



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

2025

Annual Report to the School Community



St Mary's College for the Deaf

10A Riddell Road, WANTIRNA SOUTH 3152

Principal: Amanda Purcell

Web: smdeaf.vic.edu.au

Registration: 1669, E Number: E1262

Principal's Attestation

I, Amanda Purcell, attest that St Mary's College for the Deaf 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 2025 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 21 May 2026

About this report

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

Governing Authority Report

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) continues to take bold and ambitious steps, guided by our MACS2030 strategy, to empower our students to flourish and step into the world as the leaders of tomorrow.

In advancing our 2030 vision and our ambition to deliver world-leading Catholic education, we celebrate the significant progress made across our four areas of strategic focus. The safety and wellbeing of our staff and students underpins everything we do, enabling an environment where learning grows with purpose, leadership develops in capability and confidence, and our communities continue to thrive through our shared Catholic outlook.

Inspired by faith in the Jubilee Year of the Catholic Church in 2025, we successfully implemented our Faith Formation Framework, to further strengthen faith education, offering deeper opportunities for spiritual development and meaningful engagement for students, staff and leaders alike. Faith is at the heart of all our schools, grounding our mission and inspiring students, teachers and staff to grow and lead with integrity.

The official launch and implementation of the Vision for Engagement (VFE) strategy demonstrated impressive results in our community of Flourishing Learners.

Anchored in evidence-based practise, the VFE strengthens our system-wide teaching and learning approach and enhances the daily engagement of students through the explicit teaching of positive behaviour, reinforcement and consistency. It sets clear expectations about attendance and includes a sustained focus on student mental health and wellbeing.

For learners to flourish, students must be safe, which is why we are continuing to strengthen our safety processes and risk management culture. Our focus is on providing training and professional development for all staff to ensure student safety remains top of mind in every decision we make, every environment we shape and every interaction we have.

To strengthen the pillar of enabled leaders, MACS has established consistent standards across schools for cultivating inspiring, capable leaders for students to observe.

In the past year, our Pathways to Principalship Programme and Women in Leadership Programme have both strengthened our principal appointment process and introduced more flexible models of principalship.

It is inspiring to see our principals and teachers continue to raise the bar, reflected in the extraordinary number of nominations received in our Best Teachers campaign.

Finally, we continue to create new and enriched communities, with the opening of a new primary school and children's hub in Melbourne's growing north, ensuring families have access to high quality education no matter where they live.

MACS Early Years Education (MACSEYE) continues to expand early years and outside school hours care services across our schools and communities, with continued growth planned for 2026.

These investments are not simply about building infrastructure. They are about building a dynamic, Catholic education system where every child has an opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

Thank you to all our students, staff, families and community members for being part of our journey so far, and we look forward to continuing to serve as a supportive and guiding presence in your children's lives.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Edward Simons

Executive Director

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd

Vision and Mission

Our College Vision

A faith community shaping the formation of empowered, inquiring students

Our Values

Our College philosophy integrates our key values of Empowerment, Inclusion, Independence and Resilience with our knowledge of the explicit needs of deaf and hard of hearing students and the values intrinsic to Catholic Faith.

Empowerment: Empowering deaf and hard of hearing students to lead themselves as strong and confident contributors to their school community.

Inclusion: Promoting inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity, acknowledge human rights and commit to the social justice central to the Catholic faith.

Independence: Fostering self-sufficient, capable deaf and hard of hearing students actively setting and achieving their own goals.

Resilience: Building resilient deaf and hard of hearing young people capable of dealing with life's challenges, maintaining positive relationships and holding a healthy sense of their own identity.

College Overview

St Mary's College has been providing an education to deaf and hard of hearing students across Melbourne from 1948, originally as a Boarding school before moving to an integrated education model by establishing partnerships with other primary and secondary Catholic schools. A St Mary's College campus is currently hosted within Holy Trinity Primary School, St John's Regional College, Aquinas College, Marymede Catholic College, Salesian College Sunbury and Thomas Carr College.

Students come to St Mary's College from early intervention programs for deaf and hard of hearing children, primary deaf facilities and Catholic and Government local schools. To be eligible to enrol, students must have a bilateral permanent hearing loss of 40db or greater. In 2025, there were 77 students from Prep-Year 12 enrolled across the six campuses. The partnerships enable students with a hearing loss from across Melbourne the opportunity to learn and grow in one of these local Catholic inclusive schools.

The College is set up to maximise each students' potential for effective communication, academic achievement and personal growth. Being in a mainstream school, spoken English is the preferred language of most students. Teachers of the Deaf, speech language pathologists, learning support officers and Auslan educational interpreters work directly with our students and collaborate with subject teachers from our partner schools to create learning and teaching experiences that meet each child's individual needs. Classrooms within the partner schools are fitted with digital Soundfield systems and transmitters and all extra-curricular activities offered to students through the partner schools such as camps, sports, music and performing arts are monitored and adjusted as necessary to become fully accessible for students with a hearing loss.

Students have the opportunity to study a wide range of Victorian Curriculum subjects as offered from Prep through to VCE, VCE/VM and VPC. Our tiered approach to intervention ranges from full inclusion in the partner school classrooms to an individualised course of study involving time in regular classes and time receiving specialist teaching and intervention with a personalised program of learning. Students are also taught from the Expanded Curriculum for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, designed to improve learning outcomes that are impacted by deafness including the development of confidence and a positive identity. Our student wellbeing model follows Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) as a whole school approach to communicating behavioural expectations and an understanding of

the consequences of decisions made. These proactive strategies are used to achieve positive social and academic learning outcomes.

Principal's Report

The year commenced with our Opening Assembly, which proved to be a highly enjoyable occasion despite the warmer weather than anticipated. The assembly provided a wonderful opportunity to recognise our award winners, acknowledge our student campus leaders, and strengthen connections among students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It was inspiring to see students reconnect with peers and begin the year with such positivity and enthusiasm.

Following the highly positive findings of our 2024 review, the school has developed a new four-year School Improvement Plan. This plan provides a clear pathway for continuing our strong work in improving outcomes for all students and ensuring that every learner is supported to achieve success academically, socially, and emotionally. Throughout the semester, students across the school have engaged in a broad range of enriching learning experiences beyond the classroom. Students participated in field trips and practical activities designed to deepen their learning and prepare them for future pathways. Swimming programs, work experience placements, exploring our wonderful city and the countryside through camps and excursions and participating in driver education experiences were just some of the many activities that took place outside of the classroom.

A highlight for students is always participation in both the Secondary Schools' Deaf Sports Day and the Primary School's Deaf Sports Day. These events provided students with a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with old friends, meet new peers, and share experiences with others who also navigate hearing loss. The days were filled with teamwork, sportsmanship, and a strong sense of community and belonging. We also celebrated St Dominic's Feast Day, an important occasion in our school calendar. The celebration reflected our shared values, strengthened our sense of community, and provided students and staff with an opportunity to come together in faith and fellowship.

Staff professional learning and expertise continue to be a significant strength of our school. We are extremely proud that three teachers presented at the International Conference for Educators of the Deaf in Rome during the July school break. Their presentations showcased the school's work in Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), explicit instruction, and student wellbeing, highlighting the innovative practices taking place within our community on an international stage. In addition, we congratulated four teachers who have attained Masters-level accreditation, qualifying as Teachers of the Deaf through the completion of their studies.

Their commitment to professional growth and specialist expertise greatly enhances the quality of teaching and support provided to our students.

As always, I extend my sincere thanks to our School Advisory Council, partner schools, staff, students, and families for their ongoing support and partnership. Together, we continue to foster a learning community where every student is valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To develop a stronger sense of St Mary's College as a Catholic learning community inspired by the Dominican tradition.

Intended Outcome: If we develop a stronger sense of St Mary's College as a Catholic learning community inspired by the Dominican tradition, then students will make stronger connections between faith and life.

Achievements

The 2025 school year began with a liturgical celebration and Opening Assembly where students and staff from across the school gathered as a campus community to reflect on our faith through student-led prayer. The presentation of the Dominican Award at this event is an important feature in recognising a student inspired to live by values important to our community. One student was selected from the whole school who had demonstrated actions and words in their school life that reflect each of the four Dominican Pillars of community, service, study and prayer. Students were given a further opportunity to lead and make decisions at our St Dominic's Day celebration which included a full Mass at St Dominic's church followed by social games and activities where our senior students supported the involvement of our junior students. To build staff knowledge of the pillars in the context of life today, staff took turns at meetings linking a prayer or reflection based on one of the pillars to an issue or event occurring at that time. Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) continued to acknowledge acts or words demonstrating characteristics of the pillars used in everyday school life. MACSSIS data demonstrated an increase in positivity in students' perception about the Catholic identity of the school from 2024 to 2025.

Value Added

- Liturgies to mark significant events.
- Student-led prayer at assemblies and prayer services
- Staff prayer at all briefings and staff meetings with a termly focus on one Pillar of life.
- Staff professional learning focusing on ecological thinking, prayer and spirituality
- Staff organised Christmas fundraising appeal for The Salvation Army
- Social justice activities were able to run in person again
- Partner school activities such as the Long Walk organised through Aquinas College and the Project Compassion collection of food and household items for the St. Vincent de Paul Society were once again up and running.

Learning and Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To implement an agreed pedagogical approach across the school that aligns with the Vision for Instruction and the additional adjustments for DHH students.

Intended Outcome:

- If we implement an agreed pedagogical approach, then student reading comprehension will improve.
- If we implement an agreed Vision for Instruction (VFI) approach, then student learning dispositions will improve.

Achievements

In 2025, two key improvement strategies to improve reading in deaf and hard of hearing learners was identified:

- If we implement a visual phonics approach to teaching reading, then we will improve student achievement in letter-sound correspondence in primary students
- If we implement a corrective reading approach to teaching decoding strategies, then we will improve student achievement in reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension in years 7 to 9

In order to achieve this, the following actions were taken:

- A school-wide WIAT Reading analysis was able to identify specific gaps and misconceptions at word reading level in every student.
- All Teachers of the Deaf built expertise through professional development in two Visual Phonics instruction strategies and explicit instruction in morphology for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students.
- Teachers begun delivering explicit teaching of decoding strategies and phonology in Extended Literacy with some students
- Provide time for teachers to collaborate and share best practices
- 82% of primary students made 12 months or more growth in reading achievement on PAT Reading tests and 80% of Year 7 & 8 students were reading at or above age expected.

Student Learning Outcomes

Reading, Writing & Numeracy can be challenging for students who are deaf and hard of hearing due to the reliance on compromised access to clear sound. However, our Year 9 students demonstrated greater growth from year 7 to 9 across all 3 areas when compared to the average of all students in Australia and those from similar backgrounds in NAPLAN.

VCE/VM/VPC

All Year 12 students successfully completed their senior secondary education. This year, all Year 12 graduates chose to complete a VCE pathway and all who applied for a University degree received an offer. Others chose to explore work and travel opportunities before deciding on their preferred career path.

A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate. Data not reported for 2025 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.

Senior Secondary Outcomes

VCE Median Score	31.1
VCE VM Completion Rate	100%
VCE VM Completion Rate	100%
VPC Completion Rate	*

*Data not reported for 2025 due to insufficient data i.e. less than 4 student enrolments for VCE/VCE VM/VPC or none of the students in a school received study scores.



Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To use coaching, modelling and feedback to build capacity of staff to respond to wellbeing and behavioural needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) plus students.

Intended Outcome:

- If we use coaching, modelling and feedback to build capacity of staff to respond to wellbeing and behavioural needs of DHH plus students, then student wellbeing and safety will improve.

Achievements

In 2025, our key improvement strategy was to use Team Teach to build staff capacity to manage student behaviours of concern so that students feel a greater sense of safety and belonging in the school environment.

Achievements towards this end included:

- Engage all staff in professional learning workshops focussed on strategies for students with behaviours of concerns with presenters including Laura Spencer (Child, Youth & Parent Mental Health Therapist) and Dan Petro (Behaviour Analyst).
- Streamline processes for reporting, tracking and responding to behaviour incidences.
- Employ a MHIPS staff member to empower and upskill teachers to identify and respond to mental health concerns.
- Whole school training in TeamTeach de-escalation techniques and strategies to reduce disruption and provide predictable, positive responses to students with concerns or emerging behaviours.

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) continued as a school-wide strategy to improve student engagement and confidence. Each campus maintained a staff to student ratio of approximately 1:4, meaning students were provided with timely and responsive support and recognition of positive actions and words. Our Student Campus Leaders further developed

their leadership skills and confidence by attending the Halogen Youth Leadership Forum, where they listened to inspirational speakers talk about their leadership journey.

Value Added

The following value added opportunities were provided by St Mary's College:

- Each campus elected a student leader
- A Position of Leadership was responsible for coordinating the student leaders program
- Social opportunities to bond with other DHH students at Opening Assembly and St Dominic's Day celebration (Liturgy, Lunch and Bowling)
- Student leaders continued to be responsible for the College banner at partner school events and liturgies when onsite
- Various social opportunities were provided within St Mary's space at lunch times. These were open to our students and their friends from the partner school and included Auslan classes and clubs
- PBL winners were acknowledged weekly and monthly winners recognised in the newsletter and awarded incentives or gift vouchers
- Campus based celebrations of milestones including birthdays and recognition of graduating students occurred
- Participation in Primary Deaf Sports and Secondary Deaf Sports (University of Melbourne) provided opportunities for friendly sporting competition between DHH students from other schools across Victoria
- Behaviour tracking software was used to identify possible goals for students in various areas of social skills or behaviours

The following value added opportunities were accessed by our students through our partner schools:

- Camps, retreats and buddy peer support programs
- Harmony Day events
- Wellbeing workshops and activities
- Access to Youth Space (secondary) at lunch and recess
- Music, drama, sports and art groups
- Formal evening events such as Graduation Mass, Dinners, Debs and Presentation Balls

Student Satisfaction

In 2025, St Mary's College students completed the annual survey MACSSIS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools - School Improvement Survey). Overall, St Mary's College students reported fairly similarly in 2025 (52%) to 2024 (55%) with the average of all schools being 54%. Data showed an increase in positive responses from 2024 to 2025 when asked

how often adults in their school give students an opportunity to talk about things that worry or concern them, which reflects an increase in student confidence and feeling of safety in raising concerns with a staff member.

Student Attendance

St Mary's College is responsible for reporting on student attendance. To ensure diligence to student safety, attendance is recorded throughout the day by both St Mary's and each partner school each period. The administration officer of St Mary's is responsible for ensuring any unexplained absences are reported to parents / guardians as soon as possible following the first roll mark.

The Deputy Principal overseeing each campus makes contact with parents/guardians of any students that are absent for two consecutive days. This may be to enquire about the wellbeing of the student, rather than to discuss attendance concerns, as the absence reason may be known. For students who continue to have non-medical related absences, a PSG meeting is called to ascertain causes and develop strategies to help improve the student's attendance. For more significant difficulties with attendance, a school engagement plan is developed with the student and PSG members.

Years 9 - 12 Student Retention Rate	
Years 9 to 12 Student Retention Rate	91

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	
Y02	89.31
Y03	95.83
Y04	72.22
Y05	89.31
Y06	90.74
Y07	91.27
Y08	89.71
Y09	78.93
Y10	85.75
Overall average attendance	87.01

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To use coaching, modelling and feedback to build capacity of staff to respond to wellbeing and behavioural needs of DHH plus students.

Intended Outcomes: If we use coaching, modelling and feedback to build capacity of staff to respond to wellbeing and behavioural needs of DHH plus students, then staff professional practice will improve.

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Achievements

The leadership team supported four teachers to gain their Masters and become qualified Teachers of the deaf, one teacher to gain their provisional VIT and two Education Support Staff to complete their Certificate Four in School based Education Support.

The school undertook and passed VCAA compliance as part of the school review.

The leadership team continued to engage in regular learning walks in classrooms along with fortnightly 1:1 feedback meetings between teachers and Head of Campus.

The building of professional capacity in managing students with ongoing behaviours of concern through professional learning with Dan Petro, Laura Spencer and the Team Teach program.

Deputy Principal Staff awarded one of ten fellowships for contribution to Catholic Secondary education and active involvement in the Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools Deputy Principal Association.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2025
The professional learning undertaken by staff at St Mary's College in 2025 focused on deepening the understanding of MACS Vision for Instruction and Vision for Engagement as well as reading strategies and whole school learning around how to support children with challenging behaviours. Professional learning was completed in the following areas: <u>Deafness</u> Auslan 102 - Expressions Australia Theory of Mind and the DHH Learner Cued Articulation International Congress for Educators of the deaf <u>Faith</u> Can a Scientist Believe in God <u>Teaching and Learning</u> Making Maths Accessible for Students who are blind or have low vision The Shape Coding System Reading Strategies - MorThemes Reading Strategies - Decoding Reading Strategies - Phonics Reading Strategies - Phonological Awareness Morphology in Action: Structured Teaching to Boost Spelling and Reading <u>Wellbeing</u> Understanding Anxiety: Supporting Autistic Students' Behaviour and Engagement Support students with ADHD more effectively in your classroom Autism, ADHD and Aggressive Behaviours: Exploring Triggers, Supports and Strategies Student Engagement in Action – Professional Learning for School Leaders Supporting students through schooling can't

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
I CAN NETWORK - Supporting Neurodivergent Students Team Teach Dan Petro - how to write behaviour support plans Laura Spencer - the nervous system and wellbeing strategies <u>Leadership</u> Information Sharing Reforms and Child Link Webinar NCCD Moderation & Quality Assurance Supporting Graduate teachers to full VIT	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2025	24
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$198.00

Teacher Satisfaction

In 2025, St Mary's College staff completed the annual survey MACSSIS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools - School Improvement Survey). Overall, St Mary's College staff reported more positively (79%) than the MACS school average (69%). Areas of significant positivity included the overall school climate (90%), perceptions that staff at the school have what it takes to improve instruction (90%) and how well teachers work together in teams to improve teaching and learning (89%). An area for improvement was identified as the amount and quality of feedback staff receive (50%), although this was still above the MACS average (43%).

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	20
Graduate	5
Graduate Certificate	2
Bachelor Degree	23
Advanced Diploma	4
No Qualifications Listed	0

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	4
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	27
Teaching Staff (FTE)	22.7
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	21
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	11.64
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To strengthen community engagement in the life of the college.

Intended Outcome: If we strengthen community engagement in the life of the college, then families' sense of belonging and participation in school events will increase.

Achievements

Year 7 Information night was held to welcome and inform our new families and existing families moving from our primary campuses to our secondary campuses. Orientation events and primary school and kinder visits assisted students to feel supported and transition successfully.

PSG meetings were held either face-to-face or online a minimum of once per term. Students shared their goals and achievements with the team.

Year 12 Graduation and Awards Evening celebrated our graduates and the achievements of our students, including recognition of student leaders.

Special Considerations and Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) applications were completed with students and families of Year 12 students. Documents were also prepared for Disability Liaison Officers at the relevant TAFE and Universities where students were transitioning, outlining student support needs for future success in those environments.

Termly newsletters and regular social media posts highlighting the life of the College across the six campuses was shared with existing families.

Parent Satisfaction

Unfortunately in 2025, we only had a small sample of responses to the MACSSIS survey. However, it did represent 11% of our parent population. Overall there was 72% positive endorsement for the school. Perceptions of the school and the learning climate was perceived as a significant strength with 90% positive endorsement and how well the school matches their child's developmental needs endorsed positively at 80%. Areas for

improvement identified were the overall Catholic identity of the school and the degree to which families are partners with the school.

Financial Performance

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

For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at smdeaf.vic.edu.au