



Diocese of Sale
Catholic Education Ltd

2024

Annual Report to the School Community



St Mary's Primary School

11 Pearson Street, SALE 3850

Principal: Brett Morris

Web: www.stmarysale.catholic.edu.au

Registration: 183, E Number: E4004

Principal's Attestation

I, Brett Morris, attest that St Mary's Primary 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 2024 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 31 Mar 2025

About this report

St Mary's Primary 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](#).

Governing Authority Report

During 2024, more than 18,200 students were educated in 43 Catholic schools, owned and operated by Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL).

Across our Catholic schools 2,900 staff were employed nurturing students in their academic, spiritual, physical, and emotional development.

Working with the Bishop of Sale, the DOSCEL Board, DOSCEL Secretariat, schools and parishes, the mission to offer every student the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God while achieving their personal best, remained at the forefront of our work.

Investing in school staff and leadership teams to promote expert learning and teaching practices continued to be a priority. Efforts to develop new recruitment strategies against a national teacher shortage were also fruitful.

In 2024, we partnered with Swinburne University of Technology to launch the first Accelerated Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree. The program is tailored for staff working as Education Support Officers (ESOs) in our Catholic schools, providing a structured pathway for them to become qualified teachers. In November 2024, we welcomed 29 ESOs who will commence the program in 2025.

Reflecting on 2024, we have much to be proud of.

Ongoing significant investment in new learning facilities and refurbishments through the Capital Grants Program and school community funding continued across our schools.

In December 2024, we were thrilled to complete construction of the new St Josephine Bakhita Catholic Primary School at Clyde North in preparation for its opening in 2025. This is the 39th primary school within the network of primary and secondary schools owned and operated by DOSCEL. The project was supported by the Victorian Government Capital Funding Program (VGCF) and a loan from the Capital Development Fund (CDF).

We also welcomed capital funding announcements from the Victorian and Australian governments to support continued school infrastructure development.

Most notably we welcomed Victorian Government funding announcements to support the building of two new primary schools in growth areas - St Oscar Romero Catholic Primary School Stage 1 at Drouin and Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic Primary School Stage 1 at Clyde planned to open in 2027. The funding support recognises the demand for Catholic education in these growth communities.

The care, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people remain a central focus and fundamental responsibility of everything we do. Child Safety Week 2024 was an opportunity for schools to share with their communities their activities and programs to keep young people safe every day.

I extend my deep appreciation to everyone involved in Catholic education within the Diocese of Sale for their commitment to our vocation of Inspiring Faith, Inspiring Learning.

Paul Velten

Director of Catholic Education - Diocese of Sale

Chief Executive Officer - Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited

Vision and Mission

St Mary's School is a welcoming and inclusive community where:

- a quality Catholic educational environment exists that is strengthened through school, family and parish partnerships.
- staff and students are challenged to extend their learning in a safe and supportive environment.
- individuality is celebrated and the wellbeing of students, staff and families is promoted.

School Overview

St Mary's is a school rich in the traditions of family involvement and quality education. We seek to share in the vision and mission of the Catholic Church by ensuring the message of Jesus is alive within the school community. As a community of faith, we endeavour to provide opportunities for children to develop their unique talents and personalities.

We recognise that we are a community working in partnership with parents and the wider Parish and town community to promote learning for each individual. Student wellbeing is a high priority, and we believe that we need to develop resilience amongst children through our pastoral, child safety and wellbeing initiatives that fall under Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Support.

St Mary's offers comprehensive specialist programs appropriate to the needs of our students including Student Wellbeing, Italian, Physical Education, Swimming, Art and Music.

We value our partnership with families in educating their children and the support of parents and community in school activities including:

- School Advisory Committee
- Class Parents Program
- Colour Fun Run
- Liturgies & Sacramental Program
- Sporting and swimming events
- Celebrations and Feast Days
- Canteen
- School magazine
- Reading and classroom assistance
- Parents and Friends Association.

Principal's Report

2024 was a busy but successful year for St Mary's in many ways:

Accelerated student learning was the focus with school priorities being driven through the Learning and Teaching Network. Recognising that teacher practice is the number one factor influencing student learning, ongoing upskilling and PD around High Impact Teaching Strategies and evidence-based practice continued for all staff across the year. Our NAPLAN data indicated that our work is having a positive impact, and we continue to strive for school improvement across the board.

Again, our P & F worked hard to plan, coordinate and run various events. From the Movie Night to the Disco and the Colour run, all events were a great success, raising money and providing our students and families with fun, laughter and community connection.

Money raised was reinvested into the school, and the new "Caterpillar" playground was purchased and installed. The provision of the school canteen and the wages of the Canteen coordinator proved, again, to be a service that is valued and appreciated by the school community.

Nurtured and inspired by our Catholic faith, our school community understands the great privilege of being located beside the Cathedral. Providing a quality education, in partnership with families, our priests and our St Mary's Parish, our Catholic story permeates every aspect of our day-to-day learning. The Sacramental program saw students continue their faith journey and the program was well supported by school leadership and staff.

For a small school competing against local schools two or three times our enrolment, our students shine on the sporting arena. In the small schools division (school with similar enrolment numbers) St Mary's again won every major district competition and had a number of students represent at State level in various individual sports.

Staffing wise, Mrs Joanne Feuilherade and Miss Molly Semmens concluded their time at St Mary's at the end of the year. We thank Jo & Molly for time at St Mary's, and we wish them well.

It is a privilege to work at St Mary's school and, on behalf of the St Mary's School community, I thank Fr Francis and Fr Aneesh for their support of the staff and their ongoing care to deepen faith and connect both school and parish. I congratulate our staff on their dedication to the children, for their support of each other and for their willingness to trial new ideas and evidence-based, best practice to bring about improved student learning.

I thank the parents for their trust in allowing us to collaborate with them in the education of their children. I congratulate the children on their attitude and effort, for their respect for others, for openness and cheerfulness that augers towards them becoming responsible adults and informed citizens who may contribute to the Church's mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal:

- To maintain and enhance Catholic identity by embedding the Religious Education Curriculum *To Live in Christ Jesus* in a dialogical and recontextualised manner.

Intended Outcome:

- That staff have a deep knowledge and understanding of the learning progressions of the Religious Education Curriculum, *To Live in Christ Jesus* and demonstrate a strong understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Particularity.

Achievements

During 2024, it was important for us to continue our work in maintaining and enhancing the Catholic Identity of our school. We embarked on an advertising campaign with our neighbouring Catholic schools to highlight our uniqueness and role within the wider Catholic community and local context. We also sought to find new ways to promote the Catholicity of our school to prospective families. Religious Education units across the school allowed regular opportunities for children to bear witness to their faith. Teachers attended professional learning sessions held within the school, to assist them in developing a deeper understanding of the Religious Education curriculum, *To Live in Christ Jesus*. This enabled teaching staff to plan contemporary Religious Education inquiry units that challenged children and invited them to explore what it means to be Christian in the modern world.

The “Family centred, Parish based, and School supported” Sacramental program saw a number of students take the next steps of their journey in Faith and commitment to Catholic life. It was lovely to see so many families reconnecting with the Church through school Masses.

Prayer forms part of our daily practice and in 2024 we continued to search for many different ways to include varying forms of prayer into our daily school life for both staff and students. We conclude the school week with an Assembly at which we acknowledge our Catholic Identity. We pray our school prayer and the Hail Mary (in Italian), acknowledge the traditional custodians, sing the National Anthem and raise the Australian flag. Each week a different class presents the Sunday Gospel at Assembly on which the whole school (and attending parents) reflect.

Value Added

The school reached out to the local and wider community where possible by raising money for Caritas, donating to Saint Vincent de Paul and other local organisations. All classes shared the Sunday Gospel with parents and parishioners at weekly assemblies. Once again, weekly contributions, by the Principal and our Religious Education Leader, in the school newsletter provided development in faith opportunities for parents.

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal:

- To build the professional capacity of all teachers to be expert teachers.
- To improve and accelerate learning outcomes for all students.

Intended Outcomes:

Staff have a strong knowledge of the Victorian Curriculum and its progressions of learning.

- Analysis of assessment data.
- Utilise Evidence Based Practice.
- Enact a Clinical Teaching Cycle.
- Develop and embed the Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Support (WSAPBS).

Achievements

In 2024, we re-emphasized our commitment to improve learning for all students and for ourselves as teachers. It is important that we are always looking to improve and enhance learning outcomes for our students.

Literacy and Numeracy, as always, are high on the agenda at St Mary's School. We were able to critically evaluate our student data and make plans for the future. We saw a need to review our numeracy and reading programs to address some observations made from our student data. Teachers continued to use data throughout the year to drive teaching and learning.

We maintained our Response to Intervention model with appropriate instruction for all students and provision of early intervention and support programs at a more targeted level by providing small group instruction in Reading and Extending Mathematical Understanding (EMU) via a specialist teacher. Little Learners Love Literacy (LLLL) was rolled-out in Foundation and Year 1 in 2020, introducing the Science of Reading approach. Following the success of Little Learners, the school sought to build upon this work and Initial Lit was implemented into Year 2. Mini Lit Sage was introduced in Term 3 of 2023 to assist in the provision of intervention in the form of small group instruction for the lowest 25%. Additional small group support was again provided through the Tutor Learning Initiative and the work of our education support officers was valued in all grades. Year 3, 4 and 5 made use of Jocelyn Seamer's "The Resource Room" and the Whole Class Structured Literacy block. Small group

intervention continued across the senior grades targeting Phonics and Decoding. We also provided intensive Speech support for both speech production and language acquisition for students as we engage the services of a qualified practitioner to assess, instruct and develop appropriate programs for the students. We will continue to monitor all supported students as they move through the school, effectively communicating concerns with their parents.

We continued to provide a wide and varied curriculum with many opportunities to participate in Physical Education Programs at a local, regional and state level, which is very much appreciated by parents. We encourage children to participate in a variety of sports at these levels, not only for competition but to boost the self-esteem of children who may not necessarily participate in weekend sporting programs. Our swimming programs, together with winter sports programs and athletics are always well-supported by families. They provide another opportunity for parents to be involved within the school.

We provided our children with many opportunities to access learning through incursions and excursions assisted by funding from the Parents and Friends Association.

Student Learning Outcomes

In NAPLAN Reading Yr 3 sit above the National & State at every percentile while Yr 5 are similar to National but below State at every percentile.

We believe the Yr 3 results are a good indication that the implementation of "Little Learners Love Literacy" and the upskilling of staff in the explicit teaching of a systematic synthetic phonics program, (making use of MultiLit) is having a positive impact.

With an aim to continue this work across our middle and senior grades, we have started to follow Jocelyn Seamer's structured literacy model but have not yet gained traction or had enough time to see positive results in our NAPLAN data.

In NAPLAN Numeracy, again our Yr 3 students sit above the National & State at each percentile except the 90th where we level out. This again hints at us not extending our most capable students.

While we know that we have a couple of low outliers in Yr 5, we still exceed National & State at the 10th and 25th percentile.

Our challenge remains to lift and accelerate the children sitting at every percentile, particularly the 75th and 90th percentile.

To ensure accelerated progress for all students, we will continue to focus on building teacher capacity through professional learning opportunities, evidence-based teacher practices, utilising the expertise of the Community of Practice leaders (previously known as the Collective) and school leaders at the planning table.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	424	74%
	Year 5	488	62%
Numeracy	Year 3	441	87%
	Year 5	500	86%
Reading	Year 3	456	91%
	Year 5	490	69%
Spelling	Year 3	417	78%
	Year 5	493	76%
Writing	Year 3	465	96%
	Year 5	487	79%

*A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2024 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.

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal:

- To build the professional capacity of all teachers to be expert teachers.
- Building upon the existing culture of care and respect to create a school environment that is safe, that celebrates difference and diversity, promotes inclusion and nurtures positive relationships.

Intended outcomes:

That the school continues to embed the Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Support (WSAPBS), to ensure all staff have a clear understanding of student management, ensuring all students are engaged in purposeful learning in a safe, inclusive environment.

- Build confidence in students through the development of their individual talents, interests and relationships.
- Develop meaningful ways to involve families and access the wider community.
- Continually promote and celebrate our identity within the parish.
- To develop safe digital citizenship practices.

Achievements

During 2024, St Mary's School worked extremely hard to continue to develop links between the school, home, parish and wider community.

Community events (such as incursions/excursions, performances/shows) and various school events (such as Liturgies, expos featuring student learning and school life celebrations- Mother's/Father's Day breakfast, sports carnivals etc) were held throughout the year.

In addition to the Movie night, the school disco and community initiatives such as Ride to School and the Colour Fun Run were real highlights. In its third year, the Colour Fun Run provided an opportunity for nearly all our families to connect in the school grounds. The Year Six Graduation and End of Year Concert were well attended by families and it was a lovely way to end the year.

Our student leaders represented the school with pride at various community functions and our school captains played significant roles during the ANZAC Day ceremony.

Our School Advisory Committee continued to be a wonderful support and sounding board. The group engaged in conversations, assisted to strengthen partnerships and aided in the process of school improvement.

During 2024, parents continued to welcome new families and support families in need through the "Class Parents" network.

The Parent and Friends Association meet regularly to plan school fundraising events. The committee was keen to financially support school initiatives, and they further assisted with the purchase of additional resources.

Value Added

St Mary's Whole School Masses, Prayer Liturgies, Mother's Day & Father's Day events, the Movie Night, School Disco and our school concert "Beauty and the Beast" were all very successful events involving both the school and wider community. The involvement of grandparents, friends and parishioners celebrated the work of the school and provided opportunities for the children to learn of the past and value the generous contributions of older generations.

St Mary's continues to be involved in a number of activities in the area of service. The parent-coordinated Casserole Bank ensured meals could be sent to school families and they were well-received and appreciated by all. Some families required some extra support while other families (including school staff) generously donated to help others in the school community.

The school continues to access outside agencies (e.g. counselling to assist with specific children and family needs) and has a strong ongoing connection with local paediatricians and speech pathologists.

The school has received positive feedback and a high degree of satisfaction from families who accessed these support networks.

Student Satisfaction

Data from the 2024 Insight SRC Survey shows students express their satisfaction with Year 5/6 children saying they feel connected to the school (75%), and they recognise and value Teacher Relationships (Personal Development 75%, Encouraging Learning 78% & Teacher Empathy 81%).

While "Encouragement in Learning" is reasonably high, it has dropped by 5 with Student Motivation at 79% and Learning Confidence dropping 4 points to 67%.

Year 5/6 students indicated that the teaching is purposeful (80%) and they rate Teacher Empathy highly (81% for Year 5/6 and 88% for year 3/4).

The students of St Mary's are very compliant and appear to be happy at school with student scores for Engagement in Learning stable for both Year 3/4 and Year 5/6: "Motivation" (79% & 79%) and "Connectedness to Peers" (79% & 76%). There is, however, more work to be done in regard to providing "Stimulating Learning" (69% & 69%) and "Collaboration" (Year 5/6 at 67%).

Student Attendance

When a student is absent from school, parents are to notify the school via the Parent Access Module on SIMON (our communication system). Parents are asked to include a reason for the absence. Teachers mark the roll (twice each day) and attendance/non-attendance is logged via SIMON. In the event of a student absence without notification from parents, an automated message is sent immediately to parents requesting a response and reason for the absence. If parents do not respond to the automated message, our administration staff contacts parents/carers by phone that same morning. The principal will contact parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences, with a view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences and focus on increased student engagement and attendance at school.

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	92.0
Y02	91.4
Y03	88.6
Y04	89.1
Y05	89.1
Y06	91.3
Overall average attendance	90.3

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal:

- To build leadership capacity throughout the school

Intended outcomes:

- All leaders are instructional leaders supporting staff to enact changes needed to improve student outcomes which support the diocesan agenda.
- That decision-making is based on evidence.

Achievements

The school continued to focus on developing leadership capacity throughout the school. This occurred across staff, student and parent groups.

In 2024, the Leadership Team continued to meet on a regular basis to discuss priorities for School Improvement. Each of the leading teachers were encouraged to utilise their specific skills and interests. They were also encouraged to build upon current competencies and to extend their learning to new areas. Directed by data, and always with an aim to improve student learning (accelerated learning) through building teacher expertise, the leadership team continued to promote and embed the learning from the Learning and Teaching Network.

The School Advisory Committee, in partnership with the Parents and Friends, continued to maintain its profile as the body responsible for working with the principal and school staff in developing the school facilities and the sense of community.

With respect to student leadership during 2024, we sought to maintain the different Leadership groups within the student cohort. Our Student Representative Council (SRC) engaged in initiatives to promote student voice and Child Safety. The SRC group continued to play a role in student engagement in school decisions especially in the area of Catholic Social Teaching. The student leaders, across all areas, displayed excellent leadership throughout the year and set a great tone for the school. The children represented their school with pride at sports carnivals and during community events. There were opportunities for all year six students to lead various components of our weekly assemblies and guest presenters from every year level were encouraged to share reports on school and classroom initiatives.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2024	
<p>Staff engaged in the following Professional Learning opportunities throughout 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anaphylaxis, Asthma and CPR training. • Child Safety Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations eLearning module • Anaphylaxis e-learning module. • Diocese of Sale Learning and Teaching Networks focused on professional development to implement the Victorian Curriculum, Religious Education, Numeracy, Literacy, Leadership development and Learning Adjustment strategies. • Victorian Curriculum Professional Learning. • Child Safety Standards sessions. • Assessment Professional Learning. • Initial Lit and Mini Lit Sages. • Gaining/Maintaining Accreditation to Teach Religious Education. • Fr Elio Capra on Recontextualising the Story of Jesus Through Art. 	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2024	20
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$1706.35

Teacher Satisfaction

Teacher satisfaction, as identified under learning (the extent to which staff members feel their efforts are being recognised and their capability is being developed through appropriate learning and development opportunities) suggests that staff feel their efforts are valued (Appraisal & Recognition at 82%) and they are supported through professional learning opportunities (Professional Growth rated at 85%) (Insight SRC survey).

There has been a real team effort, modelled by school leadership, to maintain staff wellbeing with Individual Morale (85%) and School Morale (91%). While the pillars Empathy (90.6), Engagement (86.5) and Learning (81.2) were sustained, improvement in the pillar of Clarity was most pleasing, up from (78.5) to (87.9).

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	3
Graduate	4
Graduate Certificate	0
Bachelor Degree	14
Advanced Diploma	3
No Qualifications Listed	1

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	17
Teaching Staff (FTE)	10.77
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	10
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	6.08
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal:

- St Mary's aims to create a school community where all people feel valued and respected. Designed around the common desire to see all children grow and learn in a happy, safe, faith-filled and supportive environment, all members have important roles to play in the provision of learning opportunities.

Achievements

St Mary's prides itself on the strong partnership of school and family. 2024 saw parents and grandparents involved in various school activities and events over the course of the year. All prospective parent volunteers met child safety regulations (holding WWCC, attending volunteer inductions and passing referee checks). From assisting with classroom learning activities to helping out at whole school sporting events and attending special community gatherings (such as Liturgies, the Colour Fun Run and school concert), our parents and extended family members came along to be part of their children's learning and school life.

I thank all our parents for their incredible support for the children and the work of the staff.

Parent Satisfaction

Parents feel very involved in their child's education, rating "Parent Partnerships" at 79% and "Parent Input" at 85%. Parents have confidence in the teachers rating "Focus on Learning" at 88% and "Stimulating Learning" at 86% (Insight SRC survey).

2024 saw many opportunities for parents to be involved in activities and events at the school. Parents expressed their belief that their children were more engaged in their schooling, rating "Connected to School" at 89% and "Student Motivation" at 82%.

Financial Performance

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.

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at www.stmarysale.catholic.edu.au