



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

2024

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 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 02 Jun 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Edward Simons

Executive Director

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd

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 opened at "Delgany" Portsea in 1948 as a day and boarding school for deaf and hard of hearing students. It relocated to Melbourne in 1985, establishing a primary campus (Prep-Year 6) at Wantirna South and a secondary campus at Dandenong (Year 7-12). These campuses were located within the grounds of Holy Trinity Primary School and St John's Regional College with a view to enabling students who are deaf and hard of hearing the opportunity to learn within a local school environment whilst accessing daily onsite specialist teaching required for success. Since then, St Mary's has established further campuses within Aquinas College Ringwood (Year 7-12), Marymede Catholic College South Morang (Prep-Year 12), Salesian College Sunbury (Year 7-12) and Thomas Carr College Tarneit (Year 7-12), enabling students with a hearing loss from across Melbourne the opportunity to enrol in a St Mary's inclusive education campus.

Students come to St Mary's College from early intervention programs for deaf and hard of hearing children, primary deaf facilities and also Catholic and Government local schools. To be eligible to enrol, students must have a bilateral permanent hearing loss of 40db or greater. In 2024, there were 79 students from Prep-Year 12 enrolled across the six campuses.

The College is set up to maximise each students' potential for effective spoken communication, academic achievement and personal growth. 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 FM SoundField towers 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.

Our 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 range 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. Building on the Victorian Curriculum, 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 are a broad range of tailored and proactive strategies used in achieving positive social and academic learning outcomes.

Principal's Report

2024 was a dynamic year marked by our school's Opening Assembly, recognizing award winners and student leaders, and fostering connections among deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students across campuses. Events from St Mary's College and partner schools promoted inclusive experiences within local schools and deaf communities.

Holy Week liturgies, classroom activities, and acts of compassion such as Caritas Australia built an awareness of the importance of giving whilst our annual St Dominic's Day whole-school celebration provided a joyous occasion, bringing students and staff from all campuses together to honour our school's mission and values.

Our Primary and Secondary Schools' Deaf Sports Day was a resounding success, showcasing the talents and determination of students and providing rich opportunities to build friendships and engage in social activities with other DHH students from around Victoria.

Our secondary school staff collaborated with Deaf Children Australia on a new program that provided meaningful work experience placements for our Year 10 students. This initiative supported essential skills and opportunities designed to increase success in work endeavours for DHH students, particularly when seeking their first part-time job and considering the best senior secondary pathways to support career choices.

The Principal study tour of schools and provisions for DHH students in the UK and Ireland, and conference titled "Diversity in Deaf Learners" was highly successful and much new knowledge about ways to strengthen reading skills for students with hearing loss, and how to address the mental fatigue that many DHH students experience each day was brought back and used in improving teaching and learning across the school.

The end-of-cycle school review was conducted in 2024. Overall, the report was positive, with the reviewers taking the time to visit each campus and understand the unique context of our students and school. Strengths highlighted included a strong strategic vision for the future and instructional leadership that models and pursues best practices in DHH education, exemplary staff expertise and commitment to DHH students and a commitment to well-being and its expression through the four Dominican pillars being at the core of all the college does.

Our year concluded with our whole school Year 12 graduation event, where we also

celebrated the achievements of some of our students who have received awards, including the Australian Defence Force Awards (ADF).

The College's success is based on a very skilled and committed team of teachers, allied health and educational support staff and a wise and supportive School Advisory Council. Our partner school staff at Marymede, Aquinas, St John's, Thomas Carr, Holy Trinity and Salesian Sunbury are tireless in providing our students an inclusive community in which to learn. Together, the College is in a great place to enter into our next 4-year school improvement cycle, delivering effective, innovative, inclusive education for deaf and hard of hearing students in partnership.

Catholic Identity and Mission

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To build confident and resilient learners inspired to live in the tradition of the Dominican charism with voice and agency in decision making.

Intended Outcome: That students have the attitude, mindset, skill and strategies to successfully manage academic and social challenges, as well as the confidence to engage with new experiences.

Annual Target: A whole school understanding of the Dominican charism.

Achievements

The 2024 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. A further initiative this year was linking Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) acknowledgements to acts or words demonstrating the pillars being demonstrated in everyday school life. MACSSIS data demonstrated an increase in student reporting positively in school belonging.

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 enhance purposeful and effective pedagogical practices that promote successful learning outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Intended Outcome: That there is consistent growth in literacy, numeracy and language competency in all students.

Achievements

In 2024, two key improvement strategies were identified:

- A SMC pedagogical framework to deliver the teaching and learning program used consistently by all teachers.
- Evidence-based practices through the Science of Reading used consistently to teach reading.

In order to achieve this the following actions were taken:

- The Science of Reading continued as an appropriate framework to analyse and design a system of explicit teaching in reading for DHH learners and a framework was written around this, staff participated in the school professional learning program and PLC groups focused on analysing reading and using the Reading Rope to understand gaps in DHH readers' skills.
- The Leadership team commenced building knowledge of the MACS Vision for Instruction and cognitive science which was woven into professional learning for staff as they continued to develop their pedagogical approach to teaching reading.
- 1/3 of students made 12 months or more growth in reading achievement on PAT Reading tests. However, as this year year was more about building teacher expertise, we expect to see greater growth in 2025.

Student Learning Outcomes

Reading and Grammar/punctuation can be challenging for students who are deaf and hard of hearing due to the reliance on uncompromised access to clear sound. 64% of Year 7 students being proficient or greater in NAPLAN reading is a pleasing result and consistent with our PAT data that suggests 65% of students from Foundation to year 8 are at age appropriate reading level. As text becomes increasing complex from year 9, any basic reading gaps or weakness start to appear as areas of concern which is why our focus on an explicit whole school approach to evidenced-based reading instruction will continue into 2025.

VCE/VM/VPC

All Year 12 students successfully completed their senior secondary education following their chosen pathway. Year 12 graduates from 2024 received a range of post school opportunities. We had seven students complete a Vocational Major certificate. Most went on to work and further training in their chosen area with a couple choosing a gap year to gain life experiences. Four students completed a VCE pathway and commenced degrees at university or have deferred their offer in order to travel or explore other opportunities. Post school destinations included Digital communication, Nursing at Monash and Design.

NAPLAN - Proportion of students meeting the proficient standards			
Domain	Year level	Mean Scale score	Proficient
Grammar & Punctuation	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
	Year 7	472	18%
	Year 9	492	20%
Numeracy	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
	Year 7	501	46%
	Year 9	539	27%
Reading	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
	Year 7	502	64%
	Year 9	510	20%
Spelling	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
	Year 7	474	27%
	Year 9	540	40%
Writing	Year 3	*	*
	Year 5	*	*
	Year 7	510	46%
	Year 9	559	47%

*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.

Senior Secondary Outcomes	
VCE Median Score	30.1
VCE VM Completion Rate	100%
VCE VM Completion Rate	100%
VPC Completion Rate	100%

*Data not reported for 2024 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.

Post-School Destinations as at 2024	
Tertiary Study	55%
TAFE / VET	27%
Apprenticeship / Traineeship	0%
Deferred	0%
Employment	18%
Other - The category of Other includes both students Looking for Work and those classed as Other	0%

Student Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To build confident and resilient learners inspired to live in the tradition of the Dominican charism with voice and agency in decision making.

Intended Outcome: That students have the attitude, mindset, skill and strategies to successfully manage academic and social challenges, as well as the confidence to engage with new experiences.

Achievements

In 2024, our key improvement strategy was to design a responsive, tiered and contextualised approach to building a positive identity around student deafness to reduce anxiety. The aim was to decrease in students reporting school related anxiety.

Achievements towards this end included:

- Developing a tiered response based on Positive Behaviours to Learning (PBL) to reports of anxiety
- Designing curriculum and lessons in social-emotional learning and Deaf Identity for teacher use

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. The Student Leadership position continued to be effective, expanding on initiatives from the previous year and leading the student campus leaders in promoting the engagement of other students in new activities. 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 2024, St Mary's College students completed the annual survey MACSSIS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools - School Improvement Survey). Overall, St Mary's College students reported more positively (55%) than the MACS school's average (52%). Areas of significant positivity include students feeling teachers having high expectations of what they can achieve, teacher-student relations and school belonging. The annual school survey (MACSSIS) data showed an improvement in student's safety, which would indicate that work done on helping students with feelings around anxiety and a sense of belonging have had impact.

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	[ASR_Years9To12StudentRetentionRate.retentionrate]

Average Student Attendance Rate by Year Level	
Y01	
Y02	89.3
Y03	95.8
Y04	72.2
Y05	89.3
Y06	90.7
Y07	91.3
Y08	89.7
Y09	78.9
Y10	85.8
Overall average attendance	87.0

Leadership

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To extend the professional capabilities of St Mary's staff to collaborate effectively and be empowered in leading learning communities.

Intended Outcome: That knowledge of individual student's needs and best practice in deaf education are embedded in St Mary's and partner school collegiate planning.

Achievements

The leadership team continued to engage in fortnightly learning walks in classrooms along with fortnightly 1:1 feedback meetings between teachers and Head of Campus. The building of professional capacity in planning with colleagues around student learning continued through a common commitment to engaging in Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings each week. Teachers had an annual review meeting and set teaching and learning goals, using the AITSL standards for teachers. The school review was a major focus was much of term 3 with staff taking the opportunity to use the self reflection tool to stimulate thinking and develop ideas around what best practice in deaf education should look like. The principal engagement in a study tour of the UK and Ireland brought back many examples of contemporary practice of the science of learning in deaf education to share with staff.

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning
List Professional Learning undertaken in 2024
<p>The professional learning undertaken by staff at St Mary's College in 2024 focused on becoming familiar with the MACS Vision for Instruction initiative and the Science of Learning Staff also built their understanding of Faith by engaging with Encounter professional learning modules. In the area of student wellbeing, topics included Berry Street training, positive behaviours for learning, teaching students about the laws and social media and risk assessments. Professional learning was completed in the following areas:</p> <p><u>Deafness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Supporting post-school transition for students who are deaf or hard of hearing *Improving the outcomes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in mainstream settings *Understanding deafness *Dynamic Temporal Tactile Cueing for Childhood Apraxia of Speech *Supporting deaf and hard of hearing students in the classroom *Explicit Syntax Instruction for deaf and hard of hearing students *Inclusive Classrooms: Supporting Students with Hearing Loss *Technology update Cochlear Implant Clinic *Impact of noise in school classrooms *Language and communication strategies used by deaf and hard of hearing children *Literacy achievement of deaf learners *Phonological decoding and reading comprehension in deaf and hard of hearing children *Understanding and supporting reading difficulties in deaf and hard of hearing children *Reading and dyslexia in deaf children <p><u>Faith</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Liturgy for Primary teachers *Encounter

Expenditure And Teacher Participation in Professional Learning	
<u>Teaching and Learning</u> *The best strategies and resources for vocational major *Interpreting Naplan data *Accessibility and inclusion for students who are blind or vision impaired *Preparing for Year 12 EAL *Supporting the oral and written language of adolescents *The Science of Reading <u>Wellbeing</u> *Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders: teaching strategies and behaviour support *Dan Petro - introduction to student safety/escalation cycle management plans <u>Leadership</u> *Empowering teacher leaders *Coaching/mentoring Course *Primary student wellbeing leaders network *Eastern Region Deputy Principal conference	
Number of teachers who participated in PL in 2024	31
Average expenditure per teacher for PL	\$432.00

Teacher Satisfaction

In 2024, 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 (71%) than the MACS school average (68%). Areas of significant positivity included perceptions of the quality of relationships between staff and members of the leadership team (82%) and how well teachers work together in teams to improve teaching and learning (81%) and school climate (81%).

Teacher Qualifications	
Doctorate	0
Masters	14
Graduate	5
Graduate Certificate	2
Bachelor Degree	17
Advanced Diploma	4
No Qualifications Listed	9

Staff Composition	
Principal Class (Headcount)	4
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	26
Teaching Staff (FTE)	21.7
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	21
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	12.65
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Community Engagement

Goals & Intended Outcomes

Goal: To extend the professional capabilities of St Mary's staff to collaborate effectively and be empowered in leading learning communities

Intended Outcome: That knowledge of individual student's needs and best practice in deaf education are embedded in St Mary's and partner school collegiate planning.

Annual Target: teachers are sharing knowledge of their students' learning needs with partner school teachers.

Achievements

PSG meetings were held either face-to-face or online a minimum of once per term. Partner school classroom teachers (primary), subject teachers (secondary) and other relevant staff such as year level leaders, partner school counsellors, were invited along to gain a greater understanding of the learning needs of our students. St Mary's teachers of the deaf shared knowledge of strategies that resulted in improved outcomes for each individual and were therefore likely to be seen as working with individual strengths. Unfortunately due to various barriers, attendance at these meetings was sometimes difficult and so various alternative ways to share this information will be explored in 2025.

St Mary's staff held annual professional learning sessions on various practical topics related to teaching deaf students to partner school staff and primary teachers attended partner school year level planning meetings to provide advice about deaf learners.

Deputy Principals met with early education and primary school teachers of students prior to transitioning to ensure they were as prepared as possible to meet the needs of our new students. 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.

Parent Satisfaction

Unfortunately in 2024, we only had a small sample of responses to the MACSSIS survey. However, it did represent 9% of our parent population. Overall there was 76% positive endorsement for the school. The times, frequency and communication with the school was perceived as a significant strength with 96% positive endorsement and the school fit being

endorsed positively at 91%. An area for improvement identified was engagement with school events, which both the the school and parents have identified as challenging due to the nature and context of the school structure.

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