



# 2024

## Annual Report to the School Community



### St Mary's School

2 Murlong Street, SWAN HILL 3585

Principal: Kathryn Quin

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

Registration: 1084, E Number: E2040

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## Principal's Attestation

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I, Kathryn Quin, 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 Mar 2025

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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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Reflecting on 2024, we have much to be proud of, with DOBCEL demonstrating our dedication to ensuring the highest quality student outcomes in a safe, affordable, faith-based and nurturing environment. There was significant ongoing investment in new learning facilities and refurbishments through the Australian and state Government Capital Grants Program and school community funding continued across our schools, enhancing learning spaces and amenities for the benefit of students and staff.

In 2024, I visited all our Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) schools from the Murray to the Sea. DOBCEL governs 51 primary schools, one F-8 school, and five secondary colleges, educating approximately 13,500 students and employing over 2,200 teachers and staff across the diocese. These visits highlighted the spirit of harmony and sense of community, along with the cultures of care for students and staff.

During 2024, I had the privilege of meeting with all Principals along with leadership colleagues and staff. Demands on schools continue to grow, as the communities they service undergo change and face challenges such as devastating bushfires and cost of living challenges.

During the year DOBCEL commenced the development of its future DOBCEL Strategy 2035. Our strategy is focused on ensuring fullness of life for all in our school communities and particularly our students. With our Catholic Identity foundational to our mission our focus will be on

- Collaborative Cultures
- Engagement & Belonging
- School as Community
- Rich Pedagogical practices for deeper learning and wellbeing
- Sustainable Stewardship

I recognise the extraordinary work, exceptional dedication and professionalism of staff in our schools and offices in providing education services to the families and communities they serve. 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 DOBCEL

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## Vision and Mission

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At St Mary's we are committed to improving the lives and learning of the children for whom we are responsible. Our vision is to create a dynamic learning environment that integrates modern pedagogical approaches with Catholic principles, empowering students to excel academically, socially, and spiritually.

We strive to create an educational environment that engages students in purposeful and relevant learning. St Mary's has developed a whole school approach to learning and teaching underpinned by a model of pedagogy that provides a common language and process for effective learning communities to operate across the school. Our beliefs are lived out through our commitment to the Response to Intervention (RtI) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) framework which underpins all teaching and learning programs and practices.

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## School Overview

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St Mary's Primary School is part of St. Mary's Parish, Swan Hill. The school opened in 1919 and, in 1923, the arrival of three Sisters of St. Joseph, began a long and close association of the Josephites (1923-1996) with Catholic Education in Swan Hill. The school retains the values of the order with the Josephite characteristics of hard work, dedication, community, and family unity, still strong features of our school.

St Mary's Primary School currently has a student population of 608 students under the care of a close, effective professional team of Teachers, Learning Support Officers, School Service

Officers, and Office Administration. St Mary's currently comprises a mix of permanent classrooms and portables, a large junior hub, canteen, gymnasium, and an administration building, which houses a library, staff planning room, staff room, and offices. Our beautiful landscaped gardens and quality playing spaces are excellent features of our school, along with well-presented classrooms that promote learning in a positive and secure environment.

St Mary's enjoys a position of esteem in the local community. Staff share a belief in the dignity of individuals and the promotion of self-esteem and community responsibility amongst the students. There are currently 27 straight classes. Our student population comprises 41% Catholic children with the next significant percentage identifying as Christian. A diverse range of other religions are represented as our student population consists of 20 nationalities providing us with a rich experience of multiculturalism. Our school community is made up of both town and rural families, with the majority of children having to travel by bus to school. Factors such as extreme weather conditions and rural remoteness can impact our families in many ways with 25% of families receiving CSEF. We also have strong links with our Italian and Koori Communities, which is best demonstrated through our annual Italian and Indigenous Days.

Children at St Mary's are extended an invitation and are supported to discover God's presence in their lives. Within a Gospel-centred environment, students are challenged to explore and understand themselves and the world in which they live through a worldview grounded in Scripture and the traditions of the Catholic Church. At St Mary's, we are committed to the Gospel values, a strong school-family identity, quality curriculum, and 'best practice' learning.

Teachers actively engage in developing a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Response to Intervention (RTI) has been the foundation for our teaching practices and we are currently being informed by the characteristics of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). The curriculum is vertically aligned so that there is continuity and progression across all years of school with Essential Learning Statements in Mathematics and English. Differentiation of curriculum is evident across year levels with intervention and extension programs in place in the areas of literacy and numeracy to support individual children's learning needs. Our staff is given significant time to allow for collaborative planning which is data-driven through the use of pre and post-testing. Reflection on the learning is used to feedback, feed in, and feed

forward all curriculum planning and subsequent teaching that occurs.

At St Mary's, we believe that 'every child matters every day' and our staff is committed to providing a learning environment to cater to all individual needs. The Vision and Mission statement is fundamental to all practices as we challenge, educate, and nurture each child.

During the school year, we focused our energy on priorities to drive school improvement with the School's Annual Action Plan centered on the areas of:

- Embedding a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Strengthening staff understanding of Catholic Social Teaching
- Creating authentic leadership opportunities for staff, students, and parents

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## Principal's Report

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2024 proved to be a year of growth and renewal. The staff's ongoing professionalism and positive approach to providing rich and engaging learning experiences for students remained foremost throughout the year.

This report offers an opportunity to celebrate our collective successes, acknowledge the dedication of many, and look ahead with excitement to the opportunities the future holds.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our School Board Chair, Jess Merrett, and the entire School Advisory Council (SAC) for their unwavering support and dedication throughout 2024. The SAC has played a vital role in offering thoughtful advice and practical insights on a range of school matters—from swimming programs to uniforms—and their guidance has been invaluable.

A special thank you goes to our vibrant Parents and Friends (P&F) team, whose tireless fundraising efforts continue to energize and enrich our community. In particular, I acknowledge the leadership of Renee Hirst and Ebony Free, who were instrumental in coordinating standout events such as the School Welcome Picnic, Mother's and Father's Day celebrations, the Colour Fun Run, and the School Disco. These events have created cherished memories for our students and families.

The P&F raised almost \$12,000 this year. In the first half of the year, funds were directed toward the much-anticipated Ninja Playground. As that project neared the commencement phase, the focus shifted toward smaller projects, such as purchasing new class sets of lab coats for our growing STEM program.

### **Buildings and Infrastructure**

We made significant progress on several infrastructure fronts in 2024. A highlight was the development of the Ninja Playground in partnership with Adventure Plus. Although originally scheduled for Term 4 completion, delays due to required civil works by Catholic Care have pushed the completion to March 2025. We look forward to seeing our students enjoy this exciting new space very soon.

Recognising the increased demand for high-quality care, we have also begun exploring plans for a purpose-built Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) facility. This will be a self-funded initiative, supported by OSHC income, and we are currently working with the DOBCEL accountant and Infrastructure team to progress to the next stage in 2025.

In collaboration with B2 Architects, we pursued both Federal and State government grants to continue upgrading our existing facilities. While our application for State funding was unsuccessful, we remain hopeful for Federal support in early 2025.



We were fortunate to retain all our portable buildings on-site, which has allowed us to establish dedicated spaces for STEM, structured lunchtime play (The Playroom), and Languages—including intensive English for new arrivals and the Wemba Wemba language program. These spaces have significantly enhanced our capacity to meet the needs of a growing and diverse student population.

### **Staff and Students**

Enrolments remained steady throughout the year. While some families moved away, we welcomed an equal number of new students—some from Swan Hill and others from as far afield as India, the UK, Vietnam, and South Africa.

Our Open Days and Flying Start programs were well-attended, and the introduction of evening school tours in Term 1 was met with enthusiasm. Although Foundation enrolments for 2025 are slightly lower than in 2024, we bid farewell to a large Year 6 cohort of 87 students and expect to commence the new year with enrolment figures comparable to this year.

Staff transitions were a key feature of 2024, with a number of staff taking leave for family, health, or personal reasons. I am deeply grateful to our entire team, who demonstrated resilience, flexibility, and collegiality in supporting one another and ensuring a smooth continuation of programs. We also welcomed new staff across both teaching and support roles, strengthening our ability to meet students' diverse needs.

### **Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)**

A major highlight of 2024 was our first formal Assessment and Rating by the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division. We were thrilled to receive such positive feedback and are committed to the ongoing improvements identified through this process.

Our OSHC program continues to thrive, expanding to accommodate up to 80 children per day. We are proud to serve families from both St Mary's and Swan Hill North Primary School. Our dedicated team of over 25 part-time educators continues to grow in confidence and capacity, with five staff currently completing their Diploma of OSHC. We also increased the number of places available during Vacation Care, a change that has been warmly welcomed by our families.

### **Teaching and Learning**

2024 has been another exceptional year for teaching and learning at St Mary's. We proudly introduced Science and Technology as a standalone specialist subject—a move that has been very well received by students and has enhanced our ability to offer a rich, differentiated curriculum.

Under the leadership of Curriculum Leader Mardi Hall, we have refined our inquiry-based learning units to promote deeper engagement and curiosity. Our academic outcomes remain strong, building on the national recognition we received from ACARA in 2023. NAPLAN and PAT results show that most students have made significant learning gains this year.

Staff have continued to engage in high-quality professional learning, including work with educational consultant Shaz Bailey to strengthen our inquiry pedagogy, and continued collaboration with James Anderson to deepen our focus on student agency and teacher efficacy.

### **Faith and Community**

Our connection with the Parish continues to be a cornerstone of life at St Mary's. We are grateful to Fr James and Mary Kennedy for their leadership of our Sacramental programs and pastoral care. Students participated in a wide range of social justice activities this year—from fundraising for the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal to delivering Meals on Wheels and visiting local aged care homes.

These opportunities reflect our commitment to Catholic Social Teaching and nurture empathy, compassion, and a sense of service in our students.

### **Student Wellbeing**

Student wellbeing remains a top priority at St Mary's. In 2024, we experienced a significant rise in families seeking wellbeing support, particularly in response to anxiety and changes in family circumstances.

This year, senior staff completed ChildLink training, and we observed a growing number of students actively engaged with external wellbeing services. In response, we further strengthened our internal support team. We welcomed Kyle Doran through the MHIPS program and continued to benefit from the expertise of Learning Diversity Leader Chris Prockter, three dedicated Student Support Officers, and of course, Mac—our beloved wellbeing dog who has brought joy and comfort to many.

We remain committed to partnering with families and external agencies to ensure all students are supported to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we look to 2025, I am filled with optimism and enthusiasm. With projects such as the Ninja Playground and potential OSHC facility on the horizon, and continued commitment to educational excellence and wellbeing, we are well-positioned to build on the strong foundation laid this year.

To the students and families of St Mary's—thank you for your partnership, support, and trust. You are the heart of our community.

And to the extraordinary staff of St Mary's—your passion, commitment, and care for our students is what makes our school truly exceptional. I am deeply grateful for all that you do.

Together, we have achieved so much in 2024, and I look forward to all that we will accomplish in the years to come.

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## Catholic Identity and Mission

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

In 2024, our primary focus was to deepen staff understanding and expertise in recontextualizing Religious Education. Through engagement with scripture, Catholic tradition, and Shared Christian Praxis, our educators worked collaboratively to more confidently deliver newly developed Religious Education units. Our continued collaboration with Kim Hawkes from DOBCEL to expand and strengthen our staff knowledge of our RE curriculum units each term was of great benefit for all teachers. Additionally, we remained committed to expanding our knowledge of social justice principles and Catholic Social Teachings, ensuring that these foundational values were meaningfully integrated into our teaching practices and broader school community initiatives.

### Achievements

Each term, dedicated time was allocated within the Professional Learning Schedule to support staff in the ongoing development of their knowledge and skills in Religious Education. These sessions provided opportunities for educators to engage in deep reflection, collaborate with colleagues, and explore new teaching strategies that enhance their ability to deliver meaningful and engaging Religious Education lessons. By prioritizing professional learning in this way, we aimed to build confidence, enrich pedagogical approaches, and ensure that our teaching remains aligned with Catholic tradition and contemporary educational best practices.

Seventeen staff members successfully achieved full Religious Education Accreditation through the University of Dayton, demonstrating their commitment to professional growth and excellence in faith-based education. This accreditation process involved in-depth study and reflection on key theological concepts, Catholic teachings, and best practices in Religious Education. By completing this rigorous program, staff members have further enhanced their ability to deliver high-quality, faith-centered learning experiences, strengthening the spiritual and academic development of our students.

Flexible time was allocated as needed for the Religious Education (RE) Leader to meet with individual staff members or teams to provide tailored support and guidance. These meetings focused on various aspects of the Religious Education program, including the planning and preparation of liturgies, school Masses, and the implementation of the new curriculum. By offering these sessions, the RE Leader was able to address specific needs, facilitate

collaboration, and ensure that all elements of the Religious Education program were thoughtfully planned and aligned with Catholic traditions and school values. This approach fostered a supportive environment where staff could confidently engage with the evolving curriculum and liturgical responsibilities.

Staff actively utilized the New Awakenings curriculum and newly developed units to guide their planning process, fostering a collaborative approach in designing engaging learning activities and meaningful assessment tasks. Additionally, staff worked closely in teams alongside Kim Hawkes (CEOB) to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the new Religious Education units. These collaborative efforts ensured a shared commitment to delivering high-quality instruction that aligns with the curriculum while enriching students' learning experiences.

Teaching staff, alongside the Religious Education Leader, have engaged in professional learning with DOBCEL staff through face-to-face sessions to develop comprehensive and impactful Religious Education units aligned with the RE curriculum. Whole-staff professional development days have also been dedicated to deepening understanding of Social Justice principles and strengthening knowledge of the RE curriculum. Additionally, staff have been actively exploring and utilizing the Caritas website and its resources to enhance their teaching of Catholic Social Teaching principles, ensuring that students gain a rich and meaningful understanding of faith in action.

All staff participated in an engaging professional development day led by Gen Bryant, which centered on enhancing spiritual and faith development within our school community. During this enriching session, staff explored various strategies for nurturing their own spiritual growth while also gaining insights into how to effectively support the faith formation of students. The day included thought-provoking discussions, reflective activities, and practical approaches to integrating spiritual development into everyday teaching practices. By engaging in this professional learning opportunity, staff deepened their understanding of how to foster a vibrant, faith-centered environment that nurtures both personal and collective growth in spirituality.

As part of our ongoing commitment to fostering a strong foundation in Religious Education, all students participate in scheduled Religious Education classes each week. These lessons provide opportunities to explore scripture, Catholic traditions, and faith-based teachings in a meaningful and engaging way. In addition to formal instruction, students also take part in dedicated prayer times each day, allowing for moments of reflection, gratitude, and spiritual growth. Through these daily and weekly practices, we strive to nurture a faith-filled learning

environment where students can deepen their understanding of Catholic values and strengthen their personal relationship with God.

Each Friday morning, staff come together for a dedicated prayer time, fostering a sense of spiritual unity and reflection within our school community. This weekly gathering is led by two different staff members each time, allowing for a diverse range of prayer styles, reflections, and faith-sharing experiences. By rotating leadership, all staff have the opportunity to contribute their personal insights and perspectives, creating a rich and inclusive environment for collective worship. This practice not only strengthens the faith and fellowship among staff but also serves as a meaningful way to start the day with gratitude, inspiration, and a shared commitment to our Catholic values.

We provide regular communication with parents and the wider community through our weekly newsletter, which includes updates on school events and activities. Each edition features important Religious Education news, along with prayers and reflections, offering an opportunity for families to engage with the spiritual life of the school and stay connected to their children's faith development.

Within our Parish, parental engagement played a vital role in the Sacramental program, with parents invited to participate in sessions and complete aspects of the program at home with their child. This approach provided a meaningful opportunity for families to share special moments of faith, fostering deeper discussions and connections. The Sacramental celebrations of Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation were joyfully celebrated with Fr. James at the Parish, bringing the school and wider faith community together in these significant spiritual milestones.

### Value Added

- Whole School Masses.
- Assembly Prayer.
- Daily Class Prayer
- Whole School Professional Development Day with Gen Bryant.
- Special celebration of feast days/events e.g. CESH Mass, Mary Mackillop, Year 6

Graduation Mass, Beginning and End of Year Mass.

- Liturgical Celebrations e.g. Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Advent, Mission Week.
- Ongoing communication with parents and the wider community through our weekly Newsletter.

Creation of F-6 Scripture Scope and Sequence linked to Social Justice Actions and community outreach

- Staff led prayer time on Friday mornings.
- Continued involvement of Religious Education Leader within the Senior Leadership Team.
- Staff participation in professional learning and development through CPL's.
- Making connections between Religious Education and other curriculum areas.

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## Learning and Teaching

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

Engaging students in rich and authentic learning experiences.

Building authentic student and learner agency into our teaching and learning practices.

Embedding a culture of shared leadership and continuous learning for all.

### Achievements

In 2024, St Mary's remained committed to delivering a viable and guaranteed curriculum, ensuring a cohesive and consistent framework for teaching and learning across the school community. With a predominantly young and often less experienced staff, our pedagogical approach fosters shared principles, practices, and goals across all year levels and subject areas, supporting both teacher development and student success. As a school, we take great pride in our focus on Explicit Teaching, complemented by the use of evidence-based programs such as Origo Maths, STARs, CAR's Online, New Waves Mental Maths, and Spelling Mastery. 2024 saw the introduction to New Waves English Skills. This new program was trialed in the late half of the year to enhance grammar and punctuation, ensuring a clear scope and sequence throughout the entire school. This program includes daily exposure to multiple practice opportunities, reinforcing key skills and providing consistent, targeted instruction to support student mastery and will be fully implemented in 2025.

In 2024, St Mary's entered into the second year of a three-year partnership with James Anderson—an esteemed educator, author, and keynote speaker—focused on Learner Agency. As this concept gains momentum in education, James, a leading advocate, emphasizes the importance of empowering students to take ownership of their learning. By fostering an environment where students actively participate in decisions about what and how they learn, Learner Agency becomes a key driver of motivation, engagement, and responsibility. Throughout the year, staff engaged in a closure day multiple staff meetings dedicated to exploring Learner Agency. James consistently challenged educators to cultivate a school culture that supports student independence while ensuring they have the skills, tools, and guidance needed to navigate their learning effectively. His sessions particularly highlighted the role of growth mindset in building a learner agency. A central focus of his work was The Learning Zone Model, which outlines the stages of learning. By understanding the dynamics between these zones, staff recognized the importance of intentional planning to help students navigate their learning journeys. This approach fosters resilience, adaptability, and continuous growth, preparing students for both academic and lifelong success.

As part of his work with St Mary's, James Anderson also explored the 16 Habits of Mind, a framework designed to develop intelligent and thoughtful learning behaviors. He guided staff



through an in-depth examination of these habits, focusing on how they manifest in action and contribute to effective problem-solving. By identifying which habits play a crucial role in tackling challenges—such as persistence, thinking flexibly, managing impulsivity, and striving for accuracy—educators gained valuable insights into how to embed these principles into daily teaching and learning. The intent is that by integrating the Habits of Mind into classroom practice, staff develop strategies to support students in becoming more resilient, adaptable, and independent learners, reinforcing the school's commitment to fostering a culture of continuous growth and self-directed learning.

In 2024, the school continued to prioritize and strengthen its Coaching and Mentoring model, which has been highly commended by the Catholic Education Office on multiple occasions. Our Instructional Coaching program focuses on enhancing teaching practices and student learning outcomes through a collaborative approach. More experienced educators serve as coaches, working closely with teachers—particularly Graduate and Provisionally Registered teachers—to support their professional growth. This process is designed to be constructive, supportive, and centered on continuous improvement, helping teachers refine their classroom practices to maximize student success. Additionally, graduate and provisionally registered teachers are paired with Mentor Teachers who offer daily guidance in key areas such as classroom management, instructional strategies, curriculum development, and overall professional development.

Collaborative planning, regular Curriculum Team meetings were embedded into the staff meeting agenda. These sessions provided opportunities for both formal and informal discussions, with a focus on differentiation, extension, and enrichment. Staff were given additional time to plan Inquiry learning, sequentially audit current units based on year-level descriptors, and align content with student needs and interests. Discussions also emphasized the importance of higher-order thinking, student voice, and learner agency, ensuring that planned learning experiences were engaging and meaningful.

To further enhance Inquiry learning, St Mary's identified the need to engage an Inquiry facilitator in 2024. As part of this initiative, the school explored a partnership with expert Shaz Bailey, an experienced educator and consultant specializing in Inquiry-based learning. With over 30 years of teaching and leadership experience across primary and secondary education, Shaz has worked within all Australian school systems as well as an international school in Indonesia. Passionate about authentic, inquiry-based, concept-driven, and transdisciplinary learning, Shaz led a whole-school closure day, advocating for environments that nurture student agency, engagement, curiosity, and joy. Throughout the year, she dedicated two consecutive days each term to working closely with staff, guiding them through Inquiry pedagogy in team-based sessions. Her hands-on approach provided educators with the tools and strategies to further embed student-centered planning and learning, reinforcing St Mary's commitment to fostering engaged, independent, and reflective learners.

With the introduction of the V2.0 Maths Curriculum, comparisons were made to ensure its alignment with our existing Stepping Stone and Mental Maths Programs. This process included a thorough audit across the whole school, allowing for a comprehensive review of our current practices. As a result, affirmation was gained that no major gaps were identified along with reassurance that through our Maths lens we are continuing to extend and enhance our students using these programs. While also ensuring a seamless integration of the new curriculum while maintaining consistency and effectiveness across all year levels.

There has been a continued emphasis on shifting from "my" data to "our" data, fostering a collective approach to student progress across levels and units. Members of the Leadership Team attended a number of professional development sessions with Dr Selina Fisk (A Data Storyteller). Selina collaborates with organizations and schools to develop strategic approaches to collecting, collating, and utilizing data. She engaged us in effective data storytelling conversations, ensuring that all decisions are informed by evidence. Data discussions have become a key focus in unit meetings and weekly leadership team meetings, ensuring that student learning is regularly analyzed and addressed. A new data set, DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), was explored in Term 4 to further enhance our approach to literacy assessment. This tool provides valuable insights into students' early literacy development, enabling more precise tracking of their progress and the identification of areas that require targeted intervention. The aim in 2025 is to implement it across the whole school as another source of data collection to monitor student growth, make data-informed decisions, and tailor interventions to meet the individual needs of each learner.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

With the implementation of NCCD (Nationally Consistent Collection of Data) requirements, our systematic approach to supporting students with additional learning needs has been further refined and strengthened. A Learning Diversity Leader and Curriculum Leader, along with a dedicated RTI team, work collaboratively to ensure each student receives the support they need. This model provides increasing levels of intervention, ranging from whole-class strategies (Tier 1) to targeted small-group support (Tier 2) and intensive one-on-one instruction (Tier 3), tailored to individual learning needs. To support this, a variety of evidence-based intervention programs in numeracy and literacy are delivered within this multi-tiered system, ensuring that students receive the most effective support in alignment with their specific learning requirements. We have a well-documented and structured intervention model, facilitated by the Learning Diversity Leader and Curriculum Leader and overseen by Unit Leaders. This model includes a range of evidence-based intervention programs, delivered within classrooms and across levels, to support students at their point of need. These programs include Read 3, MiniLit, MultiLit, Reading Fundamentals, Boost Reading, Numeracy Fundamentals, and Quicksmart.

<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	419	57%
	Year 5	*	*
Numeracy	Year 3	422	77%
	Year 5	514	84%
Reading	Year 3	423	76%
	Year 5	504	87%
Spelling	Year 3	423	73%
	Year 5	*	*
Writing	Year 3	447	99%
	Year 5	494	83%

\*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.

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## Student Wellbeing

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

Refine effective practices to promote and enhance the well-being of staff, students and St Mary's families.

- Build and expand methods of celebrating achievement and acknowledging and affirming students and staff for their achievements.
- To strengthen students' social and emotional learning and to have a whole-school approach to positive behaviour management.
- Create and incorporate a Social Behaviours Guaranteed and Viable F-6 framework into the school's learning and teaching programs.

St Mary's remains committed to upholding a strong reputation within the community for prioritising student wellbeing. The school benefits from significant external community agency support to assist students and families in need—not only those facing urgent challenges but also by taking a proactive approach to supporting all families within the school community.

Promoting and enhancing student wellbeing involves nurturing various aspects of their development, including personal, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual growth. Key elements include fostering positive self-esteem, encouraging respect for others, building strong relationships, promoting responsible behavior, and developing personal resilience. These values and skills are not only taught but also expected from students.

Through the Dog's Connect program, our school wellbeing dog, Mac, plays an essential role in supporting students, particularly in managing school-related anxiety. Mac has a positive emotional and social impact, contributing to improved mental health and overall wellbeing while strengthening the connection between the school and the wider community.

Key strategies for maintaining a supportive school environment include implementing a consistent Positive Behavior Support system, explicitly teaching social and emotional skills, and using restorative language. Recognising the importance of staff wellbeing in fostering a

positive school culture, the school will focus on collecting staff and student wellbeing data through Simon, Wellbeing surveys, notes, and professional development sessions.

## Achievements

In 2024, for the first time, we had two full-time Wellbeing Support/Learning Diversity Leaders, along with four part time Wellbeing Officers working daily with students and their families, providing regular check-ins as needed.

St Mary's commitment to the Dogs Connect program, featuring our wellbeing dog, Mac, has been a key element in promoting student and staff wellbeing. The wellbeing team has actively incorporated Mac into their sessions, using his presence to foster a positive and supportive environment. Mac's warm and friendly nature brings joy to everyone he encounters, strengthening staff and community culture. He also helps students regulate their emotions, offering a calming and proactive approach for those experiencing anxiety or challenges with school attendance.

The Resilience, Rights, and Respectful Relationships program was delivered consistently and collaboratively, focusing on developing students' social, emotional, and relationship skills. It promotes healthy relationships and covers key areas such as emotional literacy, problem-solving, and stress management.

In 2024, we continued the St Mary's Stars program, an initiative designed to recognize and celebrate students who go above and beyond in demonstrating respect and consideration for others. At the heart of this program is student-led recognition, empowering peers to nominate classmates who display acts of kindness, empathy, and respect within the school community.

Additional wellbeing initiatives include:

Brain Gym, Mindfulness and Movement, and Peaceful Kids, supporting student engagement in learning.

A whole-school focus on Sensory Breaks/Brain Breaks to assist with self-regulation.

A consistent, school-wide approach to behavior management, emphasising Restorative Practices.

Staff wellbeing check-ins each semester, facilitated by Kate, Jason, or Chris.

Breakfast Club, running daily to support students with a nutritious start to their day.

We introduced a new quiet wellbeing space for students to use during lunch times. The 'playroom' allows kids to escape the busyness of the school playground and let them relax in a calm environment.

Extra staff on yard duty during lunchtimes (pink vests) to help umpire and join in with games, reducing yard issues and ensuring students return to class with a happier mindset.

Connecting families 'in-need' with organisations such as The Good Kitchen, St Vinnies and Swan Hill Food Hub.

MHIPS (Mental Health in Primary Schools) training from the two full time members of the wellbeing team. The funding received from this also enabled another part-time team member to work directly with students.

### **Programs We Are Proud of and Continuously Strive to Improve:**

At St Mary's, we are committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment through a variety of programs designed to enhance student wellbeing and social connections.

Community Groups – Once a term, students are placed into vertical groups (Foundation to Year 6) and engage in activities with different teachers, focusing on Social and Emotional Learning. This initiative helps students build new friendships and connect with peers across the school.

Lego Club – Running daily at lunchtime, this club provides a space for students who love to construct, create, and collaborate with others. It offers a great opportunity for social interaction while engaging in imaginative play.

Colouring Club – Open daily, this club is perfect for students who enjoy coloring, drawing, and socializing while expressing their creativity.

Dance Club/Playroom - Two new and completely different spaces students can choose to visit during their lunchtimes. The playroom allows students to escape the hustle and bustle of the school yard.

PALS Program – Year 6 students regularly meet with Foundation students to participate in joint activities that promote fun and relationship-building. This program fosters a sense of responsibility in older students while providing younger students with a sense of security and connection.

Playground Activities – A variety of engaging activities are set up daily in the Passive Play area during recess and lunch, providing students—especially those who may struggle with

friendships—a safe and enjoyable space to play. Our wellbeing team actively participates, helping students develop social skills in a supportive setting.

Quiet Reading, Meditation & Yoga – These daily activities offer students a calm space for relaxation and mindfulness.

Peaceful Kids – A mindfulness-based program aimed at reducing anxiety and stress while fostering emotional resilience. This initiative equips students with essential coping strategies to navigate daily challenges.

Wellbeing Room & Sensory Rooms – These dedicated spaces cater to the diverse sensory and emotional needs of students. Our wellbeing team and Learning Support Officers (LSOs) utilize these rooms to provide targeted support and run specialized programs that assist students requiring additional social and emotional guidance.

Play POD- While not yet open, discussions and planning for the Play POD at St Mary's have taken place throughout the year. The POD will be a 'hands-on' and creative area where students will be able to create some items out of recycled products. Set to open in 2025!

## Value Added

St Mary's continues to enhance student and staff wellbeing through a range of programs and initiatives designed to foster resilience, support diverse learning needs, and promote positive school culture. Key developments include:

- Expanded Sensory & Wellbeing Rooms to cater to the diverse needs of students.
- Sensory Breaks PD for staff and Learning Support Officers (LSOs) to implement effective regulation strategies.
- Dogs Connect Program, integrating our wellbeing dog, Mac, into student support sessions.
- Peaceful Kids, facilitated by trained wellbeing staff to help students manage anxiety and build resilience.
- Brain Gym, Mindfulness, and Movement Programs to support focus and emotional regulation.
- Staff Wellbeing Surveys to monitor and enhance workplace wellbeing.
- Tom Hierck support.
- Cyber Safety Workshops, delivered online for students and parents.
- E-Learning Modules to support staff and student development.

- Whole-School Positive Behaviour Blitzes (SWPBS) to reinforce expected behaviors.
- Refined Data Analysis for RTI Meetings to enhance targeted student support.
- Enhanced Year 6 Leadership Program, ensuring all students develop skills aligned with their strengths.
- Student-Devised Individual Learning Goals, with regular reflections to promote growth.
- Seesaw Integration, allowing students to share learning goals and celebrate achievements.
- Regular PSG Meetings to assess and refine student short- and long-term goals.
- Increased Awareness for R U OK? Day, with week-long staff activities focused on mental health.
- Professional Development on Individual Learning Plans, supporting tailored student growth.
- Headspace PD Sessions for all staff, with the Wellbeing Team working closely with Headspace experts.
- Staff Lunchtime Yoga to promote relaxation and wellbeing.
- Increased LSOs Across the School to provide additional support for students with specific needs.
- Engagement of Paraprofessionals (Occupational Therapists, Care teams, psychologists, CAMHS, counselors) to support students with social and emotional challenges.
- On-going commitment to PALS and bus buddies for younger students in our school.
- Engaging in learning around Child Safe standards and protocols.
- Tracking student behaviour through SIMON, allowing Senior Leadership to outline any hotspots or consistent issues arising.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to fostering a supportive, inclusive, and growth oriented environment for all members of the St Mary's community.

## Student Satisfaction

We have shown improvement in relation to student experiences across the school. The whole school blitzes continue to improve the focus on positive behaviour for all students and the

introduction of the Alignment of SWPBS on Simon allows us to analyze data patterns in terms of student behaviour and needs.

Taken from the most recent Insight SRC Data shows that students felt relatively positive about their ability to learn and about the wellbeing and care provided.

Student wellbeing: 69.1

Contentedness to school: 70

Teacher Empathy: 73

Student safety: 76

Student motivation: 71



## Student Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential for students to maximize their learning. The school in partnership with parents is responsible for promoting regular attendance of students. The following procedures are followed to monitor and address non-attendance:

- Attendance is checked twice daily and entered electronically on SIMON.
- Parents/Carers are required to notify the school of the reason for any absence.
- An SMS message is sent by 9:30 am for any unexplained absence and a follow-up a phone call is made if parents or carers have not responded to the SMS.
- Attendance is constantly monitored and frequent non-attendance is followed up by leadership with a phone call and, if necessary, a letter.
- SIMON (software used) to generate an accurate attendance roll.

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	88.4
Y02	91.4
Y03	90.0
Y04	89.7
Y05	88.9
Y06	89.8
Overall average attendance	89.7

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## Leadership

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- To refine and articulate a clear leadership model for St Mary's Primary School and build the capacity of all members.
- To strengthen and sustain a culture amongst staff that is characterized by a shared vision, professional inquiry, a strong sense of teamwork, and a focus on continuous learning and improvement for all.

### Achievements

In 2024, St Mary's made significant progress in infrastructure planning and strategic resource management to support the long-term vision of the school:

Ninja Playground: Although originally scheduled for completion in Term 4, 2024, unforeseen civil works by Catholic Care delayed access to the senior oval. Despite this, the project is back on track and slated for completion in March 2025. We look forward to offering our students this innovative play space, designed in partnership with Adventure Plus.

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC): Our OSHC program has seen continued growth in 2024. To meet increasing demand, we have begun the process of planning for a purpose-built OSHC facility. This self-funded project, supported by the OSHC income stream, is currently being progressed in consultation with the DOBCEL accountant and Infrastructure team.

Grants and Facility Enhancements: With the support of B2 Architecture, we applied for both State and Federal grants to upgrade existing buildings and grounds. While State funding was not secured, we await Federal announcements in early 2025. In the meantime, the retention of portable classrooms has enabled us to provide flexible learning spaces, including a dedicated STEM Room, the Playroom (structured lunchtime play), and a Languages Room for intensive English and Wemba Wemba instruction.

### Collective and Distributed Leadership

St Mary's continues to prioritise a culture of shared leadership, focused on empowering others and building capacity across all levels:

Leadership Structure: The school's senior leadership team expanded this year, with full-time non-classroom roles for the Learning Diversity Leader and Curriculum & Coaching Leader. Their mentoring of early career teachers and LSOs has been instrumental in maintaining high teaching standards.

RE Leadership: Our RE Leader (.4FTE) has been a critical link between parish and school. Through close collaboration with CEOB and targeted support, 17 staff members—including university students, PTT staff, and graduates—achieved RE Accreditation in 2024.

Structured Collaboration: Weekly meetings across senior leadership, wellbeing, middle leaders, and LSOs provided consistency and transparency. All meetings were documented and stored in our Shared Drive for accessibility and accountability.

Work-Life Balance: In response to growing staff fatigue, we revised our staff meeting schedule to focus on one whole-school meeting and one team-based planning session weekly. This structure provided greater autonomy and meaningful time for data analysis and curriculum planning.

Wellbeing Focus: Staff and student wellbeing remained a priority. Staff were offered targeted PD on self-care and wellbeing, EAP services were promoted, and the Wellbeing Team continued to support students experiencing anxiety or disengagement. The Respectful Relationships (RRRR) program and The Resilience Project were central components of our SEL approach in 2024.

### **Community Engagement and Growth**

Our commitment to promoting St Mary's as the school of choice in our region was evident in several key initiatives:

Enrolment Stability and Visibility: Enrolments remained steady, thanks to strong engagement strategies including weekday and weekend open days, media campaigns, and our revamped Term 3 transition program.

Fly Into Foundation: Introduced in Term 4, this personalised transition program for new Foundation students allowed us to build relationships with families ahead of formal school entry.

Digital Presence: We enhanced our communication strategy through regular updates and insights shared via Facebook and Instagram. Student Media Leaders played a key role in weekly video production, including the Student of the Week presentations.

CEOB Partnerships: Onsite visits and professional development support from CEOB staff added value across key areas including wellbeing, OH&S, HR, and centralised payroll, allowing leadership to remain focused on the core business of education.

### **Instructional Coaching and Workforce Strategy**

With a high proportion of early career teachers and two PTT staff in 2024, we sustained our commitment to mentoring and professional growth:

Coaching and Mentoring: Weekly coaching sessions, peer observations, and support with PLP goals were embedded across teams.

Strategic Recruitment: Our partnership with the ACU Teach Together Regional Hub and targeted recruitment of LSOs studying education helped address staffing needs. However, attracting qualified staff to a regional setting continues to be a challenge.

### **Leading a Community of Learners**

Our leadership team remained focused on using data to inform practice, prioritise learning needs, and drive improvement:

Data Literacy: Collaboration with James Anderson and Steve Russell helped staff grow in confidence interpreting data, leading to targeted instructional decisions and school-wide learning priorities.

Targeted Intervention and Extension: Monthly RTI meetings by year level ensured data was used effectively to identify and support students needing intervention or enrichment.

Professional Learning: A detailed schedule of professional learning aligned with the Annual Action Plan and AITSL standards guided our professional growth strategy. Weekly PD and level meetings were focused on high-impact strategies and curriculum development.

Whole-School Development Days: James Anderson facilitated a powerful day on growth mindset and Habits of Mind. Gen Bryant led a reflective, faith-based day of spirituality and music. Our critical friend, Shaz Bailey, delivered a practical workshop on student engagement, reinforcing learner agency and curriculum alignment with Habits of Mind.

Professional Dialogue: Regular staff check-ins, embedded time for team discussion, and opportunities to share strategies and expertise ensured a collective ownership of learning. Ongoing refinement of our guaranteed and viable curriculum in all key areas remains a major focus.

### **Conclusion**

The 2024 school year marked significant achievement and progress for St Mary's in the area of leadership. Through strategic planning, inclusive decision-making, and an unwavering focus on wellbeing, learning, and community, we have strengthened our capacity to lead with vision, integrity, and purpose. Our leadership team remains committed to creating a vibrant, connected learning community where every child and adult is known, valued, and supported to flourish.

<b>Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning</b>
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2024
<p>Student Agency PD- James Anderson-a series of afterschool workshops via Zoom and a school closure day</p> <p>Music Mission- school closure day</p> <p>Selina Fisk-Data Story tellig</p> <p>Feedback and Collaboration Workshops- BTS Spark</p> <p>Data Analysis-Steve Russell</p> <p>Engaging Students through Inquiry Learning- Shaz Bailey</p> <p>HITS-High Impact Teaching Strategies workshops</p> <p>TAP Accredited course</p> <p>RE Accreditation through the University of Dayton</p> <p>Certificate IV In Teacher Assistance- undertaken by any new/unqualified LSO's</p> <p>Diploma of OSHC - undertaken by 5 LSO/OSHC educators</p> <p>Seesaw &amp; Google Classroom</p> <p>MultiLit</p> <p>MacqLit</p> <p>Hermanns profiling</p> <p>Enneagram profiling</p> <p>First Aid &amp; Associated training</p> <p>Reportable Conduct and Child Safety Standards Presentations</p> <p>Mandatory Reporting</p> <p>Headspace- Dealing with Student and Parent Anxieties</p> <p>Strategies to support trauma-informed students</p> <p>Dogs Connect</p>

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
Use of sensory tools and resources	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2024	65
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$950.64

## Teacher Satisfaction

### Taken from latest Insight SRC survey

Strong sense of positivity and pride: 98% of staff expressed positivity, with high enthusiasm for their work and pride in being part of St Mary's.

Supportive leadership and collegiality: 93% believe leaders can be relied upon during challenging times, and staff reported strong teamwork and collegial support.

Clarity and alignment: Staff showed high agreement on clarity around professional responsibilities, shared values, and alignment with school goals and teaching philosophy.

Commitment to student wellbeing and teaching quality: Staff responded very positively about the quality of teaching, pastoral care, and student motivation at St Mary's.

Problem-solving and innovation: Staff appreciated the creative and effective ways the school addresses challenges.

High levels of student respect: Staff generally feel they treat students respectfully and that this is reciprocated, reinforcing a positive school culture.

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	4
Graduate	3
Graduate Certificate	0
Bachelor Degree	48
Advanced Diploma	3
No Qualifications Listed	4

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	3
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	61
Teaching Staff (FTE)	47.82
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	55
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	29.62
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	1

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## Community Engagement

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### Goals & Intended Outcomes

- To strengthen the school's identity as a supportive learning community that connects strongly with families and the broader community.
- To continually nurture and grow a school environment that is inclusive and engaging for all.

### Achievements

St Mary's welcomes and actively seeks community engagement in the life of the school and values the contribution of our family and wider community. Daily Breakfast Club and volunteers working in the canteen provided an avenue for many parents to engage in the life of the school as did parental attendance at incursions, school excursions, and camps.

Service clubs visited to read to our younger students while representatives from sporting bodies and St Mary MacKillop College assisted with the sporting events or special events at the school.

St Mary's holds many activities and events which actively encourage the attendance and participation of our broader school community. Our Welcome Picnic once again drew a large crowd which gave new and existing families a chance to mingle and meet others in a relaxed environment. While in Term 4, our annual Grandparents and Friends event proved very popular. A very large crowd of parents, carers, and extended family members enjoyed visiting classrooms and watching the staff and student performances while our Carols Evening in December was also well attended. It was also fantastic to see many visitors to our school for the Harmony Day celebrations, The Great Race was well supported by families as well as the annual Colour Run. We participated in a multitude of sporting events throughout the year.

The Mother's Day morning tea and Father's Day morning tea to celebrate the special figures in our lives were very popular. Both events saw huge numbers of parents, grandparents, and special friends come along to enjoy seeing classrooms in action before enjoying morning tea, a little treat and the chance to play or spend time with their loved ones.

Prospective families were well catered for with the introduction of a mid-week Open day in Term 1, the traditional Sunday Open Days, and a series of School in Action and Come and Try days. These provided opportunities for prospective families to come along and see what



the school has to offer as we went about our daily business. Any prospective students were also able to participate in 'Flying Start' - a preschool transition program.

Throughout the course of the year, staff actively built parent involvement and engagement in the learning process. Meet the teacher chats were held at the beginning of the year to allow parents to inform their child's new teacher about any important information they should know and to establish the lines of communication. Each term Curriculum newsletters were sent home outlining the learning to take place in all year levels and specialist subjects and staff regularly kept families informed of special events via class newsletters or Seesaw notifications. Our newsletter, social media platforms and PAM were used to advertise and promote all special events.

Our junior classes invited the Police and Ambulance to visit our school to discuss and share their services.

School Camps continued to operate with students visiting many local community organisations and businesses.

We continued to invite families along each Friday for our whole school assemblies and family-friendly Friday lunches. Student of the Week has continued to be videoed each week by student media leaders and placed on our Facebook and Instagram pages to allow family members from afar to enjoy seeing students' special achievements.

The School Advisory Council continued to be fully represented with all positions filled, it was also great to see some new faces joining the Council. They demonstrated a strong commitment to the life of the school and their work and support throughout the year were much appreciated.

Our students participated in the Australia Day ceremonies, the ANZAC Day March and Remembrance Day, and our school captains and SRC organised activities which supported local, national and international agencies including the Good Friday Appeal, Cancer for Kids, MS, St Vincent De Paul Winter Appeal and Caritas. Other student highlights include Footy Colours Day, PJ Day and Crazy Hair Day and the Colour Run.

Some of our Year 6 students volunteered to assist with the local 'Meals on Wheels' program to support the elderly in our community. This was supervised by some staff members and families from our school community.

Parent-teacher Conversations provided an opportunity for parents and staff to look at the strengths and individual learning needs of each child and set goals for future learning during Term 1, while Parent-teacher Conversations in Term 3 provided another opportunity for parents and teachers to partner around student learning.

Wemba Wemba classes to indigenous families if requested with the support of local elders and a trained teacher were continued to be offered.

Employment of bilingual aides with a community engagement component to their role. These aides liaise with the community, translate key information and ensure a connection between the Vietnamese, Chinese and Indian communities and the school. Incorporation of Google Translate in the school newsletter to assist families to receive information in their language of choice.

## Parent Satisfaction

In past years, the following activities have strongly suggested there is a high level of satisfaction among staff, parents and students on the operation of the school.

This includes:

- The welcoming and hospitable school environment
- Involvement in parish sacramental programs
- Attendance at school liturgies and assemblies
- Regular, productive school advisory council meetings
- Continued support for school-based fundraising ventures- continuous raffle
- Positive feedback regarding mid-year and annual reports
- Consistent attendance rates at student led conferences/Parent teacher conversations

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