school and is reflected in our Vision.

In 2023, the wellbeing focus was to consolidate and embed social-emotional learning into our curriculum as well as to introduce initiatives to our school. In 2023 we introduced Wellbeing time into our timetable to ensure explicit lessons could be delivered. Personal and Social Capabilities from the Victorian Curriculum are also embedded as part of our learning success criteria in all areas of learning.

The Zones of Regulation continued to be taught as a way of improving emotional literacy and to teach and use self-regulation strategies. Regular check-ins using the Zones of Regulation gives students a voice and teachers a way of noting who needs assistance. By having the opportunity to voice their feelings, students are empowered and develop relationships with peers and teachers. Staff continued their professional learning in this space by learning about self-regulation with our onsite psychologist Tracy Bentin. We have now developed a continuum for the Zones of Regulation and Emotional Literacy to demonstrate how students developmentally learn the skills in this area of learning.

Empowering students to operate in a digital world was a new focus for 2023. We undertook a Digital Citizenship project in conjunction with QUT and Evolve Education in which lessons were explicitly taught and reviewed by St Mary's Staff and students. These lessons were well accepted by students and encouraged honest discussions. Staff participated in Professional Learning with Evolve staff and parents were invited to attend a Workshop in November.

We continued to teach Child Safety using the 'Daniel Morcombe' online resources and curriculum which aligns with the Child Safety standards. The curriculum in Child Safety from Prep to Grade 6 highlights the importance of being safe, identifying people who can help when you are feeling unsafe and includes how to be safe online and what to do if bullying occurs.

The Peaceful kids program continued to be delivered as a small group intervention for years 3-6. The 8 week program helps students to lessen the symptoms of anxiety and to build resilience. It teaches them coping strategies when they are feeling worried and stressed and teaches them the skills to use.

In 2023 we engaged with external organisations to support our wellbeing and social emotional programs. Students in grades 3-4 participated in the 'Stand Tall' program by Melbourne United Basketball Club. The 4 week program focused on the values of Excellence, Community, Selflessness & Inclusiveness.

The senior students engaged in a full day program run by "Unleashing Potential", which focused on positive peer relationships.

Our 'Story Dog' continued to visit each Monday with Years 3 & 4 students having the opportunity to improve both reading and social emotional skills.

At St Mary's we continued to give students a voice through various formal and informal leadership opportunities. Students were regularly called upon to give input on school matters via Google Forms, focus groups or surveys. Student-led conferences are now firmly in place, as is goal setting in all areas of learning. Through goal setting students demonstrate the ability to be self-regulated learners by knowing where they are at and where they need to go next in their learning.

The Victorian Learning Commissioners continued to take an active role in representing students and collecting and interpreting data with the aim to improve school life. These elected students from our senior school worked with both students and staff in their role.

The collection of Wellbeing data is relatively new but highly important. In 2023 we continued to use ACER testing on a yearly basis. The information received informed our wellbeing sessions and highlighted cohorts that needed further support in areas of social-emotional learning. Data was also collected via Zones of Regulation check-ins in Homerooms.

Operoo was the platform for parents/carers to list student medical needs. Staff were all trained in First Aid, CPR, Asthma Management, Anaphylaxis Management and Epilepsy Management. Epipens are centrally recorded via the Epiclub portal and the school receives notification when these are due to expire. All students Prep - 6 have a yearly incursion with St John's Ambulance focusing on First Aid and getting help in times of medical emergency.

The school psychologist Tracey Bentin continued to provide valuable support to students, parents and staff in her 2 days per week at the school.

At the end of 2023 staff engaged in specific Professional Learning in the area of Student Wellbeing and this work will continue into 2024 as we embed the Student Behaviour Support Policy and school-wide expectations.

Due to changing enrolment numbers, at the end of 2023 we altered our buddy system from Prep-6. We created buddy teams which allowed each incoming Prep to have 3 Grade 6 buddies act as a team to help them transition to primary school. The Grade 6s created video introductions which were sent home during the Orientation process and these were well received by our newest students.

## **Value Added**

Connecting with external organisations such as Melbourne United Basketball Club, Evolve Education, QUT, Unleashing Potential and Story Dogs to enhance our Wellbeing and Social-Emotional learning.

Professional Learning in the areas of Student behaviour (Tarun Stevenson) and self-regulation (psychologist Tracey Bentin)

New 'Buddy System' in which 3 Grade 6s become a network for our Prep students. The engaging introduction videos were well received and appreciated by Prep families.

Consolidating and embedding Social-Emotional learning into our curriculum and the allocation of Wellbeing time in our planners.

Digital citizenship training by staff, Parent Workshop and explicitly taught curriculum from P-6 to enhance the capability of our students to be safe and responsible in our ever changing digital world.

Our Grade 5 & 6 students participated in our outdoor education camp at Camp Rumbug in Gippsland.

All levels participated in a Water Safety incursion with Life Saving Victoria and our 3 - 6 students participated in an Open Water Learning Experience at the LSV headquarters at Sandridge Beach.

## **Student Satisfaction**

Data from the 2023 Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools - School Improvement Surveys (MACSSIS) showed that our students had a higher rate of satisfaction than the MACS

average in the following domains:- Rigorous expectations, School engagement, Teacher-student relationships, Learning disposition, Student voice and Catholic identity.

The domain of greatest challenge to us was the student perceptions of School climate, with the perceptions of the social and learning climate of the school lower with one particular identified cohort of students.

The overall satisfaction was equal to the MACS average.

## Student Attendance

Student attendance/absence is recorded twice daily by classroom teachers using the Nforma online platform. This platform maintains a permanent record of student attendance and absences.

Parents are expected to inform the school, via letter, email or phone call, when their child is absent from school.

Parents are contacted via sms by 11.00am if their child is absent from school without explanation. Our Administration staff monitor absences in Nforma and make contact with parents when no explanation has been provided.

<b>Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level</b>	
Y01	92.0%
Y02	91.2%
Y03	92.2%
Y04	94.4%
Y05	90.3%
Y06	93.5%
Overall average attendance	92.2%

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## Leadership

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

#### Goal

- To strengthen a cohesive professional learning community - by implementing a clear and well known learning and leadership architecture

#### Intended Outcome

- That all staff are engaged in school improvement

### Achievements

In 2023, the Leadership Team consisted of Chris Ray (Principal), Amanda Gill (Deputy Principal and Learning Diversity Leader), and Sharen Maguire (Learning & Teaching Leader). Our School Improvement Team added Jane Grapsas (Literacy Leader), Tania Calabrese (Student Wellbeing Leader), Louise Alonso (ICT Leader) and Brad Sacco (religious Education Leader).

In 2023, we implemented the second year of our 4-year School Improvement Plan that was developed during 2021 by all staff with support from the Team at the Northern Region Office of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS).

The Leadership Team continued to strive to promote school life and learning with Christ as its foundation and model. We sought strategic avenues and opportunities that were forward-looking.

We actively promoted our Catholic identity by holding clearly the Christian vision of integrating life and faith in all our dealings. We ensured that educational programs and celebrations were valued. We sought ways to respond to social justice and needs in our society.

We encouraged, supported and promoted a culture in the school that sought evidence to inform action. We sought and critically evaluated new ideas and practices in teaching, learning and assessment. We shared responsibility for monitoring and maintaining a positive school climate of fairness, respect and tolerance. We supported learners of wide-ranging capacities and encouraged the pursuit of excellence.

All staff participated in professional learning and development. We ensured that the directions outlined in the School Improvement Plan and Annual Action Plan were followed, whilst offering opportunities for all staff to be professionally supported and challenged.

At every leadership meeting our major focus is the ongoing review of our Annual Action Plan to ensure strategies are fully implemented. This has guided our planning meetings and Professional Learning meetings. Regular reviews have been conducted to ensure that outcomes and targets are monitored and addressed.

We have also focused on building student voice through broadening student leadership roles and increasing the profile of the Student Representative Council. School and House Captains continued to be involved in decision-making in many areas in the life of the school. In 2023, our school continued as an active participant in the Victorian Learning Commission with student Commissioners helping to rebrand important learning resources and tools used in the school.

Weekly team planning and level meetings are embedded in our culture and as such provide for accurate, supportive planning to meet children's needs, professional learning and reflection on our practice.

PLC meetings occurred in all learning areas. The focus for PLC meetings is based on the evidence we see in student learning so that we can make informed decisions about the next steps in learning.

We continued our participation in Simon Breakspear's Agile Schools program as a means to effectively implement school improvement initiatives.

We also continued our valuable involvement in the Learning Cluster we shared with St Joseph's West Brunswick, St Clare's Thomastown West, St John's Thomastown East and St Joseph's Mernda.

<b>Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning</b>	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023	
<p>The school showed its commitment to the ongoing Professional Learning of staff by providing opportunities for staff to engage in the following learning:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middle Leaders Development with our North Central Cluster group</li> <li>• Victorian Learning Commission</li> <li>• Primary English Teachers Association of Australia Conference</li> <li>• GRIN (Numeracy) training</li> <li>• Maths Proficiencies</li> <li>• Enhancing Literacy</li> <li>• Bookmaking Program</li> <li>• Seven Steps to Writing</li> <li>• Cybersafety</li> <li>• Positive Behaviour Support</li> <li>• Enhancing Indigenous Perspectives with Leila Guruwiwi</li> <li>• NCCD Modules</li> <li>• Building Leadership Capacity</li> <li>• Agile Schools</li> <li>• First Aid Training - CPR, Anaphylaxis management, Asthma management, Injury management, Epilepsy management</li> <li>• Self Regulation and developing Self-Regulated Learners</li> <li>• Leaders participated in the following Catholic Education Melbourne Network Professional Learning programs:- Principal; Deputy Principal; Learning &amp; Teaching; Religious Education; Student Wellbeing; Learning Diversity; Literacy; Maths</li> </ul>	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	18
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$2350.00

### **Teacher Satisfaction**

From the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools - School Improvement Surveys (MACSSIS) conducted in 2023, St Mary's staff satisfaction ratings in the following domains were all rated equal or higher than the MACS mean:-

Staff-leadership relationships, Instructional leadership, Professional learning, Collaboration in teams and Support for teams

The domain we would like to improve during 2024 is Collective efficacy.



<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	11.1%
Graduate	16.7%
Graduate Certificate	2.8%
Bachelor Degree	50.0%
Advanced Diploma	19.4%
No Qualifications Listed	0.0%

<b>Staff Composition</b>	
Principal Class (Headcount)	3
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	31
Teaching Staff (FTE)	22.6
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	17
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	12.7
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

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## Community Engagement

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

The Goals from our Annual Action Plan focus on building a sense of belonging within our school community. That all learners, families and staff engage collaboratively to build connections and strengthen capacity to improve student learning outcomes. The importance of faith development is to be nurtured within the school and parish connections.

Our Intended Outcomes have been:-

- That school staff and families work collaboratively to create and strengthen safe, child friendly learning environments.
- That relationships with families and community are actively fostered and sustained to support students to thrive in learning and life.
- That families are actively engaged as learners in the school community and genuine partnerships are fostered.
- That connections to engagement in the life of the Parish School are fostered.
- That there is improved engagement with wider community groups and organisations .

### Achievements

St Mary's is a Catholic school with a partnership approach to engaging school families and staff with the St Mary's parish and broader community groups.

We have promoted a shared vision and goals by:

- building partnerships between families and teachers in the children's learning journey.
- engaging with and supporting connections with community organisations.
- nurturing the complementary roles of engaging families and teachers as mentors and partners in the children's learning journeys.
- mitigating the impact of disadvantage and barriers to engagement.

We were presented with a new year of opportunities to build on community reengagement from 2022.

The challenges presented included families post COVID continuing to work from home and leaving the local area for housing and or employment opportunities. Families were also enthusiastic to embrace inclusive community engagement. The slow decline in enrollments has led us to reflect on the platforms we have in place and to continue to strive towards increasing opportunities for the community to engage and contribute to the St Mary's

community. We identified that we had the capacity to strengthen and consolidate the processes already established.

We focused on continuing communication links with the Parish, providing more opportunities for parents and families to be onsite and engage in valuable experiences that would build relationships based on inclusiveness, opportunity and trust. We set out to ensure parents would see and feel the learning and social opportunities that the school was delivering.

Members of the St Mary's School community and the wider community were engaged in the children's learning and community experiences through participation and exposure to a wide range of opportunities. Connections to external community support organisations were established to collaboratively engage and support families and students in need. Some of the actions taken to build community engagement include:-

- district sporting events
- school athletics and cross country events
- running Student-Led Conferences
- conducting Parent-Teacher Conferences
- supporting parents and students with alternative opportunities for 'transition to learning'
- updating our school website
- conducting personal support group meetings for Evidence-Based Intervention program participants
- providing Psychological support for students and parents - including support to connect with local agencies and Paediatricians and onsite assessment opportunities for students
- linking with Council and External Support Services for families and students
- linking with Allied Health support networks for families and students
- engaging with CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- sharing information via our weekly Newsletter
- conducting regular, student-led school Assemblies
- running a positive transition program for incoming Prep students & families
- supporting parents and students in meetings and communications for Year 7 transition
- being open for School Tours as required by prospective families
- Special event days including - Grandparents and Special Persons / Mothers Day and Fathers Day
- offering a Before & After School Care Program run by OSHClub
- using Operoo as our School Communication Platform
- using See Saw as a communication platform for sharing student learning achievements
- engaging with Story Dogs as a reading support program
- connecting with Parade College to participate in the Manchester City Soccer Program
- conducting regular Level expos to share learning with parents

- conducting professionally led Cyber Safety sessions run by Evolve Education which entailed PD interactive sessions for staff, student learning and parent workshop
- having clear Information Technology Protocols for parents and students
- engaging Interrelate to conduct Relationship & Human Sexuality programs for parents and students
- students exploring and utilising facilities and experiences within our local community through level and small group opportunities
- school swimming program at Ivanhoe Aquatics for our P - 2 students
- Life Saving Victoria conducted water safety programs for all students, including open water excursions for Gr 3 - 6 students
- Italian Day Celebration to celebrate our community diversity
- inviting all families to share in our Christmas Carols evening
- supporting Lane way Lunches, an initiative of Darebin Council
- encouraging coat donations to BIG HUG
- supporting the Christmas collection of toys for local charities
- supporting the St Vincent De Paul Society and their Feast of the Sacred Heart collection
- supporting families struggling with School Fees
- inviting and training parents to be learning supports in our classrooms
- performances by our Student Choir at Sacraments, Christmas event and Performance at external competition
- accepting ACU Pre-Service teacher placements
- supplying ChromeBook devices to students in need
- providing additional supports for students/families at point of need ( e.g stationary, clothing, swimming accessories, uniforms, school camps)
- Easter and Book week community celebrations including student parades
- parent involvement and support in excursions
- parent involvement and support in special learning opportunities in the school eg. cooking

Our magnificent Parents and Friends Group have supported the school and families through:-

- Parents and Friends Meetings
- organising Parent social evenings / events
- running a School Disco for all the children
- having regular Special Food days
- organising Class family social opportunities (Offsite and Onsite)
- planning the Year 6 graduation dinner
- organising Mother's and Father's Day celebrations with coffee vans and gift stalls
- setting up the morning Tea for Special person's Day
- running our second hand uniform store
- celebrating teacher appreciation day

- organising gifts for staff in year levels at the end of school year and for individual staff milestones

We have partnered with St Mary's Parish through events such as:-

- Sacramental Masses for Eucharist / Confirmation / Reconciliation
- weekly class Masses
- year level participation at weekend Parish Masses
- Life and Faith Sacramental Formation Sessions for parents and children (including children who are not students of the school but are from parish families)
- Graduation Mass
- Christmas Eve Family Mass
- social events with staff and Parish priests

### **Parent Satisfaction**

In comparing results from the 2022 MACSSIS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools - School Improvement Survey) Parent Satisfaction data with our data from the 2023 MACSSIS, the area of challenge was Student safety.

Two domains showed no change:- Barriers to engagement and Catholic identity.

Four domains showed improved positive results from 2022 to 2023:- Family engagement, School fit, School climate and Communication.

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## Financial Performance

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The school's financial performance information and a report of the financial activities of the school's boarding premises (if applicable) have been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and will be available for the community to access from their website at [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au).

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at [www.smthornbury.catholic.edu.au](http://www.smthornbury.catholic.edu.au)