



# 2023

## Annual Report to the School Community



*With God First,  
We Will Live, Learn  
and Thrive*

### St Thomas More School

Cuthbert's Road, ALFREDTON 3350

Principal: Simon Duffy

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

Registration: 1803, E Number: E2068

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## Principal's Attestation

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I, Simon Duffy, attest that St Thomas More 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 01 May 2024

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## About this report

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St Thomas More 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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The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) governs 52 primary schools, one F – 8 school, and five secondary Colleges, educating around 13,500 students and employing more than 2,200 teachers and staff, from Mildura in the north, Portland in the south, and west to Edenhope and Nhill.

Now in its third year of operation, DOBCEL continues to work diligently to ensure all its schools flourish fully in their mission to provide high-quality, affordable, faith-based education opportunities for students and families in safe, supportive, and secure learning environments, that value diversity and promote cooperation, care, and respect for all.

During 2023, I was fortunate to visit all of our schools as the DOBCEL Board held meetings in different venues across the diocese. The spirit of harmony and sense of community, along with cultures of care for students and staff I experienced, was extremely encouraging. These school visits were also a reminder of the calibre of young people we have in our education system.

The role of school Principal continues to grow in complexity, demanding an increasingly diverse skillset and knowledge base. I am proud and deeply grateful for the exceptional dedication and professionalism of our 58 Principals, who, along with leadership colleagues and staff, work tirelessly to deliver education services for the families and communities they serve.

Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiations continued this year, involving staff from schools and human resources teams giving many hours and great effort to the process. Working with the inter-Diocesan bargaining group, DOBCEL continued to support efforts to finalise the Agreement with the Independent Education Union (IEU) as expediently as possible. DOBCEL continues to recognise the extraordinary work of staff in our schools and offices, and the substantial changes to the Agreement are intended to have a positive impact on staff and their workload.

As mandated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), the development of clear policy and procedural documents continued apace, with schools required to utilise DOBCEL foundational work, yet contextualise documents to suit the specific needs of each school. I express my gratitude to the team at Catholic Education Ballarat, who are both talented and conscientious in delivering this vital work.

During the year we saw the end of an era with the closure of St Brendan's Primary School, Dunnstown. Over 160 years of schooling was celebrated through speeches, laughter, and the sharing of many memories. Pleasingly, we also saw the refurbishment and opening of several new school buildings across the diocese this year.

I continue to be extremely grateful for the ongoing dedication, professionalism, and support of our personnel at Catholic Education Ballarat. I particularly acknowledge the commitment of our school leadership teams and their staff in nurturing and empowering the students in our care, as together we work to bring to life our vision: As partners in Catholic Education and open to God's presence, we pursue the fullness of life for all.

Tom Sexton

Executive Director DOBCELL

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## Vision and Mission

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### Mission

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a child-safe school that offers an educational foundation, which is united in faith and committed to developing the whole person to live, learn and thrive in God's love.

### Vision

As a community of learners, we will strive to:

- Achieve excellence in education in a Catholic faith community
- Nurture the spirit, mind and body of each learner
- Provide a stimulating and collaborative learning environment preparing all for lifelong learning
- Empower learners to meet the future with confidence and resilience.

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## School Overview

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St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a Foundation to Year 6 co-educational Catholic school in the St Patrick's Cathedral Parish of the Diocese of Ballarat. Our school is located in Alfredton, a suburb in the west of Ballarat, which is located in a high-growth area of Ballarat West. Our school draws students from the local area as well as from the surrounding rural areas. There was an enrolment of 431 students in 2023.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School draws on the Gospel values to build a learning environment where students feel valued and inspired to learn. We offer a quality-learning environment where each individual is supported to reach his or her potential.

We promote a vibrant, caring community that works together to create a welcoming and stimulating educational environment. Our teaching and learning philosophy is based on the belief that all students can achieve success given sufficient time and support. We believe that a focus on collaboration, learning and results are crucial in supporting students to achieve success in all facets of their school life. By offering a rich curriculum, we nurture an enthusiasm for learning in our students and a belief that optimal achievements are possible.

We believe that nurturing children through the critical, formative years means surrounding them with a learning environment rich in experience and opportunity and a pastoral atmosphere of individual care and attention.

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## Principal's Report

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It is with pleasure that I present the 2023 Annual Report to the School Community for St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. I am very proud of the spiritual, academic, social and sporting achievements of our students throughout the year.

St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School is well respected and has continued to strongly serve our local community. We are very proud of the sense of community that continues to develop and we genuinely value the input from the parish, our families, the Parents and Friends Association, School Advisory Council, DOBCEL and other external support networks.

I have again been blessed to lead this wonderful school community. Throughout this year the school truly enlivened the school motto "With God First, We will Live, Learn and Thrive".

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## Catholic Identity and Mission

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

One of our key priorities for 2023 as articulated in our Annual Action Plan was:

"Creating and nurturing a Christ-centred learning community that recognises, recontextualises and responds to the Catholic tradition and experiences/needs of all".

This was achieved through the following:

- Provide regular opportunity for rich dialogue and develop understanding with and of other faith traditions through professional learning teams and team planning.
- Collaborate with external charities and agencies to actualise the principles of Catholic social teaching and ecological conversion.
- Make use of the CEB Awakenings Scope and Sequence.
- Use effective pedagogy to enable students to develop symbolic meaning of Scripture.
- Create a school song that reflects St Thomas More's Mission and Vision in student friendly language.
- Create and participate in frequent prayerful experiences that preserve Catholic traditions and enable individual expression.

### Achievements

This year saw the second year of the CEO Scope and Sequence released for the teaching of scripture and unit planning. This is a two-year cycle of units in all grade levels except for

Foundation. These units have again been welcomed by all teaching staff. Units of work are prepared by Ballarat REL and CEB staff each term following the Shared Christian Praxis model. These extensive units include numerous resources, power points providing information on the focus scriptural text, information on Catholic Social Teaching principles and the introduction of various teaching strategies.

These units of work were presented to teams by the REL and after dialogue and collaboration they were adapted for our needs at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School to be focused on each term. Each team works on four units over the course of the year, one per term focusing around a broad concept. The Scope and Sequence ensures that students are focusing on different Old and New scriptural texts over the course of their schooling. CEB REL Education Officer, Jo-anne Van der Voort spent one planning session with each team unpacking these units and sharing her extensive scriptural knowledge with staff.

Catholic Education Office (CEO) staff attended termly staff meetings to continue to upskill our staff and increase their scriptural knowledge in preparation for sharing with our students. They focused on the Catholic Social Teaching principles which are included in each of the termly units. Again, staff were very engaged and enthusiastic in this professional development gaining an increased knowledge, understanding and interpretation of scriptural passages. During Term 4 staff were introduced to Bibliodrama and Godly Play, two strategies for sharing scripture with students. These strategies have been used by many of our staff with students finding this way of learning very meaningful.

Our yearly Religious Education professional development day was held in Term 3 with representatives from Caritas, Earthcare and CEB facilitating the day with a focus on Catholic Social Teaching, *Laudato Si* and the responsibility we all have in caring for our Earth. 2024 will see further work in this area as we move to increase the student's ecological conversion through practical action within our school community.

It is a requirement that all staff accrue a minimum of fifty hours of Religious Education professional development over a five-year period in order for them to receive their accreditation to teach Religious education. The professional development provided through staff meetings, planning meetings and professional development days continue to ensure our staff are accruing their required hours.

The REL attended three online network meetings, one in-person professional development day and one Diocesan Religious Education Retreat to further enhance knowledge of the logistics of the role and focus on scriptural interpretation which was again invaluable in working with and supporting school teams to implement their units of work.

Whole School Prayer, led by one class continued each week this year, held in-person in the hall with many school community members attending these prayerful occasions. This is an important aspect of our school culture ensuring prayerful experiences continue to support the Catholic tradition. Classes focused on different aspects of the liturgical calendar, various cultural days or themes from their current units of work. Staff continue to ensure that this

prayer time is a reverent and respectful time for our students and staff. The students also had the opportunity to celebrate Mass three times at school at our Beginning of Year Mass, St Thomas More Feast Day and the Feast of Mary Mackillop. All students were encouraged to attend our final term Mass of Thanksgiving and Grade Six Graduation at St Patrick's Cathedral. The REL upskilled staff on the elements of a successful prayer and liturgy with staff then implementing this into the allocated prayer time during our weekly Staff meeting and whole school prayers.

Many special events throughout the year enabled students to recontextualise their scriptural understanding through various actions. Term One included our now annual Crazy Sock day and casual clothes day raising important funds for Caritas. At our beginning of year mass, we launched our school prayer which had been created in 2022. Each class was given a copy of the prayer to be displayed and shared in their classrooms. Catholic Education Week celebrations took place in May with the theme 'Let the words you speak always be full of Grace'. Again, we took the opportunity to open the school for parents and friends to share lunch with their children, tour the school, participate in classroom activities and celebrate a liturgy together. It was a special day to again see the school crowded with visitors. Andrew Chinn spent a day working with our students during Catholic Education Week culminating in an afternoon concert. His entertaining and musical skills ensured a wonderful day for our students with him being booked for another day to create a school song in 2024. Again, the St Thomas More Has Talent show followed on from our Feast Day Mass. Mission Day took place in October and our grade five and six students enjoyed coordinating this event for all students with an amazing total of approximately \$2400.00 being raised to be donated to Catholic Mission.

The St Patrick's Cathedral sacramental program underwent some changes this year with students no longer completing the program preparations through Sunday Mass dismissals. This was trialled during the First Communion and Confirmation preparation with students involved in the program working with staff over a four-week period to cover the contents of the program. Families and students continued to attend an information session and weekly Masses as part of their preparation. Fr Ed Moloney also visited the students throughout their preparation time prior to celebrating the Sacraments.

### **Value Added**

- Creation of school choir to sing at school Masses
- Launch of our St Thomas More School Prayer
- Continued commitment to the interpretation of scripture through dialogue amongst teams provided an additional depth which ensured that the post-critical belief dimension was being prioritised.

- Staff continued to be led by the REL and CEB staff to develop appropriate RE units of work that were inclusive of all, following the Shared Christian Praxis and provide students with opportunities to discern and dialogue with scripture as a basis of the unit
- Professional development focusing on Catholic Social Teaching and ecological conversion collaborating with external agency and charities
- Upskilling of staff with teaching strategies such as Bibliodrama and Godly Play

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## Learning and Teaching

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

One of our key priorities for 2023 as articulated in our Annual Action Plan was:

“Ensuring highly effective, evidence-based teaching strategies, engage and empower learners and give life to all aspects of the whole person.”

- Continue to engage in professional learning to build a deeper understanding around learner agency.
- Build a common understanding of what a student centred learning environment could look like.
- Provide purposeful/authentic opportunities for students to contribute ideas to the concepts they would like to enquire, explore and learn about, as well as the way they would like to learn.

### Achievements

The goals and intended outcomes focus was retained from the previous year with the intent of going deeper and consolidating a collective understanding of what an agentic educational landscape might look like. This meant ongoing professional learning for a core team of leaders and strategically timed professional learning and experiences for staff. This year we were engaged in a Community of Practice (CoP) with Siena Catholic Primary School and Catholic Education-Ballarat. Our CoP was supported by Dr Jayne-Louise Collins and EdPartnerships, and with this expertise we successfully explored how to build our knowledge base, make use of a school-based inquiry, with a view to moving into action research in 2024. This was a context in which we supported each others' learning, and built positive inter-school relationships. Across our school we continued to take up small actions in teams resulting from ongoing conversations and professional reading and viewing. This included listening to our young people-inviting students to discuss and respond to inquiries about what learning is like for them and what they would like us to know about them as learners. We have continued to prepare for and run Student Involved Learning Conversations (SILCs) in Term 3. With a scaffold in place, and plenty of practise opportunities, the students led conversations about their own learning and achievements. It continues to be apparent that many of our students can articulate learning goals, and are keen to move onto and achieve the next steps in their learning, highlighting some of the small steps we are taking in promoting agency.

Seesaw has continued to be an effective platform to communicate student achievement regularly F-6. Parents are kept informed of focus areas across the curriculum matched with photos, videos and samples of student work, as well as special days/events.

Consistent with PLC practices, teachers meet in collaborative teams to discuss assessment data and establish goals for learning. All learning is clearly aligned with the Victorian Curriculum, and communicated to students in the form of 'I can...' learning statements. Teachers are working together to source and make use of increasingly more effective strategies to support the learning of students.

Assessment for and of learning occurs in a timely manner, guided by a whole school assessment schedule. School wide data collection of key literacy and numeracy data provides not only a level of accountability for all concerned, but a means to consider the impact of teaching. In this way we have been able to identify where practices need to be developed and improved.

As a result of learning conversations and searching for strategies that may best support the learning needs of our F-2 students, we implemented the Heggerty's phonics and phonological awareness program this year. It was a systematic, sequential and daily implementation across classes.

We set and monitored whole school SMART goals in reading using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments (3-6) and PM Benchmark Assessments (F-2). We also used PAT Assessment tools (through ACER) online to inform, set and track whole school SMART goals in the areas of Spelling, Reading and Numeracy 2-6. The use of these standardised assessments continues to provide valuable trend data, and offers another perspective along with the other school assessments in use. In reading and spelling our average achievement was higher than 2022. Mathematics (Numeracy) was 4.3% down on average 2-6, but up in most individual levels across the school.

We have continued to consider best assessment practices for our teachers and students and to this end, have had leaders and some teachers complete training in the DIBELS assessment suite. This will be rolled out for some classes in 2024 with a view to having all teachers trained by Term 2 2024.

We maintained the approach of having integrated Inquiry as a means of ensuring curriculum delivery across areas such as The Arts, Technologies, the Humanities, Health and Science, including the capabilities: Personal and Social, Intercultural, and Ethical, as well as Critical and Creative Thinking. Sustainability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Asian perspectives are covered in our 2 year cycle with close links to the Religious Education curriculum. Inquiry foci and contexts for learning continue to attract high levels of interest and engagement from our students, particularly when they have opportunities to design or negotiate what some aspects of their work might look like.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes in NAPLAN for this Annual Report to the School Community represents achievement for Year 3 and Year 5 students, summarised in the table below. It is worth noting that when comparing this data set to our previous year's data set, the benchmark for achievement has moved to a higher standard: from students meeting minimum benchmarks to students meeting the proficient standards.

Year 3 students across the board have a lower percentage meeting proficiency standards compared to the Year 5 cohort. With the exception of Year 3 Grammar and Punctuation, all areas for Year 3 and 5 are above 60% proficiency, with the stand out being writing. The scores in writing appear very strong for both cohorts of students.

In Reading, the median value for students in both Year 3 and 5 falls slightly below the national and state averages. There is a large range in the achievement of the Year 3 students, and 50% of students in the strong to exceeding proficiency range. We have a tighter range in Year 5 with 75% of students showing strong proficiency.

In Writing, the range for both cohorts was reasonably tight. 75% of both Year 3 and Year 5 students are in the strong proficiency range. The median level for both cohorts is slightly above both state and national levels.

We have a broader range of achievement in Spelling. The Year 3 data indicates that whilst the lower quartile of students is achieving higher than similar at state and national levels, our median is lower, as is the top percentage of students. The profile is different for the Year 5 students, where our data is stronger than that at state and national levels.

There is a very similar profile for Grammar and Punctuation; the Year 3 data indicates a lower level of achievement overall, and a much lower median value. The Year 5 data is more encouraging with a shorter tail, a comparative median value and some students almost exceeding expected proficiency.

In Numeracy, the Year 3 students exhibited a much greater range in proficiency levels, with the lowest quartile falling well below expected standards. What is encouraging however, is that 50% of Year 3 students are in the strong proficiency range when considering where our median value falls. There is a much stronger profile for our Year 5 students, where the median value is well above the state and national data sets, placing 50% of our students well up into the strong level of proficiency.

Our learning and teaching program includes well considered approaches to literacy and numeracy learning for all students. We have a process of using ongoing assessment data to inform teaching. Teachers actively seek new learning to best support the students. Data conversations occur weekly, and teams plan collaboratively to discuss best approaches, and the focus for explicit teaching. This is mapped in a sequential and strategic manner to ensure we cover content, provide review, and differentiate as needed. We have

implemented support groups, with extra staff, in writing, reading and numeracy as part of the regular learning cycles. This has included extension for some students.

In the F-2 classes we have started a daily phonics based program- Heggerty's- in order to improve phonological and phonemic awareness. This has supported the spelling strategies currently in use, as well as reading approaches. There has been an impact on writing development in these classes, and in the Year 3 NAPLAN data.

In 2023, our literacy assessment data indicated the need to know more about what our students need at very specific skillset levels. Working from writing samples, it has been evident that students require a focus on sentence level grammar and punctuation, and we are building this into planners with greater regularity and consistency across classes, evidenced in shared planners. To support the need to know more, we have now implemented the DIBELS assessment suite across the school, which provides a much clearer picture of the skills required for growth in reading and writing, along with the means of tracking this growth.

We have various interventions in place targeting students who have shown low achievement and low growth: ERIK, MiniLit, MultiLit and MacqLit focus specifically on literacy skill development, and JEMMS is a program designed to build automaticity and number sense in Mathematics.

We acknowledge the need to continue to search for ways to improve learning outcomes for all. To this end, we are, in 2024, engaging in the Structured Literacy project to build professional knowledge, and to audit current practices.

<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	400	47%
	Year 5	509	70%
Numeracy	Year 3	398	61%
	Year 5	504	84%
Reading	Year 3	407	66%
	Year 5	504	82%
Spelling	Year 3	410	69%
	Year 5	506	79%
Writing	Year 3	429	90%
	Year 5	507	88%

\*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

One of our key priorities for 2023 as articulated in our Annual Action Plan was:

"Ensuring highly effective, evidence-based teaching strategies, engage and empower learners and give life to all aspects of the whole person".

### Achievements

The beginning of the school year centred around our Fantastic 48 program. This program facilitated relationship building as well as providing dedicated time to unpack our School Wide Positive Behaviour Support framework (SWPBS). The SWPBS framework provides students and staff with clear expectations and shared responsibility for being 'safe, responsible and respectful' within our learning and playing spaces. The staff have developed a Positive Behaviour Flowchart that has strong links to the SWPBS framework. The flowchart identified behaviours that were deemed to be inappropriate at school and defined how staff managed these situations as they arose, ensuring students received an increasingly more consistent approach to expectations.

In 2023, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School engaged in the second year of the ReLATE program (Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments). This framework has been developed by the MacKillop Institute and assists our staff to understand how adverse childhood experiences can have lasting effects on one's engagement, health, learning and wellbeing. On-going staff surveys provide the school with current data to assist in understanding how our staff feel in relation to trauma-informed care and the areas we might need to upskill our staff within. The staff engaged in professional development in the area of 'positive psychology' which seemed to be well received by staff as an opportunity to reflect on areas of strength and values that we all offer. The PERMA Model: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievements, provided a platform for the staff at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School to develop an understanding of the theory of wellbeing. The SIT (School Implementation Team) continued to meet fortnightly to plan and strategize to meet our school goals in relation to the ReLATE framework.

The Peaceful Kids program was delivered as a social emotional intervention program facilitated by a staff member who has trained in this area. Additionally, Quiet Play, an alternative play space, has been offered during break times twice a week to provide a self

directed, but supportive environment for students to participate in on occasions when the school yard space might be over-stimulating or difficult to navigate.

In 2023, the Wellbeing Team met weekly to discuss concerns or needs of our community. This team consisted of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Pastoral Care Worker, Learning Diversity Leader and Wellbeing Leader. The aim of these meetings was to ensure the wellbeing of students, staff and families continued to be supported as required. Student Behaviour Surveys were developed and analysed. These surveys were completed by our Year 3-6 students in Term One and Term 3. The results of these surveys were collated and shared with our students so that there was an opportunity to discuss ways that we can continue to improve student wellbeing within all areas of our school.

### **Value Added**

- Employment of a Pastoral Care worker 3 days/week
- Wellbeing leader engaged in DOBCEL led professional development days
- New students transition days utilised to support social emotional wellbeing
- Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationship program embedded
- Quiet Play options during second break on Tuesdays and Fridays for students to monitor personal self-regulative needs
- On-going implementation of the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support framework. Restorative Practices Model used by staff in the classroom and on the yard
- Behaviour Flowchart linked to the SWPBS framework
- Parent, student and teacher communication methods including SSG and Student-Led Conferences to encourage a shared approach to student learning and wellbeing
- Behavioural contracts and Safety Plans written and developed for individuals when required
- Provided weekly Wrap Around the Learner (WATL) meetings to plan and intervene for identified students, led by our Learning Diversity Leaders
- Wellbeing Team meetings weekly
- Learning Support Officers and Learning Diversity Leaders facilitating interventions ReLATE Professional Development Foundation for staff to develop an understanding of trauma informed care and sustainable cultural change
- SIT (School Implementation Team) met fortnightly to plan and implement ReLATE goals

### **Student Satisfaction**

The 2023 Insight SRC data showed Student satisfaction improvement in the following areas:

- Managing Emotions (Emotional Awareness and Emotional Regulation)
- Connectedness to School
- Student Morale
- Encouraging Learning
- Personal Development

## Student Attendance

Attendance-related notifications from parents are recorded by school administration staff who in turn notify class teachers. Attendance registers are monitored in the front office daily and parents were contacted in the event of unexplained or regular student absence. Due to our high attendance rate (90.9%) the above policy and practice is adequate. The Principal contacts families where non-attendance is significant and when students are absent on a regular basis.

<b>Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level</b>	
Y01	90.8%
Y02	91.3%
Y03	92.0%
Y04	92.2%
Y05	89.4%
Y06	89.8%
Overall average attendance	90.9%

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## Leadership

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

One of our key priorities for 2023 as articulated in our Annual Action Plan was:

"We will build staff capability to be leaders of learning so that we develop a culture of continuous professional development".

### Achievements

There were many major leadership areas addressed over the school year.

The school utilised Catholic Education Office staff expertise where/when required as well as out-sourcing other professionals in various fields when required. There were many professional development opportunities available to staff throughout the year. These sessions were a combination of onsite and offsite sessions, both whole staff and individual.

Staff undertook the opportunity to develop and 'thrive' by taking up leadership roles and responsibilities. The positions of Team leaders, Sports Coordinator, ICT coordinator and Wellbeing Coordinator all became positions of Leadership.

A comprehensive School Master Plan was finalised with the engagement of Law Architects. The process involved input from staff, students and parents. The school applied for capital grants with the intention to commence the project works in 2025. With the school master plan in mind, resources (physical, human and financial) were allocated to school initiatives.

The school continued to work with St Patrick's Parish Primary and Siena Catholic Primary Schools to build better links between the schools, allowing for better sharing and understanding.

There was a large investment in information technology to allow for staff and students to have increased computer and technology connectivity. This investment has allowed all staff to have their own computer and for all students in Foundation to Year 2 to have a 1to 2 iPad access.

<b>Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning</b>	
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2023	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· ReLATE training modules (all staff 1 day)</li> <li>· First Aid, anaphylaxis, diabetes training (all staff)</li> <li>· APPA Conference (Hobart) - 1 staff</li> <li>· ACHPER conference - 1 staff</li> <li>· EduTech Conference (Melbourne) – 2 staff</li> <li>· Learner Agency Professional Development - 4 staff ( 4 days)</li> <li>· Religious Education Professional development ( all staff)</li> <li>· Religious Education Diocesan Conference - 1 staff</li> <li>· Child safety- Mandatory reporting (all staff)</li> <li>· Student health - Diabetes in School Level 2 (all staff)</li> <li>· Online Work Health and Safety Compliance Training (all staff)</li> <li>· Religious Education - Exploring Enhancing Catholic School Identity</li> </ul>	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2023	50
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$261.00

## Teacher Satisfaction

The 2023 Insight SRC data showed Teacher Satisfaction improvement in the following areas:

Work demands

Parent partnerships

Individual distress

Student behaviour

<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>	
Doctorate	0.0%
Masters	5.7%
Graduate	8.6%
Graduate Certificate	0.0%
Bachelor Degree	57.1%
Advanced Diploma	22.9%
No Qualifications Listed	5.7%

<b>Staff Composition</b>	
Principal Class (Headcount)	2
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	35
Teaching Staff (FTE)	27.4
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	24
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	20.0
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

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## Community Engagement

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

One of our key priorities for 2023 as articulated in our Annual Action Plan was:

"Embedding a culture of inclusivity that celebrates diversity and partners with the community to provide relevant and authentic learning opportunities for all".

- To enhance the school community connectedness.
- To improve student engagement through school community engagement.
- To strengthen the parent/school/parish partnership

### Achievements

From the start of the school year we continued to warmly welcome parents and families onto the school grounds and this promoted increased opportunities to forge stronger connections and partnerships with the school community. Many and various strategies and actions were utilised throughout 2023 to enhance the school community connectedness and promote/strengthen parent, school/ parish community partnerships.

#### 2.1 Partnering with Families

Being able to invite parents, other family members and friends into our school space offered many opportunities to reconnect with existing families and make connections with new families to the school. Having learnt much about the importance of relationship building through the previous years of intermittent remote learning and harsh restrictions, we continued to be conscious of maintaining effective methods and strategies of communicating and connecting with members of, and beyond, our school community.

These included:

- A comprehensive fortnightly newsletter that informed the parent community on all aspects of the school. This always featured a combination of information and photographs and a calendar of events for the current and following school term.
- The St Thomas More Catholic Primary School app. was regularly used to instantly communicate information to parents.
- A St Thomas More Catholic Primary School Facebook page was updated frequently to reflect the activities, events and achievements involving students, staff, families and the

parish in a very timely manner. This proved to be a very popular social media platform with many likes and comments from the school community regularly recorded.

- Parent Access Module (PAM) remained the primary method of acquiring and checking student details and parental consent in response to digital notifications.
- Teachers continued to communicate samples of student learning through the use of the digital platform of Seesaw. Videos, photos, text, images, files or drawings are all examples of samples that had been shared.
- At the start of each term, each of the four teams of teachers created a newsletter to be sent home to families that outlined particular events and curriculum foci for the forthcoming term.
- On a daily basis the student diaries were used as a means for communicating messages between teacher and parents.
- Throughout the year teachers kept in touch with student's parents as the need arose by utilising a variety of contact methods: phone calls, emails, video conferences in addition to onsite meetings (including both scheduled and impromptu meetings). Where required or requested, contact was made more frequently with individual families.
- The School Advisory Council (SAC) met termly and was a culturally diverse representation of the school community. They were regularly consulted on operational and strategic aspects of the school and their voice and agency was considered reflective of the school community.

In Term 1 the school offered parents the opportunity to attend a variety of information sessions that focused on following areas:

-Strategies for settling students into school.

-How students learn to read, the approaches and strategies used at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School and tips on how parents are able to support their child to become a competent reader.

-Participation in the Classroom Helpers training program aimed at up-skilling parents/grandparents and family friends who wanted to assist in the junior classrooms during the daily Literacy block (9-11am).

-Parent Support Group meetings led by the school's Learning Diversity Leaders.

All parents/volunteers/contractors were required to comply with Child-Safe standards which meant that all staff/volunteers/contractors at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School were required to annually complete the Child Safe Induction process prior to working onsite, assisting in classrooms, on excursions or participating in group work on committees. Once

the induction was completed and a Working with Children Check and photo ID had been provided and recorded by administration staff, they were then permitted to assist with school events.

Prior to Parent Teacher interviews occurring in early February, parents were invited to complete a short questionnaire with their child/ren relating to assisting the teacher know more about each individual student. This proforma formed the basis for discussion at the PT Interviews and assisted with student goal setting.

Our Assemblies, Whole School Prayers and meetings (Staff, SAC and parent meetings) begin with Acknowledgement of Country.

Our Parents and Friends committee remained enthusiastic and active in organising and hosting, both social and fundraising events, throughout the year. In general, these events were very well supported and attended, e.g. Mother's Day Breakfast, Father's Day Breakfast, Christmas Concert, Trivia Night were some planned events.

We conducted four Parent Information sessions to provide families of prospective 2024 Foundation enrolments with the opportunity to learn about our school, the school's structure, curriculum areas offered, our teaching approach etc. Attendees were given a guided tour of the school conducted by members of our Year 6 Student Leadership group. Families had until the end of May to submit their school preferences for 2024, after which principals met to allocate positions (with the priority being to accommodate as many first preferences as possible). Following this process, we were able to offer Foundation positions to all families who had requested St Thomas More as their first preference. Of the 63 positions available half of the positions were allocated to existing families and half to new families; this is the biggest intake of new families for quite a number of years.

Student progress and achievement was conveyed to parents at the end of each semester through a formal written report. Following receiving the written reports, parents were offered the opportunity to discuss student progress with their child's classroom teacher if desired.

For the second year running Semester Two Parent Teacher interviews took on the format of 'Student Involved Learning Conferences' (SILC) involving the teacher, parents and student. The SILCs were conducted in place of the traditional parent-teacher interviews, and involved the child having a significant role to play in talking about their own learning. This included them speaking about some of the learning goals they had had, showing the progress they had made evidenced through some of their work samples and inviting feedback from their parents.

Earlier in the year families were invited to participate in a working-bee to plant 200+ trees and spread a large amount of fresh chip bark across the newly planted areas. The working bee was supported by a number of parents and students who kindly assisted with the tasks.

One hundred families were invited to complete the Insight SRC survey. In contrast to uptake of 11%, when the survey had been previously completed, this year there was a 67% completion rate, thereby providing a more balanced and reliable overview of parent opinion and perception of how the school is tracking.

We held short face-to-face 'interviews' with each of our new Foundation students (for the forthcoming year) and their parents. These 63 meetings were conducted onsite and supported us in putting names to faces and gathering information crucial for supporting a smooth transition to formal schooling. It offered parents the opportunity to share information that was considered helpful in understanding and supporting their child as a student at the school. Each meeting concluded with a visit to a current Foundation classroom to give the child and parents a glimpse of what happens in the classroom. For at least half of the new Foundation students it was their first time inside the school so their curiosity was evident.

Towards the conclusion of Term 4 a 'Thank You Afternoon Tea' was held to acknowledge and thank classroom helpers who had volunteered and dedicated time to supporting the learning within our junior classes throughout 2023.

## 2.2 Community Partnerships

Throughout the year our students experienced a number of off-site learning opportunities, often utilising the local area including the Lake Wendouree and wetlands precinct, Ballarat Wildlife Park, the Alfredton neighbourhood, the Regent Theatre to name a few of the nearby excursions that occurred. In addition, our middle and senior students participated in annual camps; the Year 5/6 camp was held at Lake Dewar Discovery Camp near Myrning in March and the Year 3/4 camp took place at Log Cabin Lodge, Creswick.

The school welcomed the community to attend the Opening School Mass, Assemblies and weekly Whole School Prayers

Our fortnightly school newsletter regularly contained a section related to Community Notices and Events where community groups, clubs and organisations could promote their endeavours.

During Catholic Education Week in May we extended an open invitation to families, friends and community members to visit and tour the school.

The school website was regularly reviewed and, through the support of our school compliance officer, remained current and up-to-date for purposes of enrolment enquiries and Child Safety requirements.

We continued our connection with Australian Catholic University (ACU) in 2023 by offering placement to second, third- and fourth-year students. One of the second-year students

subsequently gained a part-time Learning Support Officer (LSOs) position following her placement period. Having pre-service teachers work as LSOs has been very beneficial as it provided practical experience of applying the theory learnt at university in a classroom context, and additionally they had the opportunity to observe and gain strategies from experienced, effective teachers. In October we were fortunate to gain one of our LSO's, who had just completed her Bachelor of Education, as a replacement for one of our classroom teachers who was involved in a serious car accident and was not well enough to return to work for the year.

The new uniform was introduced at the start of 2023 with a phasing in period offered throughout 2023 & 2024. The change has been received very positively within the community and, with a completely new colourway chosen, it will project a new and refreshed identity for the school. Being conscious of not wanting to be wasteful in regards to discontinuing the current uniform, the school has engaged with an upcycling clothing company so that donations of the outdated uniform could be recycled and repurposed.

We partnered with some local sporting clubs to provide specialised sports coaching for various year levels. Through securing Sporting Schools funding for Terms 1, 2 & 4 we were able to utilise external specialist coaches of Ultimate Frisbee for our Year 5/6 classes, netball our Year 3/4 classes and taekwondo for Year 1/2 classes. Regardless of the specialised sport being coached, each class received five one-hour sessions fully paid by Sporting Schools Grants.

We utilised a number of external allied health providers (e.g. speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists etc) to offer onsite support and assessment of individual students. We also continued our working partnership with staff from Catholic Education Ballarat (CEB) as they continued to offer school visits and professional learning opportunities. These established partnerships address identified student needs and offer access, experiences and support resources not available within the school, including partnerships with the parish, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations.

Towards the end of Term 4 our 2024 Foundation students were involved with three onsite transition sessions to gain experience of what it will be like to be an STM CPS student. They became familiar with their new setting, new teacher and peers. During one of the sessions a Parent Information session was also conducted and well attended by parents, both new and existing. The session included information provided by the principal, deputy, learning and teaching leader, learning diversity leaders, Year 6 student leaders and Foundation students.

Similarly, our departing Year Six students had the opportunity to experience time at their future secondary schools, and where needed and in collaboration with specific families and secondary schools, some students were able to attend more than one session in order to support a smooth transition to their new learning setting in 2024.

The school has continued to support after school activities and options for our students and families. This included Kelly Sports utilising our facilities for sports two afternoons a week as well as a daily 'walking bus' to escort students safely to Out of Hours School Care, conducted by Ballarat YMCA, at Alfredton Primary School.

Our Yr. 5 students had the opportunity to visit St Patrick's College, Loreto College and Damascus College as part of their Secondary Education Experience Days (SEED). These sessions, each of approximately four hours in duration, gave our students a first-hand glimpse of what secondary school settings are like as well as allowed them opportunities to experience a variety of subjects not regularly offered at primary school level. It is an annual event that helps consolidate our relationship with the local catholic secondary schools and acts as part of their promotional campaign.

Again in 2023 staff were invited to donate personal care/ hygiene items to the St Vinnies Christmas appeal. St Vinnies requested items such as soap, toothpaste, tooth brushes, sanitary items, shampoo, brushes, combs, razors, shaving cream etc. These items were collected by St Vinnies prior to the end of the school year and were to be distributed to community members in need.

Also, as a school community, we encouraged students to think of others in our Ballarat community who are less fortunate than themselves and in need of assistance. With this in mind the Student Leadership Group organised a Christmas food appeal where food items were donated to St Vincent de Paul. Each family was encouraged to bring along non-perishable food items and leave them at the school office where they were passed on to St Vincent de Paul to distribute.

## Parent Satisfaction

The 2023 Insight SRC data shows growth in parent satisfaction in the following areas:

Learning focus

Homework

Student safety

Approachability

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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.stmalfredton.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stmalfredton.catholic.edu.au)